

Andrew Christofides

Towards intuition

ANDREW CHRISTOFIDES

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1982 - 2003

Exhibition dates:

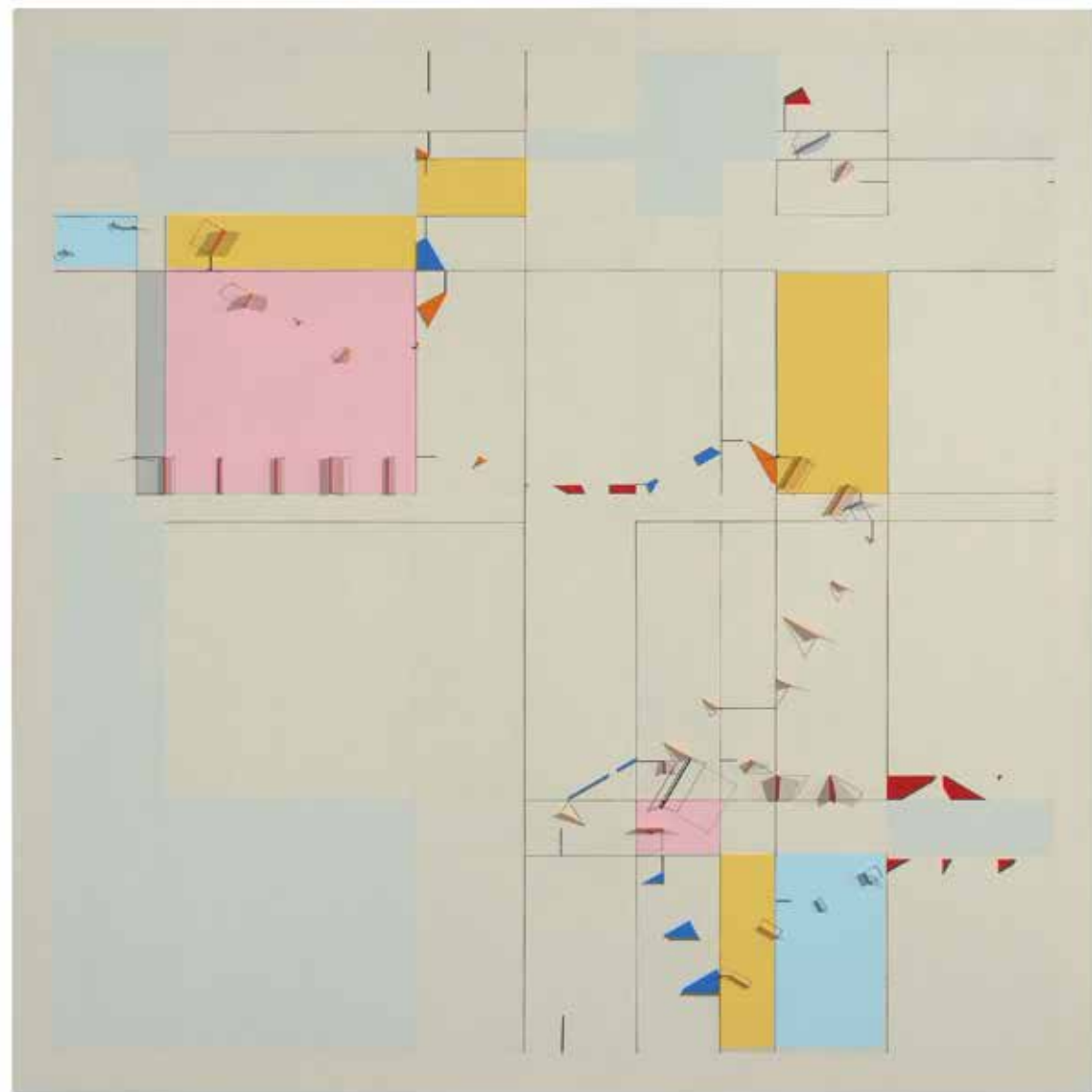
19 June – 14 July 2018

King Street Gallery 
on William 

10am – 6pm Tuesday – Saturday
177 William St Darlinghurst NSW 2010 Australia
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Liverpool Street studio, Sydney, 1984



Untitled Construction #1 1982 acrylic, card, wood & ink on board 106.5 x 106.5 x 6 cm

Mastery to Intuition

This exhibition of Andrew Christofides' relief constructions and paintings sets a scene that reflects a lifetime of introspection and expression from a multitude of experiences that go into making a cognizant being. The work spans the period 1982 to 2003, just over twenty years of intense creative output. The imagery in the work from the early 1980's presented here was constructed from a random numbering system that corresponds tangentially to the social rise of binary personal computers.¹ The stochastic system established by Christofides enabled simple abstract shapes to wander randomly, to make artificial decisions based on proximity and collision. According to Christofides, the forms (initially squares) would literally 'come across obstacles and things would happen'² that in their wake created unplanned compositions. The work took on the meandering of the Situationists (1957-1972) with an internal Psychogeography reflected in Christofides' constructions based on a grid format, by visual elements of barriers, steps, shapes, paths, gates and intricate structures. The Situationists had a word for this random arbitrary movement around architectural forms – this was the act of *dérive*³ ('drift') and is used in Christofides' work to reveal his search for a new visual language. This is most obvious in his constructions *Untitled Construction #1* (1982), *Untitled Construction #2* (1983), and *Untitled Construction #4* (1983).

Christofides moved in 1983 to a studio in Liverpool Street, Sydney, where he worked until late 1987. The paintings progressed in this period to a hexagonal format

to explore more effectively random movement utilising equilateral triangles as the main formal elements. The more dynamic possibilities of composition with the triangles were generated from dice throwing or using random numbers. In doing so, Christofides establishes himself as a system-flâneur, adopting a process of meandering and traversing the picture's surface – splitting, dividing, gridding, into iconic abstract compositions. This is evidenced in paintings *Untitled Construction #6*, *Untitled Construction #7*, and *Untitled Construction #8*, all painted in 1984, and which were the result of an intense period of focused evolution and evaluation that created inventive pictorial outcomes.

The critical evaluation of this previous work led to leaps in his practice which were seismic changes based on mastery of the system. In using the word mastery, I imply the practice of the master in the atelier tradition, with Christofides developing the necessary knowledge of materials, mediums and skills that become internalised and imbued as an integral part of his artistic processes. Thus, previous abstract paintings become literally the source material of the next paintings. Here previous, abstract systems paintings become individual icons⁴ which Christofides sees as iterative 'life cycles' to be utilised in subsequent intuitive artworks. The compositions rely on an interpretation of space that is punctuated with mastered icons. I want to take time to comprehend what we might see as counter-intuitive intuition here.

Henri Bergson defined intuition as a simple, indivisible experience of '*intellectual sympathy*' by which one places



