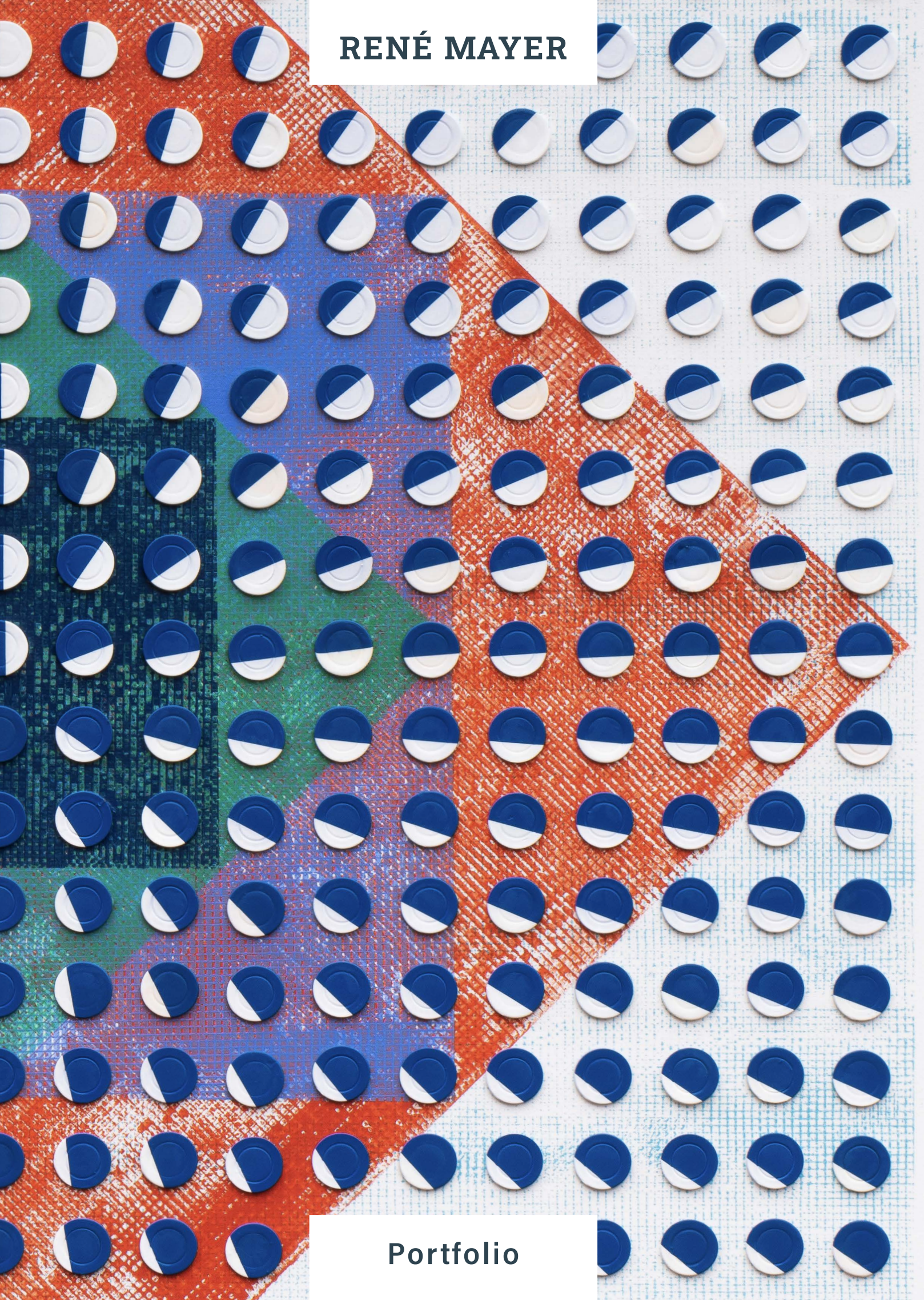
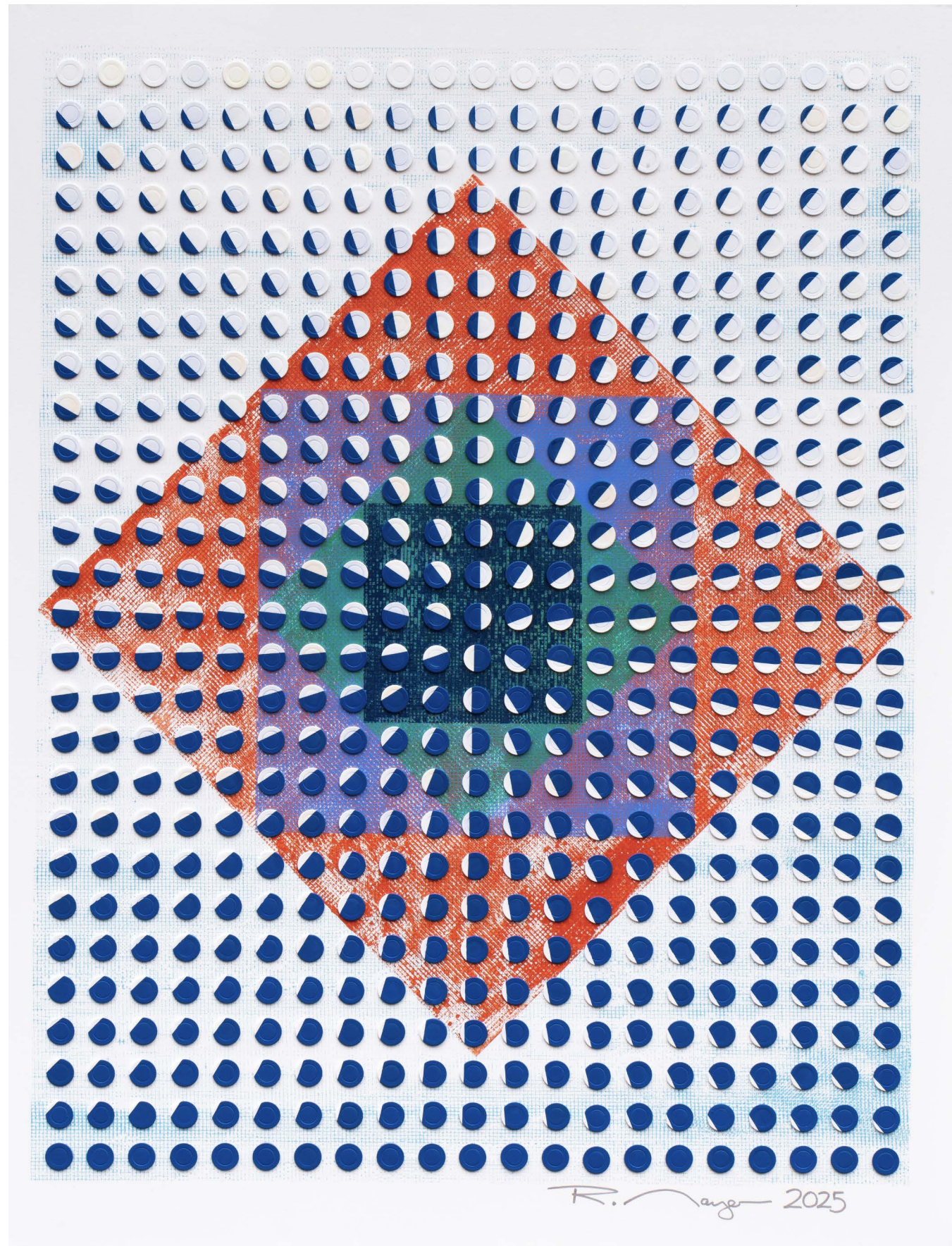


RENÉ MAYER



Portfolio



René Mayer «In my heart I am a craftsman»

René Mayer (b. 1947, Basel) is a Swiss multidisciplinary artist whose works spans over five decades and reflects a lifelong investigation into how people see, feel and relate to the world around them. Trained at the School of Arts and Crafts in Basel, his approach draws from Bauhaus principles, particularly the teachings of Johannes Itten and Josef Albers, merging technical precision with intuitive exploration through material, color and form. Recent bodies of work consider environmental fragility, the psychology of looking, and the body as both symbol and subject. Mayer lives and works between Bubbio, Italy and Basel, Switzerland.