Working Drawing 1983
Mixed media on graph paper
42 x 59.5 cm

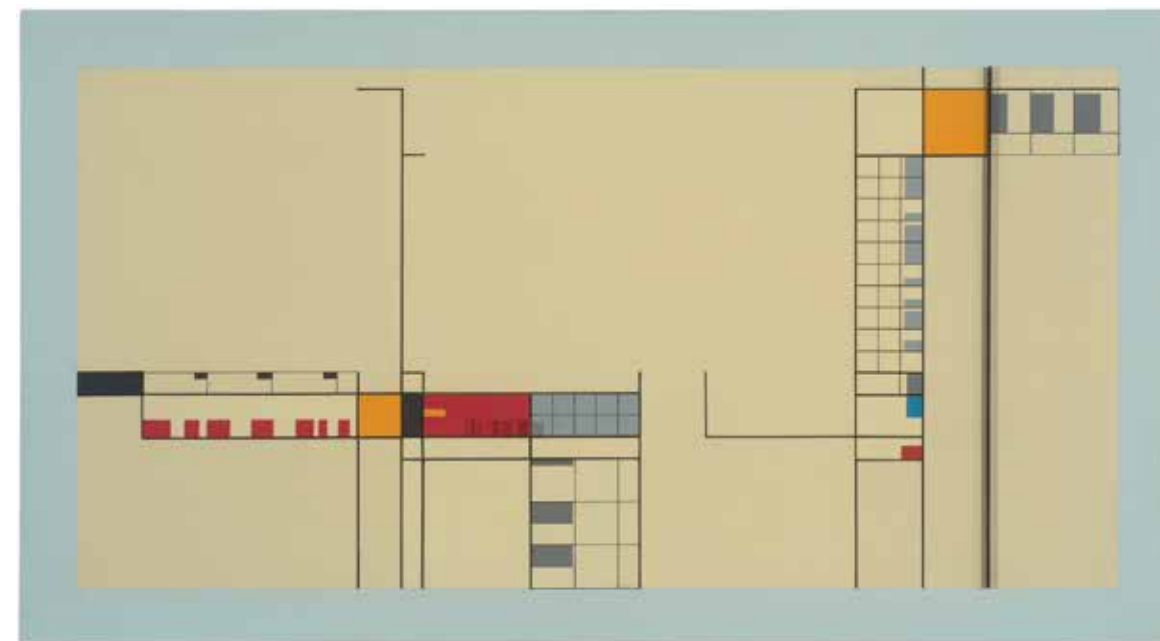
oneself within an object in order to coincide with what is unique in it and consequently inexpressible'. In contrast, he defined analysis as 'the operation which reduces the object to elements already known, that is, to elements common both to it and other objects.'⁵ In his explorations, Christofides takes Bergson's idea of 'being within an object' to identify individual systemised icons, reduced to objects, and he seizes what is unique and ineffable within them. The paintings are then composed utilising these iconic objects into compositions that are a holistic, simple, indivisible act of intuition. These concepts are most obvious in the works *Untitled Green Construction Number 4* (1987), *Untitled Green Construction Number 9* (1987), *Grey Construction Number 9* (1989), and *Untitled Yellow Painting Number 3* (1989).

The intuitive compositions post-1990 all have a specific signifier which creates linear boundaries that are to become more relevant to Christofides as life and his history start to play a more integrated role in his paintings. Christofides was born in Cyprus of Greek parentage and migrated with his family to Australia at the age of five in 1951. The abstract language shifts at the beginning of the 1990's with the positioning of simplified icons presented by bands of colour and check-patterned columns, all at the same height. The distances between the coloured and checked columns are divided by thin lines. These lines reappear from the early work to delineate boundaries between these elements. All of these works to the end of 1995 have a constant formula that eventually included oval-shaped icons that signify a glimpse of the random, systemised pattern.

In 2000 this boundary line is increased in scale as we are zoomed into a picture surface which reveals more of the uncertainty and randomness that is latent in the background. The check pattern is still there, but other elements are eliminated. The checked boundary lines, like police marking tape, are laying out the boundaries of revealing a new fundamental element. The paintings become a journey into self, not a self of ego but a self of lineage. Christofides has an ongoing commitment to define the undefinable aspect of being. In his paintings, he investigates the liminal space between the rational and the intuitive and, through the definition of these boundary lines, creates new parameters for his personal abstraction.

The paintings reflect a deeper understanding of Christofides' heritage and lineage that was not found

in representation but in 'the received appearance of the external world'⁶, a greater comprehension of the self as an antenna. The antenna receives all the signal waves that infect the body: smell, taste, touch, sight and hearing. The visual language that draws from formative textures and colours is neither real nor imagined, but felt in Christofides' pursuit of clarity. The dense, cloud like surface quality of the background colours is projected to the foreground of the painting as subtler more expressive rectangular forms – similar to looking down, you see your feet meandering through his personal history of optical textural signifiers. The terracotta tiles that influence the heavily layered beautifully-subtle surface patina of the rectangular forms. All of these final paintings incorporate more expressive titles, allowing us to sense Christofides' impetus behind the abstractions.

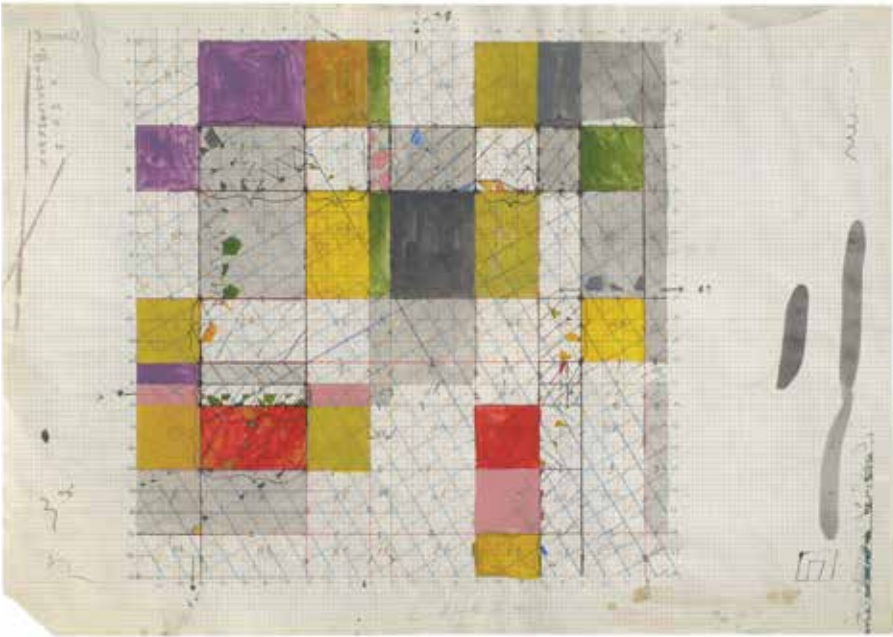


Untitled Construction #4 1983 acrylic, card, wood & ink on board 56 x 101.5 x 4 cm

For example, see: *Madonna in the Fields I* (2000); *Crimson Angels* (2000); *Nubia* (2001); *Patriot* (2003); *Dark Continent* (2003); *Splendour II* (2003), and *Terracotta* (2003).

Christofides' palette of images and icons are repeatedly used in a search for purity of substance, as if creating a unique typeface with which to express and enhance meaning. This exhibition is a great legacy of a pursuit of refinement and, ultimately, courage at the core of one's convictions to establish and elaborate a new visual language. This is courage that, on the surface, might appear as cautious steps – but they are in fact massive leaps into the unknown that proceed from mastery to intuition.

Dr Paul Thomas, May 2018
Professor of Fine Art, UNSW.



Working Drawing 1983
Mixed media on graph paper
59 x 84 cm

Notes

¹Christofides was introduced to computer systems at the Slade School in London in 1977 -78 but chose an analogue approach to be instrumental in the construction of his artwork.