RENÉ MAYER
Captured, 2025
Acrylic and painted casino chips on canvas
180 x 140 cm
CHF 7'000 + VAT

Revealing the image

In the *Imperceptible Shift* series, René Mayer works within a strictly defined system: each casino chip occupies a fixed position in an unchanging grid, while color alone is allowed to shift and evolve across the surface. Custom-made wooden guides ensure this precise order. The canvas is first painted without the chips, which are then individually colored according to a pre-established plan and placed using the guides. Until the very end, the final image remains hidden. Only when the guides are removed – as shown in this photograph – does the painting appear for the first time, revealing itself simultaneously to the viewer and to the artist.

René Mayer in his studio in Bubbio, Italy, removing the casino-chip template, revealing the painting in its completed form for the first time.



Imperceptible Shift by Luca Beatrice, Art Critic and President of the Quadriennale di Roma

Abstract art today maintains ties with the twentieth-century tradition while simultaneously incorporating new elements. If the image in painting speaks an explicit language and immediately engages with reality, abstraction – though operating through signs and symbols – certainly does not renounce meaning, instead pursuing it along a more demanding and, in some respects, more compelling path. One need only visit *Foreigners Everywhere*, the exhibition that lends its title to the Venice Biennale curated by Adriano Pedrosa: abstract painting remains central to the research of artists from many parts of the world, many from the so-called Global South, and in their works chromatic texture, sign-based or gestural interventions also reflect issues at the edges of social and political analysis.

While acknowledging the centrality of the second phase of abstraction, beginning in 1950 with the founding of the New York School, if we were to stop there – as often happens—and focus only on its direct heirs, we would struggle to understand the profound transformations that have carried abstraction into the present. A truly fundamental text for decoding the contemporary condition is Pepe Karmel's *Abstract Art: A Global History*, published in Italy by Einaudi in 2021. Karmel's thesis overturns the critical perspective on abstract painting by starting precisely from globalization. Abstraction is not merely an art form quintessentially American, but a phenomenon that extends everywhere, introducing alongside the individual (indeed individualistic) perspective of the painter a social dimension. It is no longer only about the spiritual elevation of abstraction, but also about current themes such as “the utopian rationality of technocracy, the euphoria of postcolonial independence, the turmoil of globalization, and the horror of military dictatorships.”

Is it therefore sufficient to situate abstract art within reality in order to place it in our own time? Only up to a point. As the artist and historian Roberto Floreani writes in his essay *Abstraction as Resistance* (De Piante, 2021), “contemporary abstraction” may appear withdrawn, often silent, introspective, at times subterranean, while still offering, even today, constant and credible evidence in every corner of the

world, rich in a continuity that is fully aware of the historical weight of its origins. Abstraction advances, according to tradition, through small, considered yet inexorable steps, marked by research most often nourished by illuminating texts. With good reason, one can therefore state that abstraction today enjoys a selective continuity and a constant credibility within the contemporary context.

René Mayer's work thus fully enters the debate on the relevance of abstract painting today. The Swiss artist's twenty-year research, having passed through the repeated image – therefore not excluding a pop matrix – has arrived at compelling solutions, particularly in his most recent body of work gathered in the exhibition *Imperceptible Shift*. The title itself is deliberately ambiguous, since in Italian the adjective *furtivo* does not only refer to something stolen, which is clearly not the case here, but also means “something done or occurring secretly and rapidly, so as to prevent others from noticing.” Mayer is, in effect, inviting us to observe his works very closely: from one passage to the next the difference is minimal, but if we let our gaze move across the sequence and reach the end, the mutation will have become evident – and so will its effect. Something has happened, and we did not notice it.

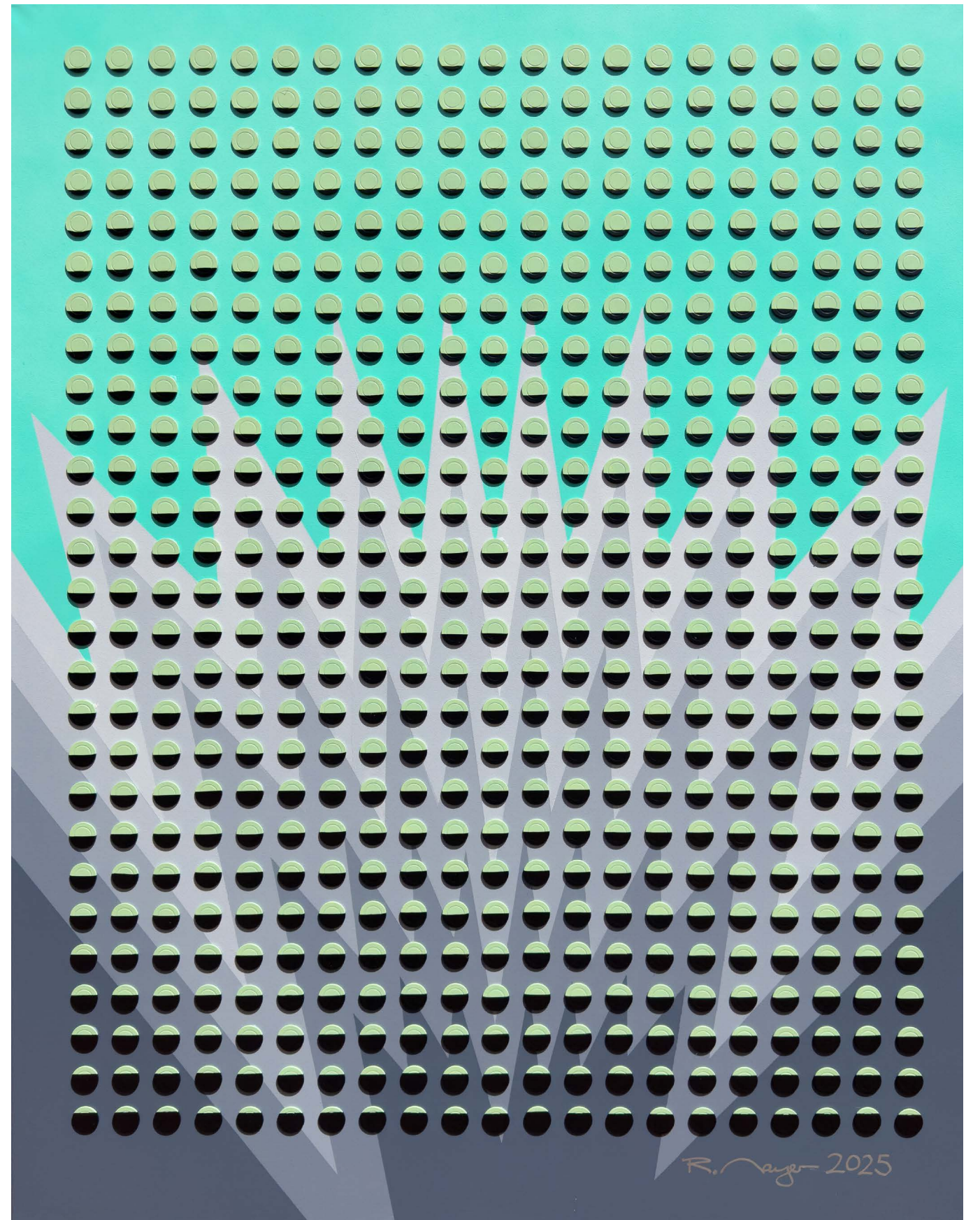
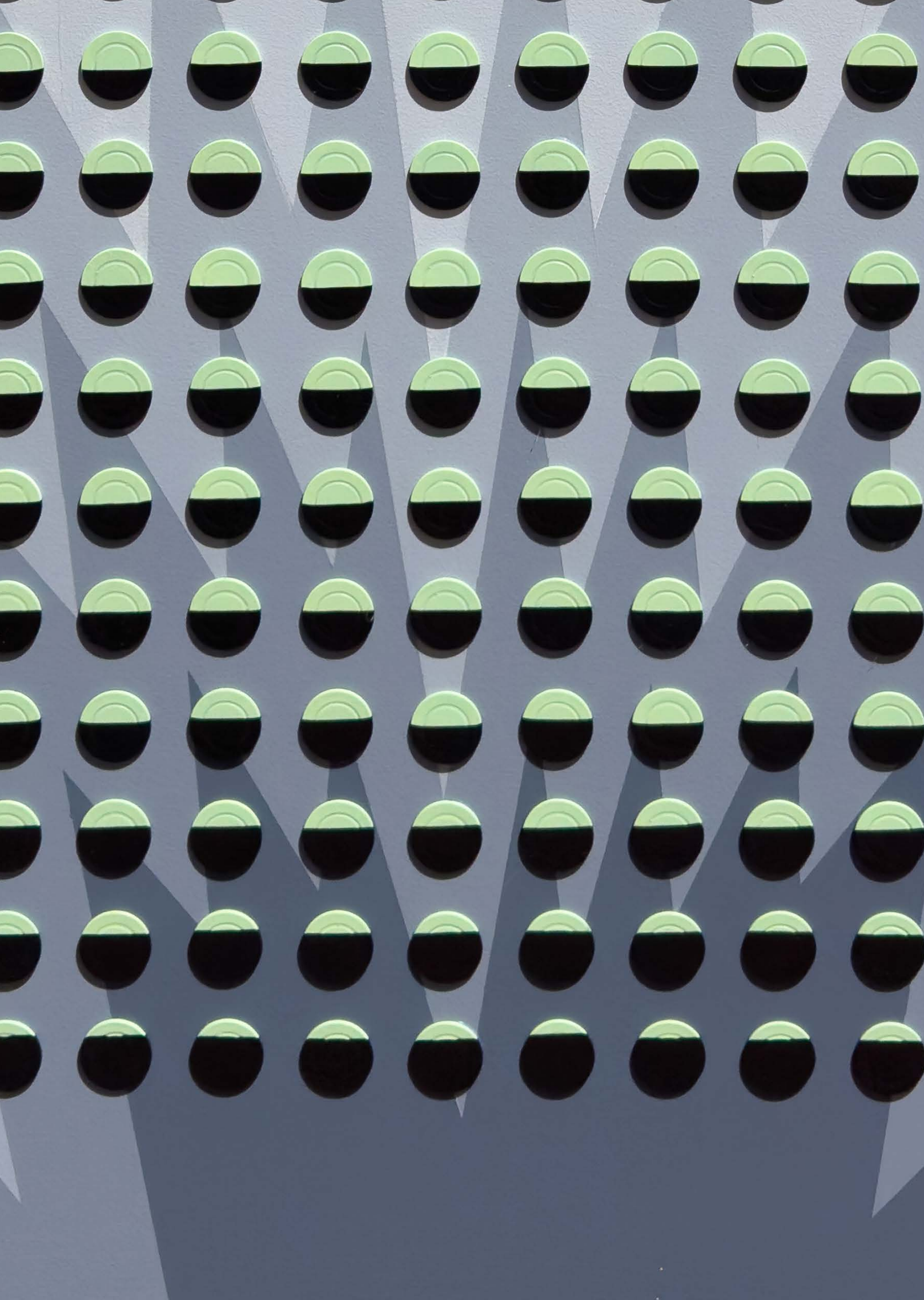
Mayer constructs his paintings with artisanal precision, in an exercise of solitary concentration immersed in the remarkable landscape of the Langhe area near Asti, in southern Piedmont, where he retreats especially during the warmer months. He seeks a form of productive self-sufficiency that allows him a direct, one-to-one relationship with the work, built layer after layer, step after step. He prepares the wooden stretcher, stretches the canvas, and mixes the paint – operations the artist defines as purely artisanal, “almost sensual.” He places the support horizontally and uses acrylic mixed with powdered pigments to achieve the desired effect.

In the *Imperceptible Shift* series in particular, Mayer introduces a single real object in large quantities, repeated in serial form: identical round shapes, plastic casino chips used in place of money. The choice is clearly connected to

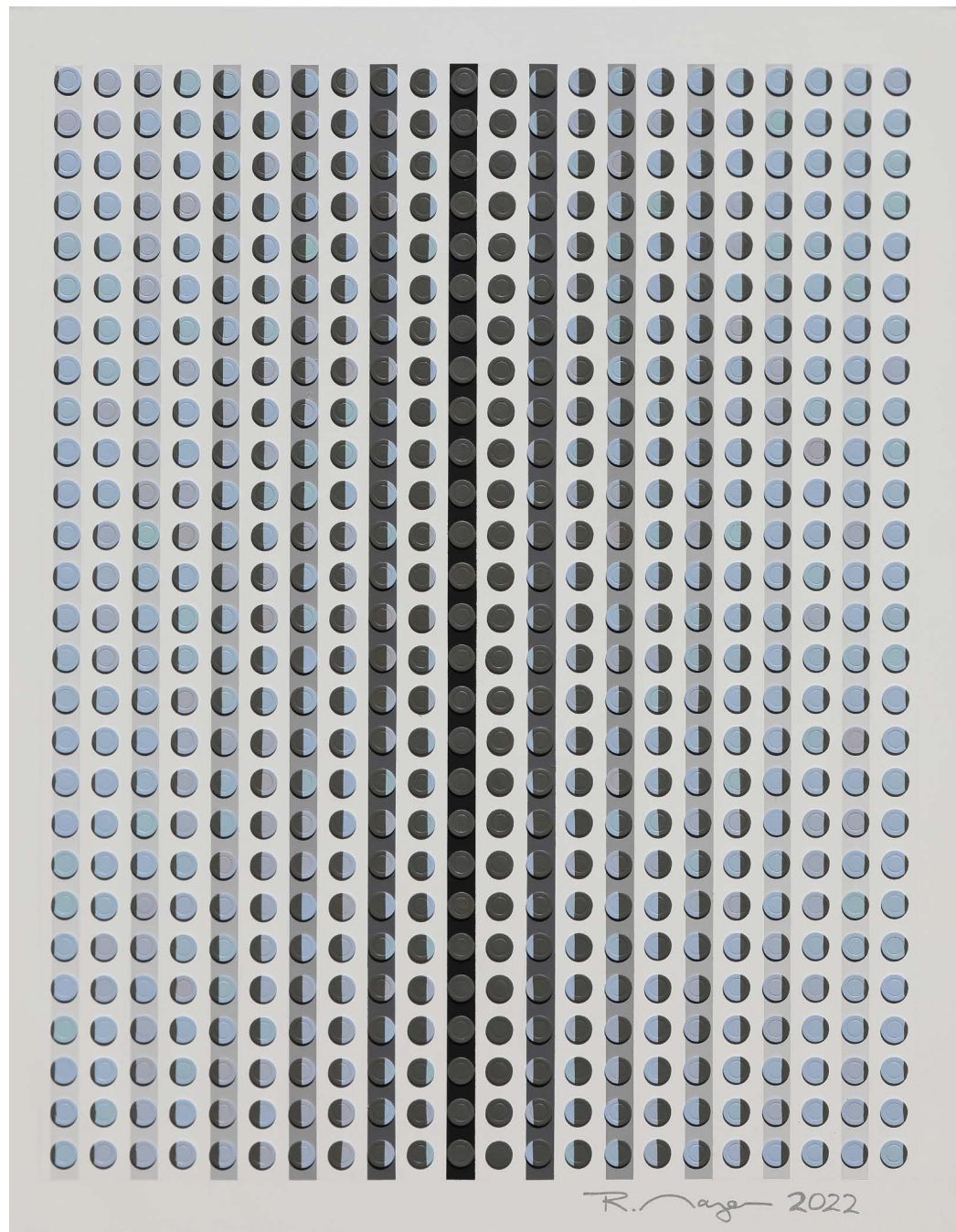
gambling, where the player entrusts themselves to chance and fate, beyond the dominion of logic and reason. One can win, one can lose, but in the long run the house inevitably prevails. For René Mayer, the house is reality itself – nature. As he has stated, “the tokens symbolize the irresponsibility of our civilization. We gamble with the Earth as if it were a casino, but in this game we are the losers.” The effects of loss and disaster are not immediately perceptible to the naked eye because, precisely, the mutations are imperceptible and we are not accustomed to noticing them in the moment. On the contrary, we tend to minimize them. Yet when we stop to reflect, something has already been set in motion, and returning to the previous order becomes difficult. In casino terms, one might say, “les jeux sont faits.”