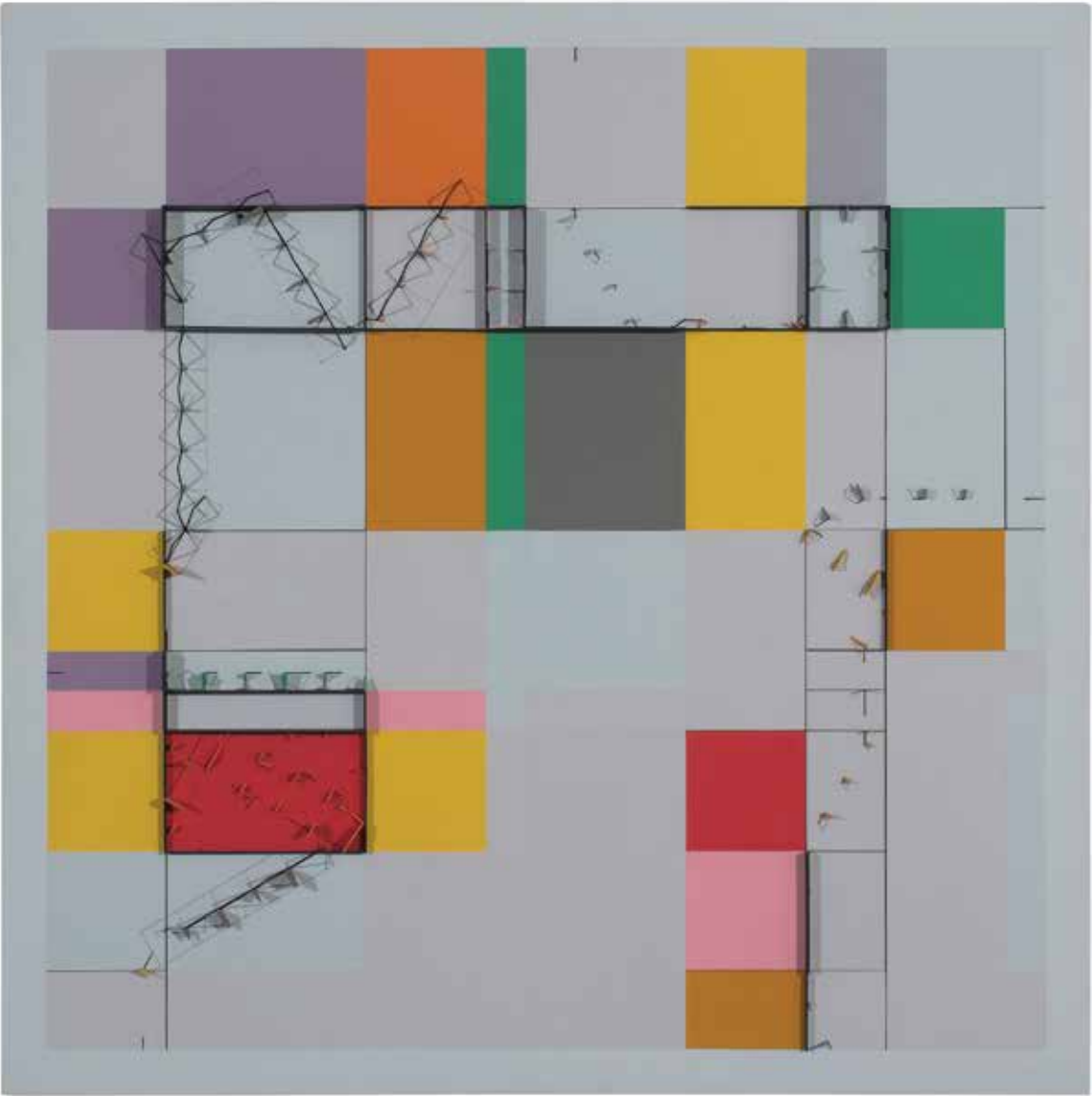
²From recorded discussion with Andrew Christofides.

³The 'dérive' was a revolutionary strategy originally put forward by Guy Debord, an International Situationist. Dérive is an experimental way of exploring space, an unplanned journey through an urban space. It allows people to break free, to investigate and critique the encounters that are made in uncharted spaces.

⁴I refer to icons here as being images which are the sum total of the thing they signify, images that incorporate significant multiple meanings and elements.

⁵Bergson, H. (1912). *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (T. E. Hulme, Trans.). New York & London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, p.7 (original italics).

⁶From recorded discussion with Andrew Christofides.



Untitled Construction #2 1983 acrylic, card, wood & ink on board 106.5 x 106.5 x 6 cm