At first glance, Mayer's work appears to be purely abstract painting. Yet, as Karmel emphasized in the aforementioned essay, contemporary art needs to intervene in a broader debate, on par with other, more explicit forms such as figuration, installation, or photography. Above all, Mayer places environmental issues at the center of his reflection, comparing the imperceptible shifts of his work to those small, everyday behaviors to which we pay little attention and which, when lined up like chips, reveal themselves as contributing causes of numerous, avoidable disasters. His work thus calls us to personal responsibility. Without resorting to grand declarations or proclamations, Mayer presents a luminous, colorful, and pleasing universe; his paintings satisfy those in search of strong painting. That might be enough – but it is not. Beneath the surface (and not so far beneath), he invites us to remain vigilant and to adopt ethical conduct. This is the commitment of his painting: the reflection of an experienced and mature artist who once again returns to the question of the sublime in nature – the idea of beauty that always conceals a threat, even if this time it requires close attention to perceive it. There is no need for a storm or a tidal wave; a sequence of small, colorful gaming chips is enough to make us suspect that we could, indeed, do better than this.

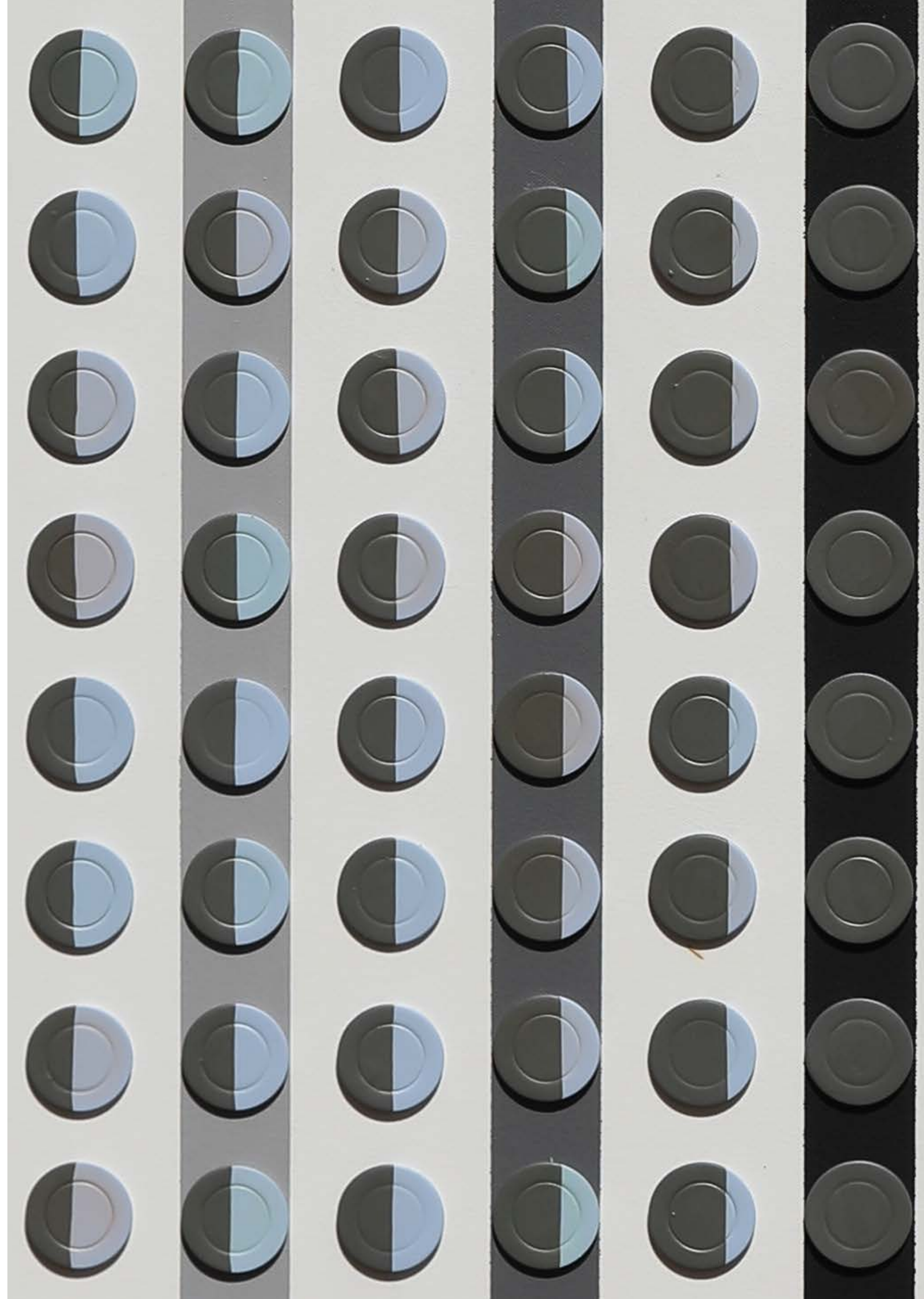
Recent works of the series
Imperceptible Shift

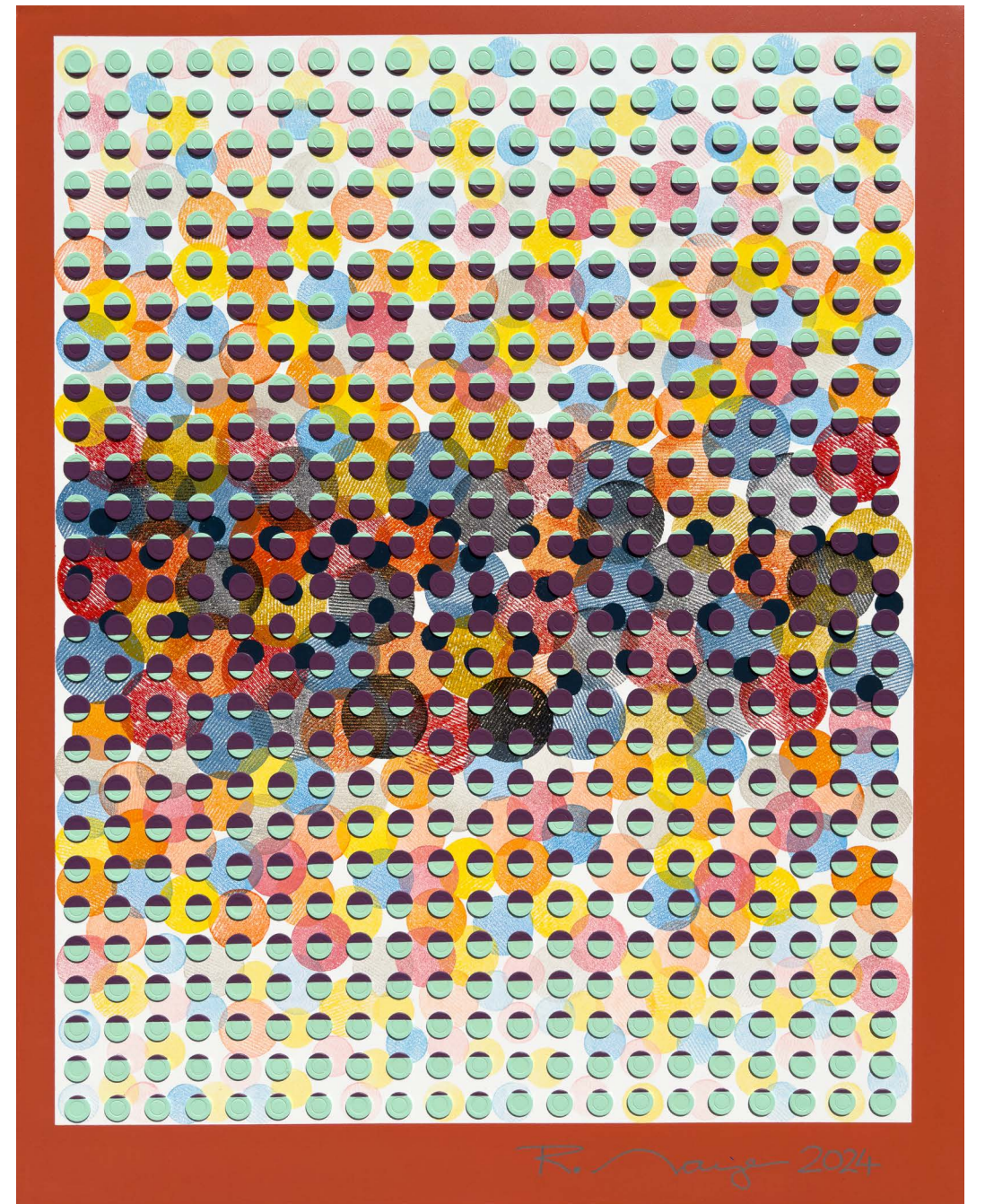
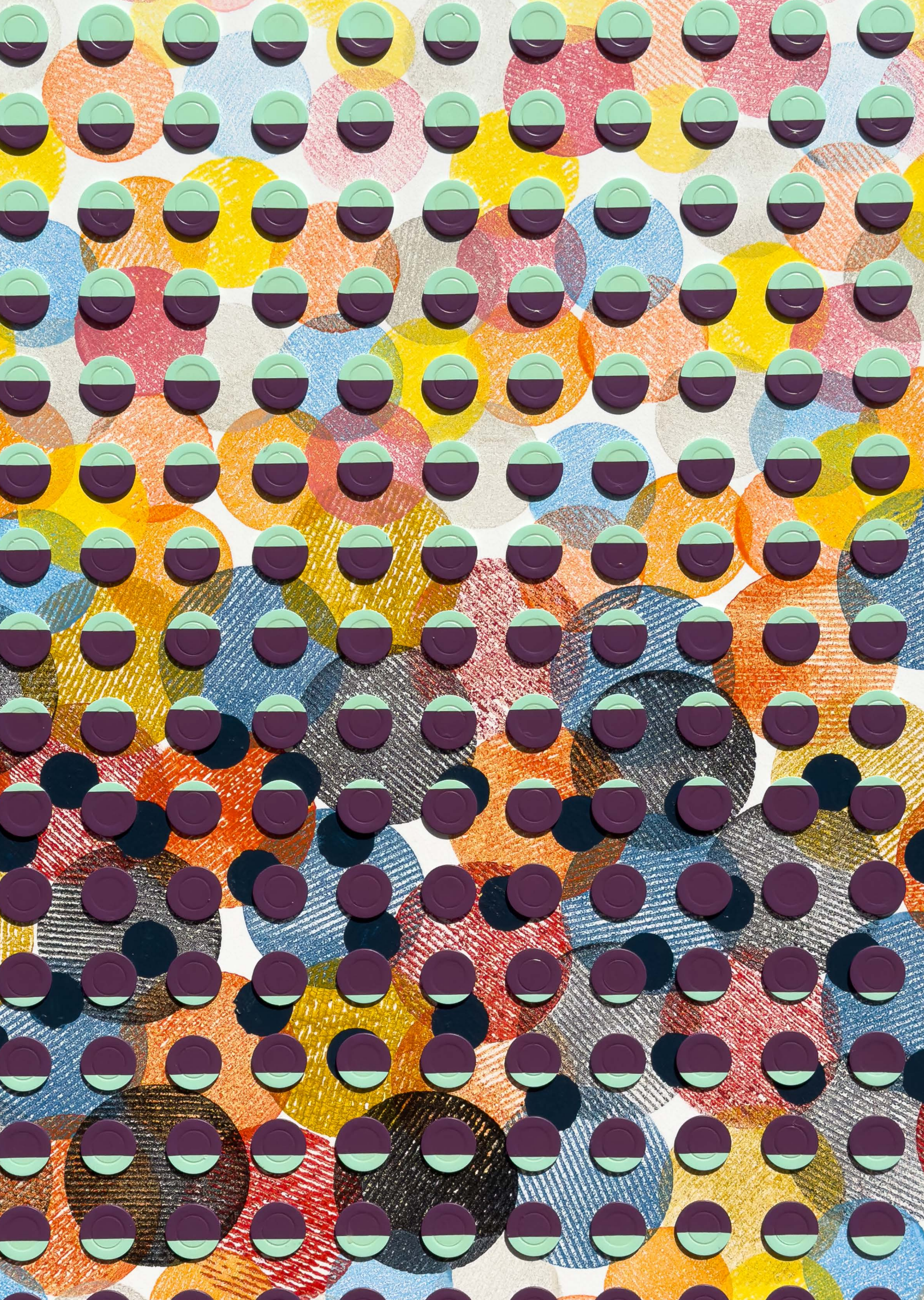


RENÉ MAYER
Crying Water, 2025
Acrylic and painted casino chips on canvas
180 x 140 cm
CHF 7'000 + VAT