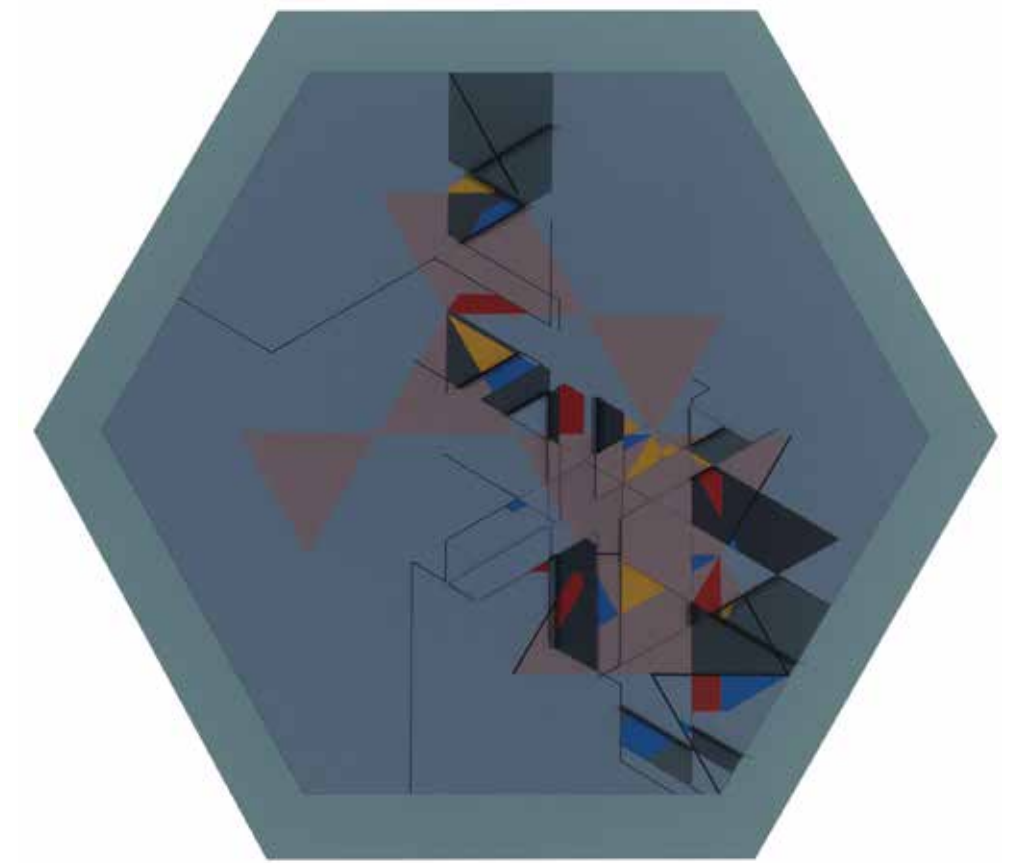
Liverpool Street studio, Sydney, 1987



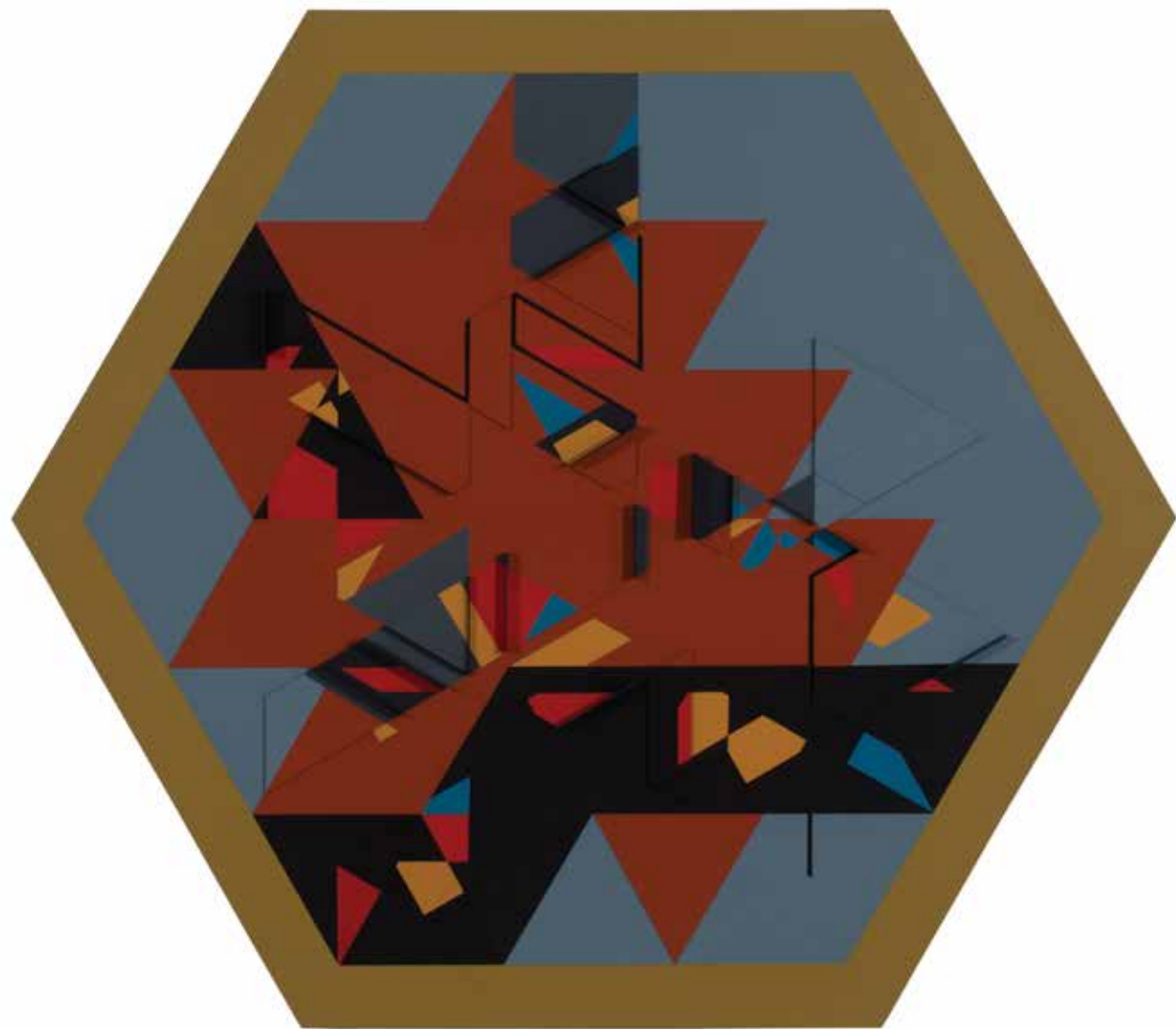
Untitled Construction 1984 acrylic & wood on board 28 x 28 x 4 cm



Liverpool Street studio, Sydney, 1987



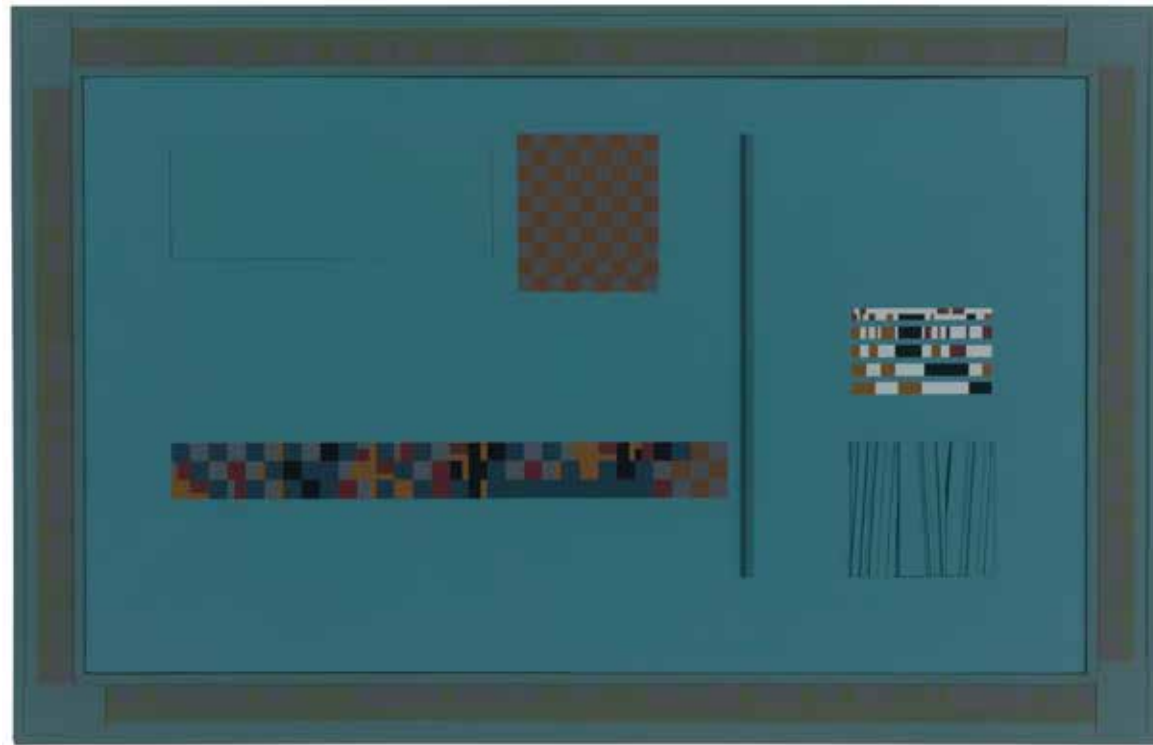
Untitled Construction #8 1984 acrylic, card, wood & ink on board 66 x 76 x 4 cm



Untitled Construction #6 1984 acrylic, card, wood & ink on board 107 x 122 x 6 cm



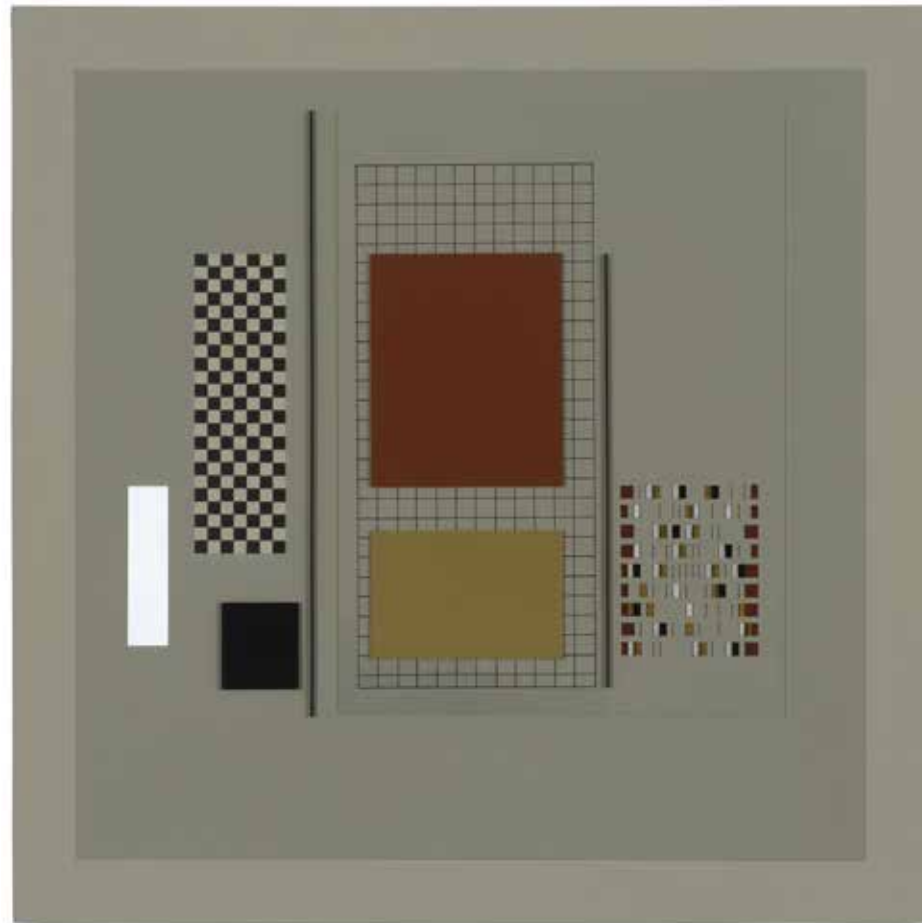
Untitled Construction #7 1984 acrylic, card, wood & ink on board 107 x 122 x 6 cm



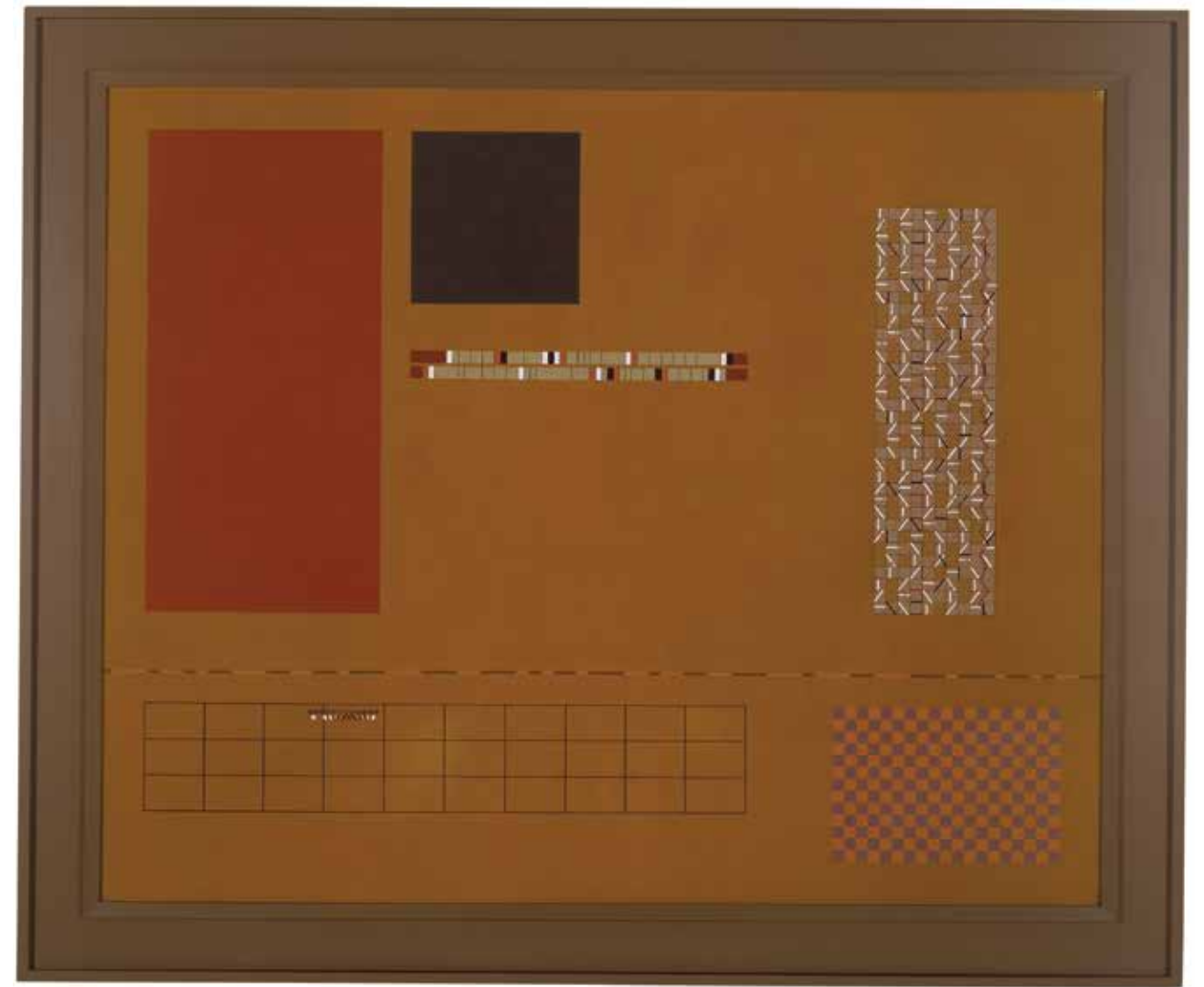
Untitled Green Construction Number 4 1987 acrylic, card & wood on board 59.5 x 93.5 x 3.5 cm



Untitled Green Construction Number 9 1987 acrylic, card, wood & ink on board 68.5 x 68.5 x 3 cm



Grey Construction Number 9 1989 acrylic, card, wood & ink on board 70 x 70 x 3 cm



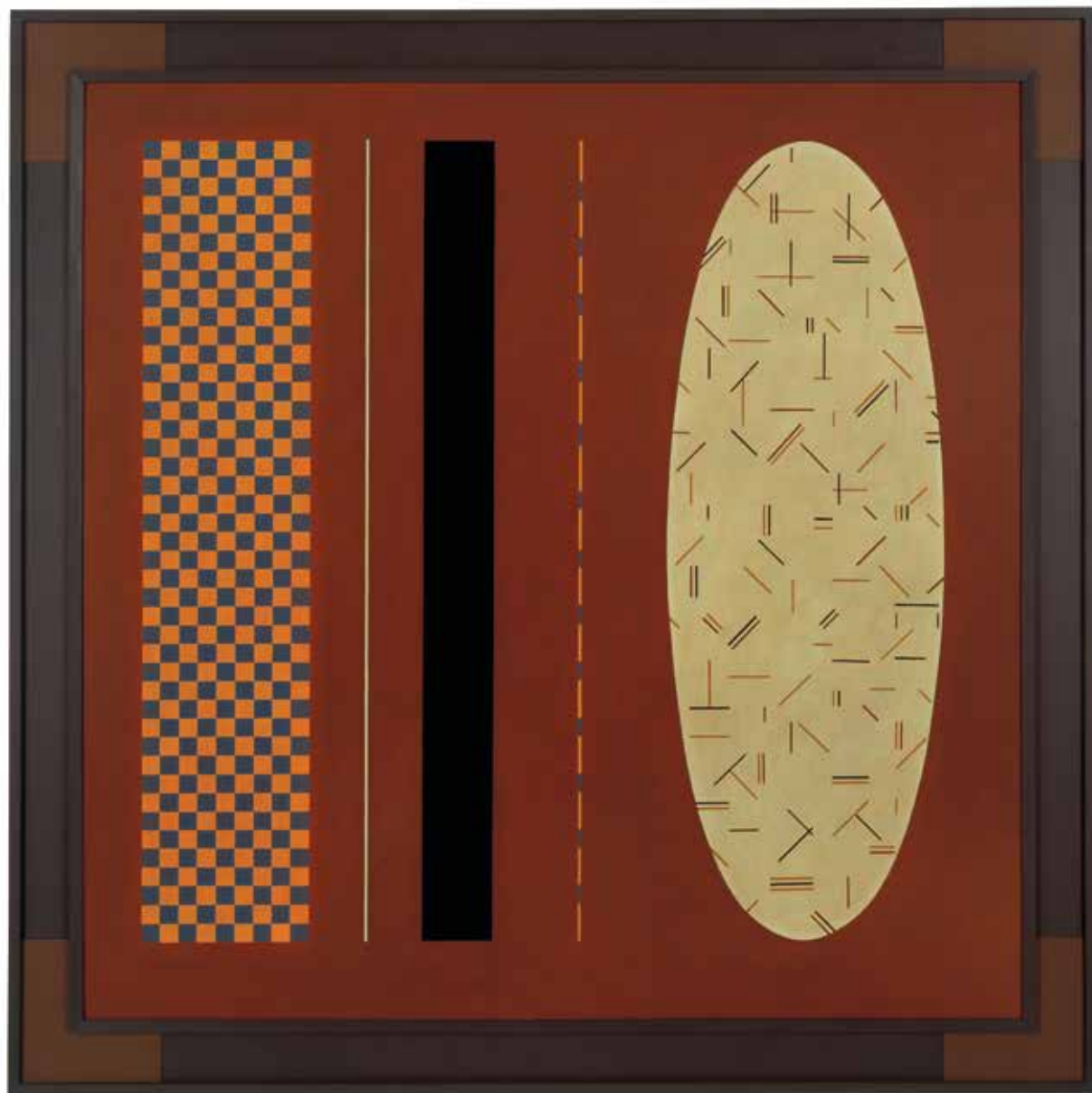
Untitled Yellow Painting Number 3 1989 acrylic on canvas 163 x 194 cm