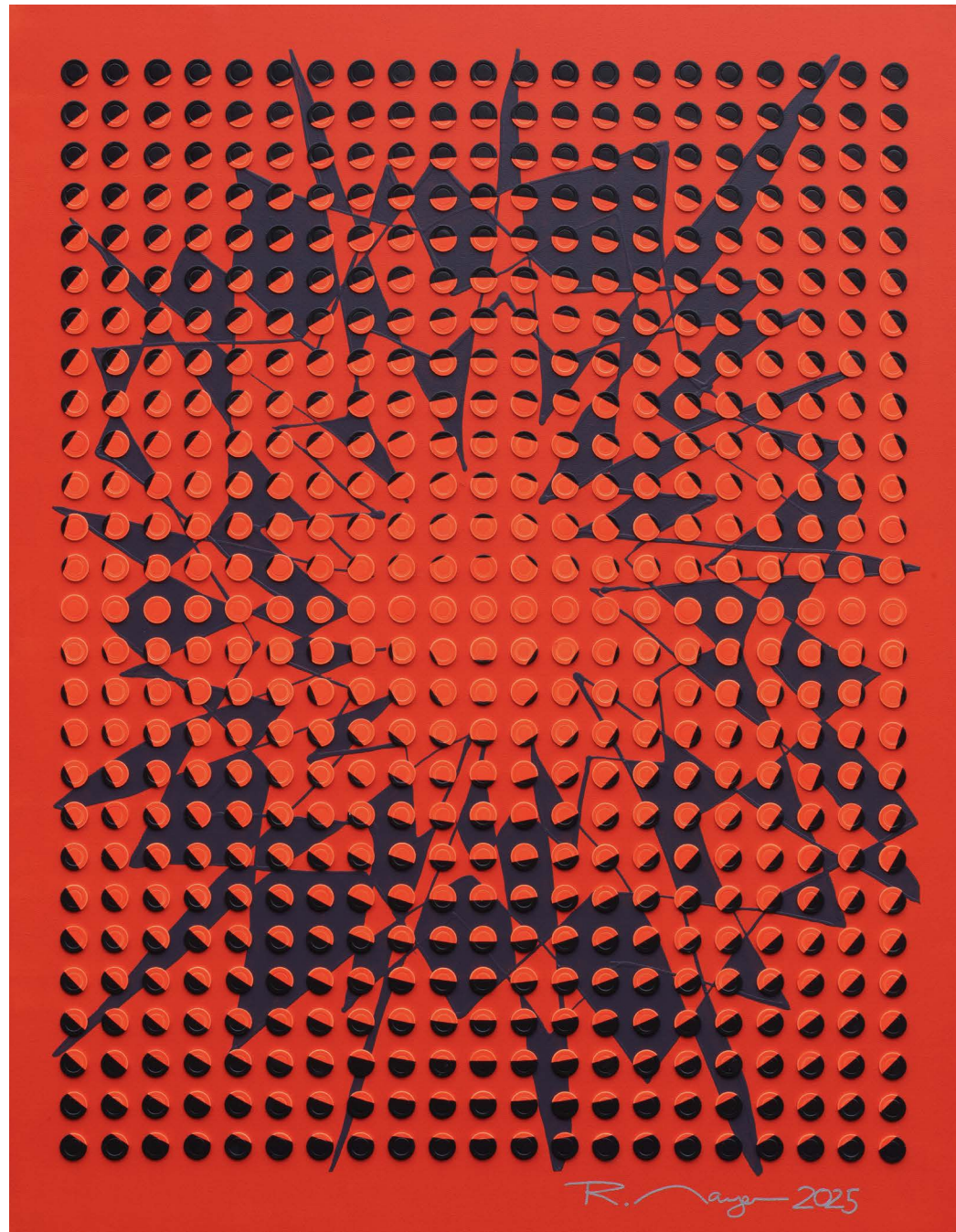


RENÉ MAYER
Abandoned, 2022
Acrylic and painted casino chips on canvas
180 x 140 cm
CHF 7'000 + VAT