Yellow Painting Number 5 1989-90 acrylic on canvas 60 x 122 cm



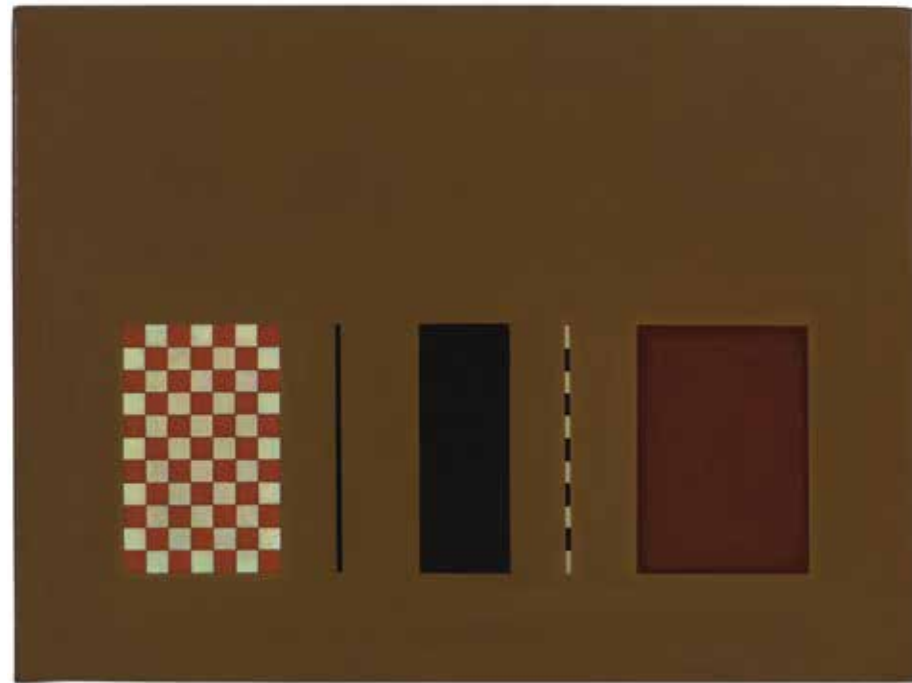
Untitled Grey Painting Number 7 1990 acrylic on canvas 73 x 73 cm



Red Painting Number 5 1991 acrylic on canvas 151 x 151 cm



Grey Painting Number 4 1991-92 oil on canvas 30 x 30 cm



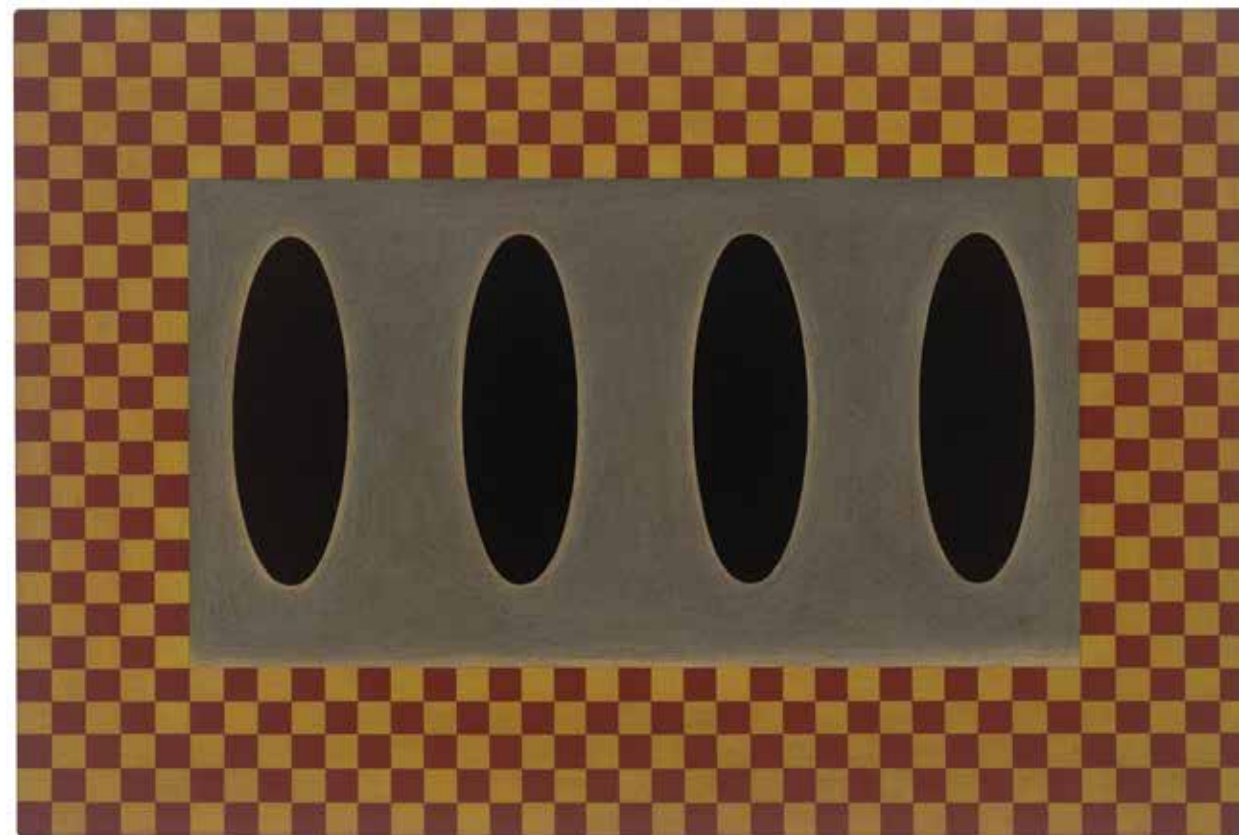
*Yellow Painting Number 12** 1994 acrylic on canvas 30.5 x 40.5 cm



Grey Painting Number 48 1994-95 acrylic on canvas 51 x 51 cm



Yellow Painting Number 12 1995 acrylic on canvas 30 x 30 cm



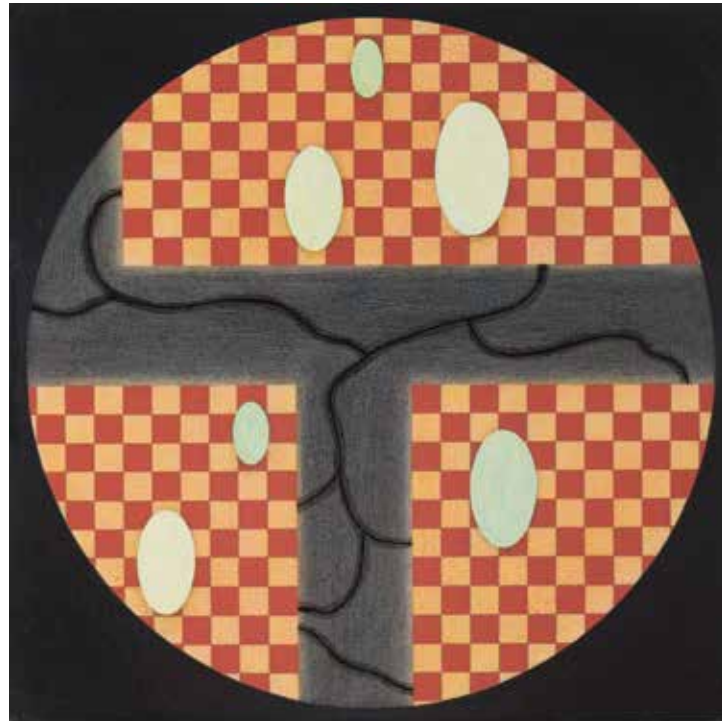
Grey Painting Number 79 1995 acrylic on canvas 40.5 x 61 cm