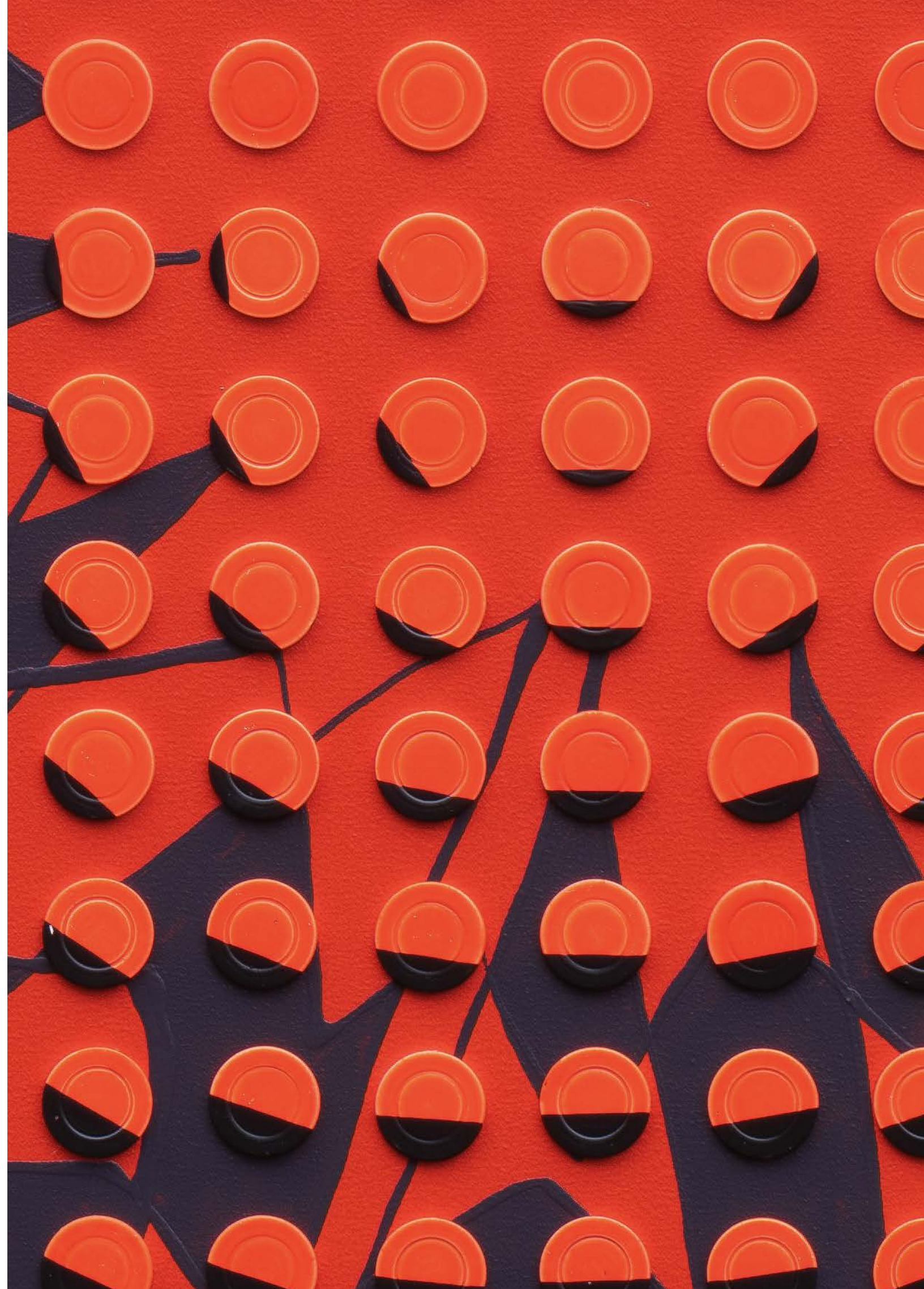


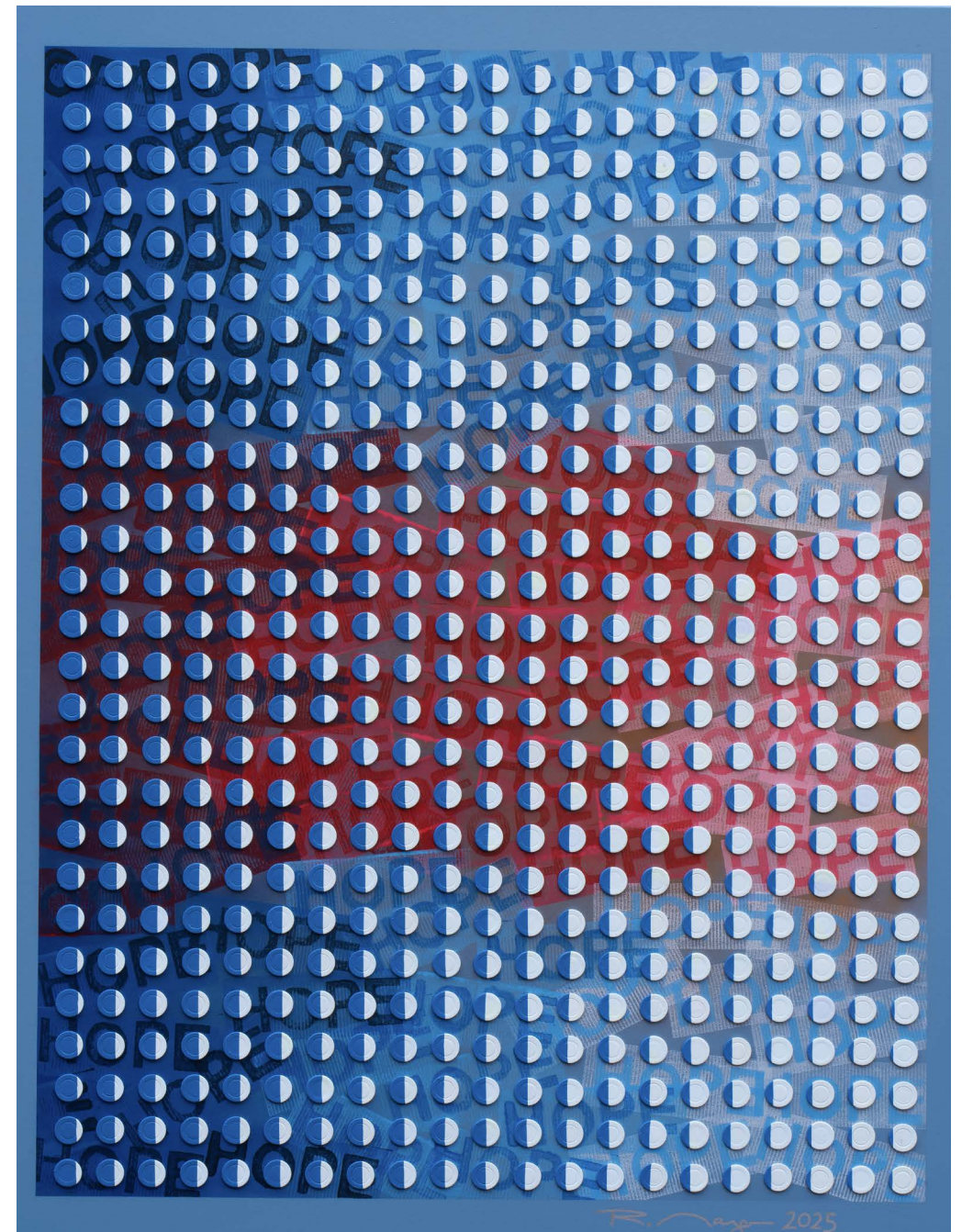
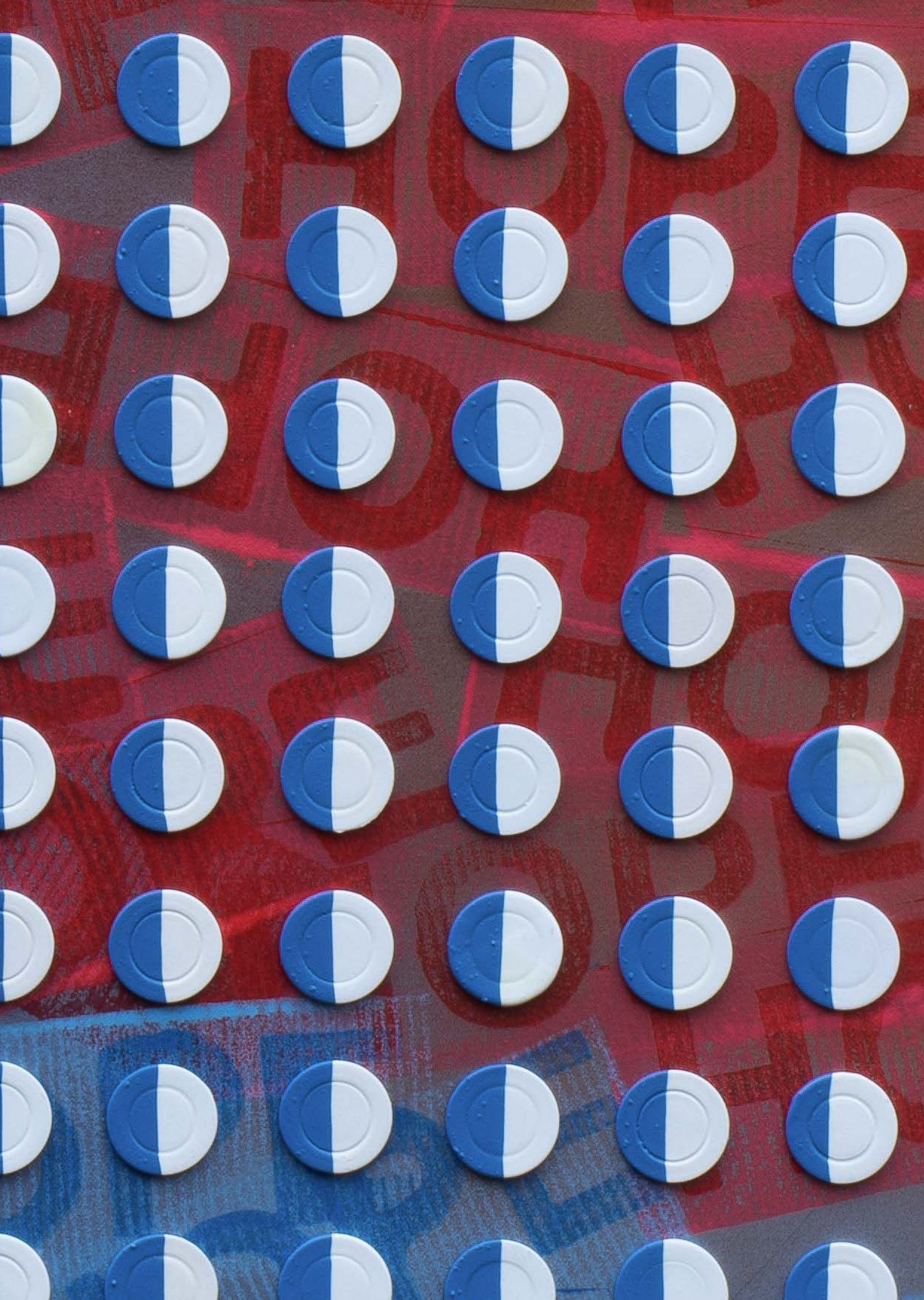


RENÉ MAYER
Melting Bubbles, 2024
Acrylic and painted casino chips on canvas
180 x 140 cm
CHF 7'000 + VAT