Chippendale studio, Sydney, 2018



Blue Painting Number 10 1995-96 acrylic on canvas 51 x 51 cm



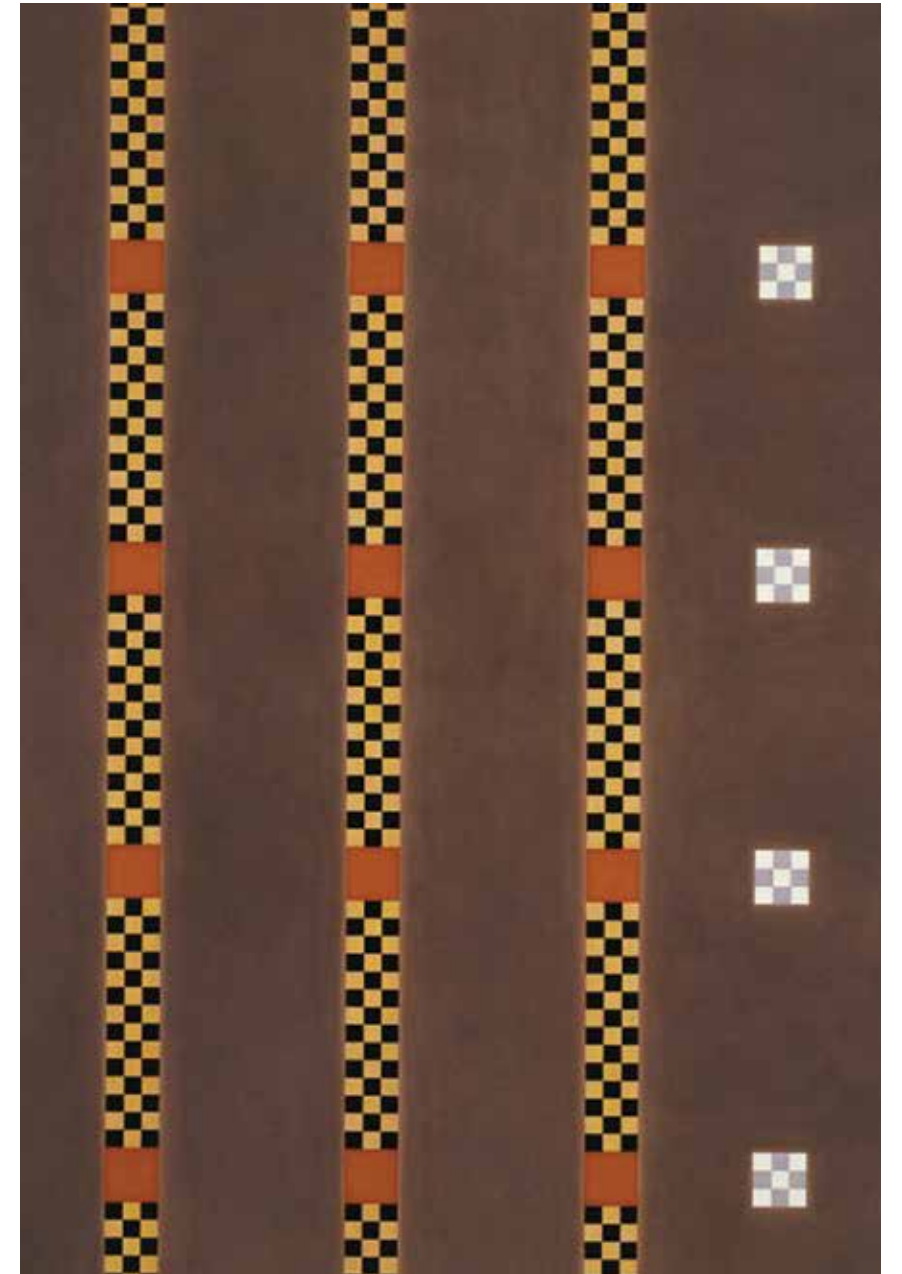
Grey Painting Number 81 1997 acrylic on canvas 30.5 x 30.5 cm



Madonna in the Fields I 2000 acrylic on canvas 61 x 61 cm



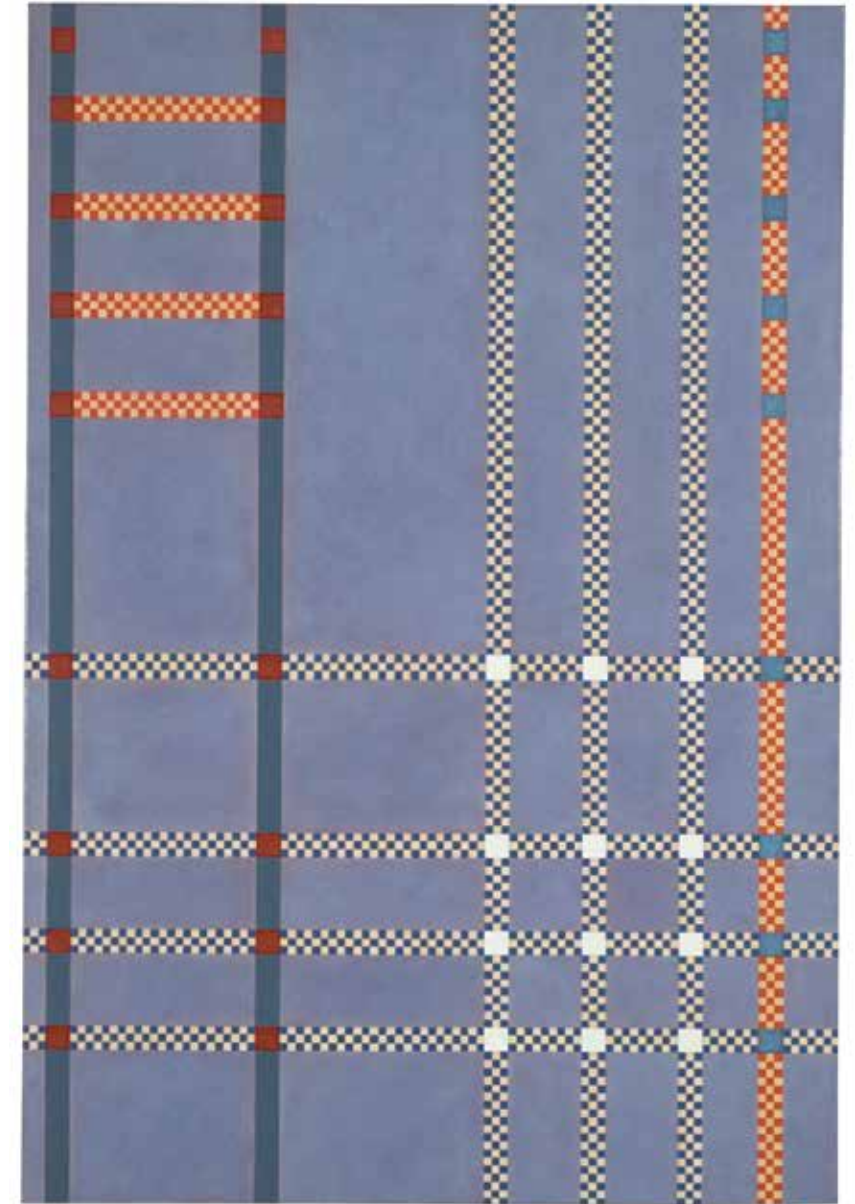
Crimson Angels 2000 acrylic on canvas 61 x 61 cm



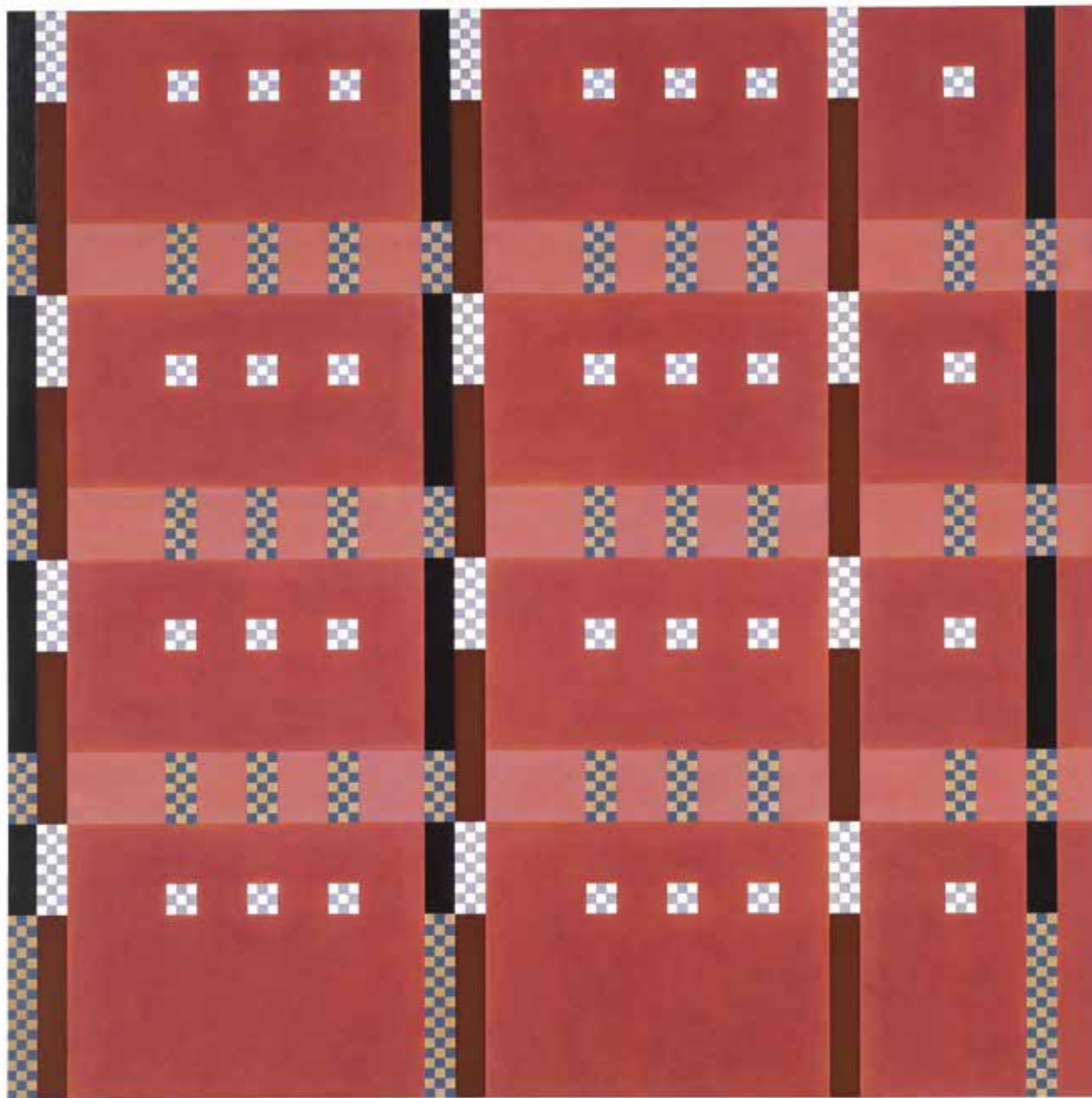
Nubia 2001 acrylic on canvas 152 x 102 cm



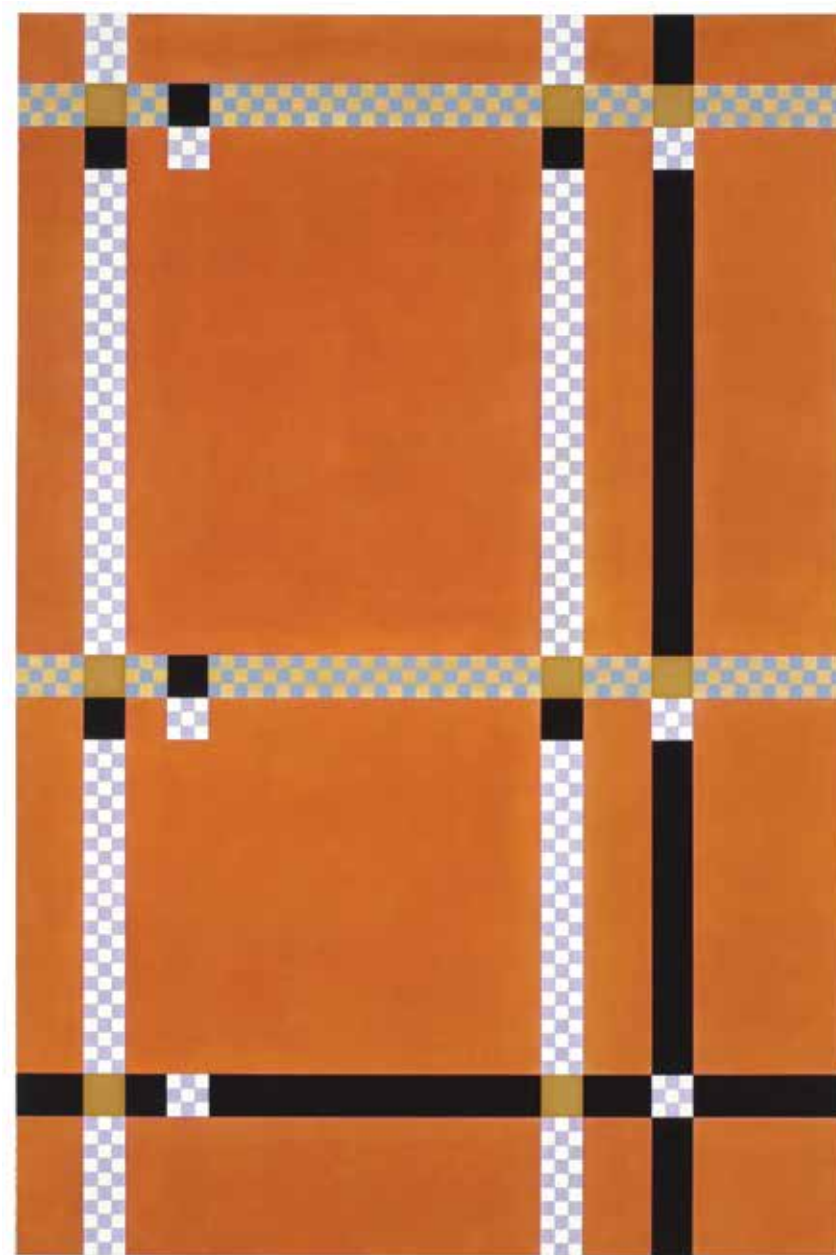
Dark Continent 2003 acrylic on canvas 112 x 76 cm



Patriot 2003 acrylic on canvas 112 x 76 cm



Splendour II 2002-03 acrylic on canvas 183 x 183 cm



Terracotta 2003 acrylic on canvas 152 x 101.5 cm

Andrew Christofides

Andrew Christofides was born in 1946 in Cyprus and migrated to Australia with his family in 1951.

After studying Economics from 1968-1971 at the University of New South Wales, he travelled to Cyprus and then to the United Kingdom, where he lived from 1974-1982.

In London, he studied Fine Art at the Byam Shaw School of Drawing and Painting (1974-1975) and Chelsea School of Art (1975-1978). Whilst at Chelsea, he was awarded a Rome Scholarship and a studio residency at the British School in Rome for 1978-1979 and the Picker Fellowship in Painting at Kingston Polytechnic in London for 1979-1980.

Since then, he has lectured in painting and drawing at numerous colleges of art in the United Kingdom and Australia, and was Head of Drawing at The College of Fine Arts, Sydney, from 2003-2012.

He has had thirty-four solo exhibitions in New York, London, Rome, Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne and Adelaide.

Since 1978, he has been included in over 140 group exhibitions throughout Australia and overseas, including numerous museum and institutional exhibitions.

He is represented in public, institutional, corporate and private collections in Australia and overseas.

He currently lives and works in Sydney, Australia.

Full CV available at:
www.kingstreetgallery.com.au
andrewchristofides.com



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