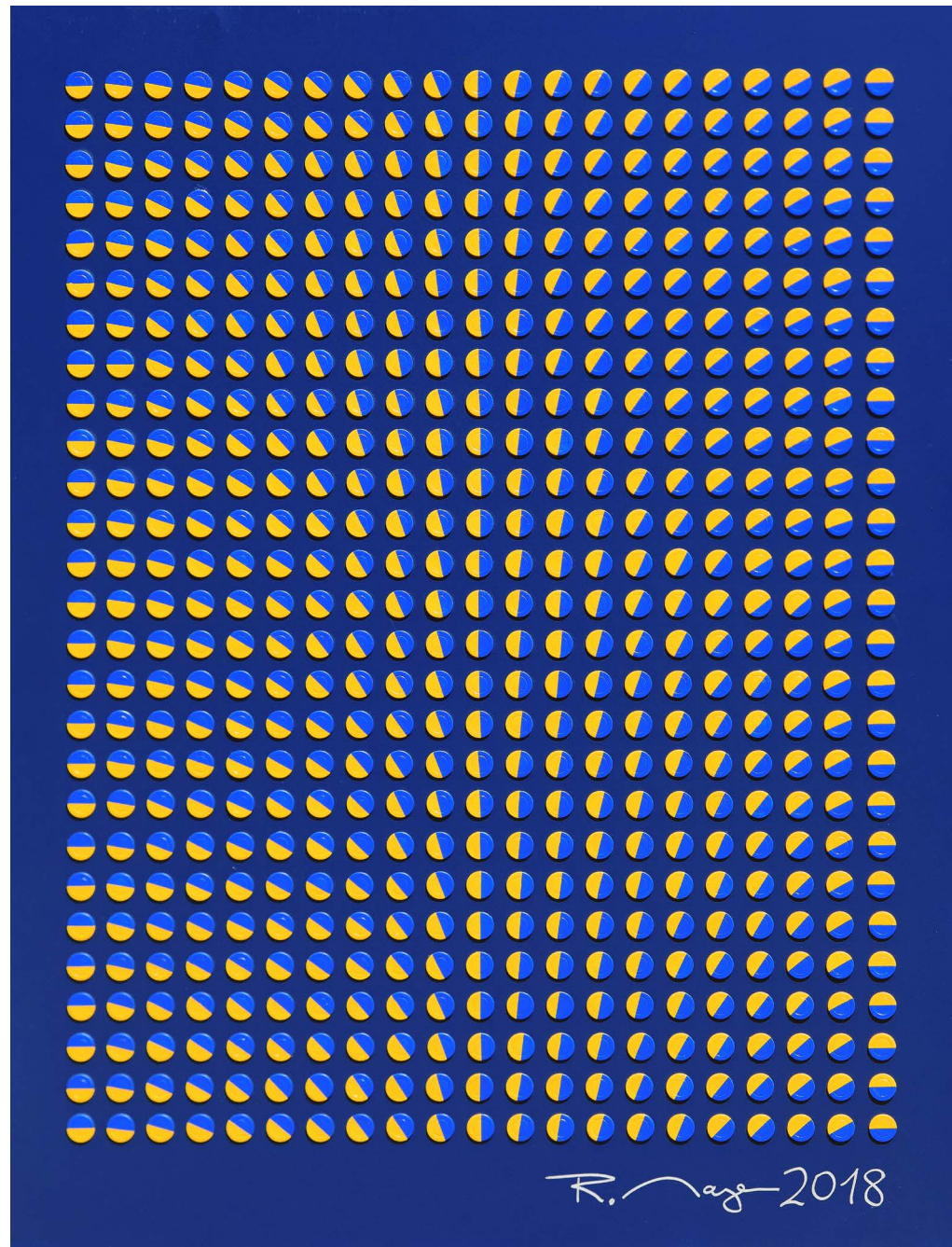


RENÉ MAYER
Eccentric, 2025
Acrylic and painted casino chips on canvas
180 x 140 cm
CHF 7'000 + VAT

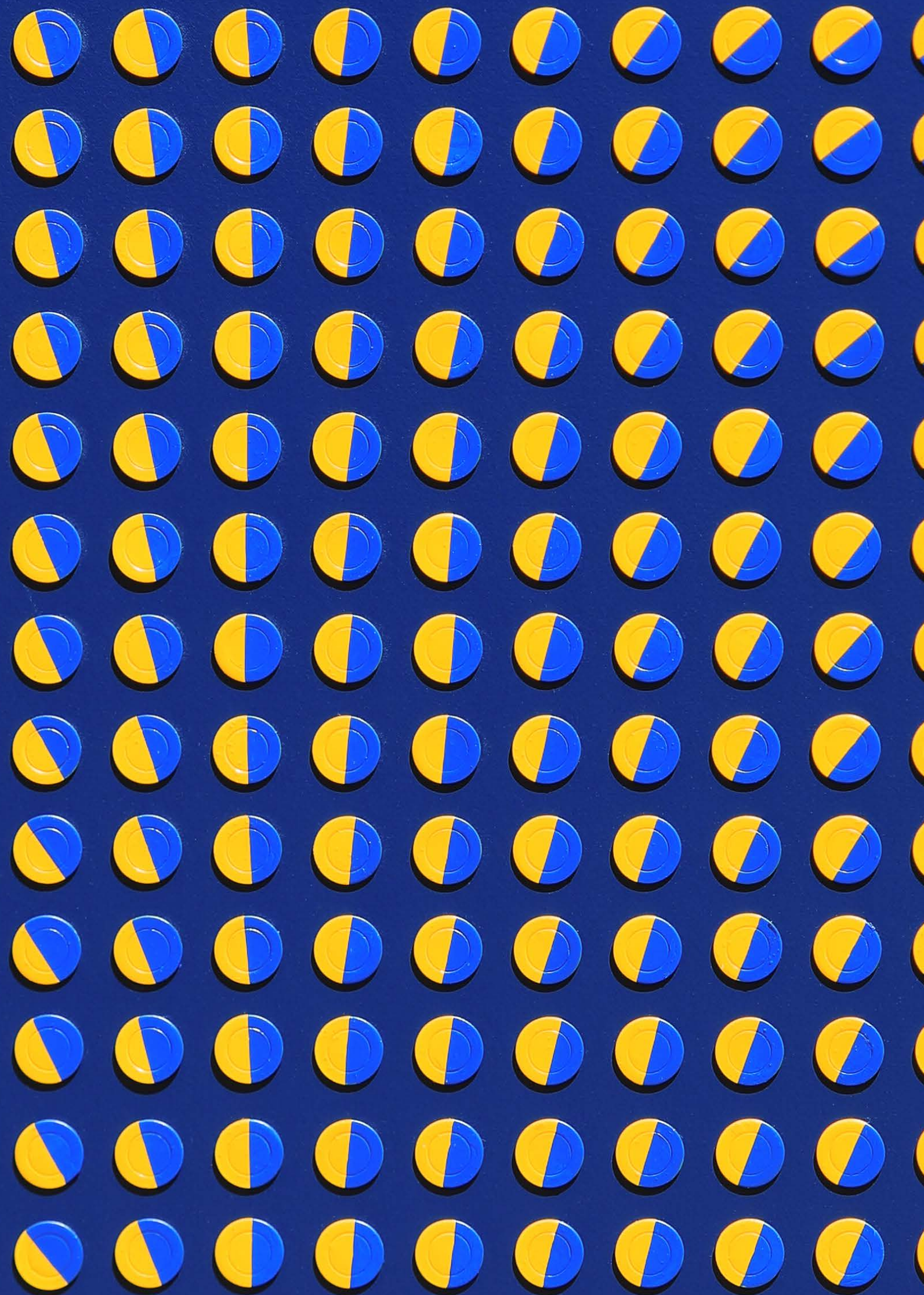


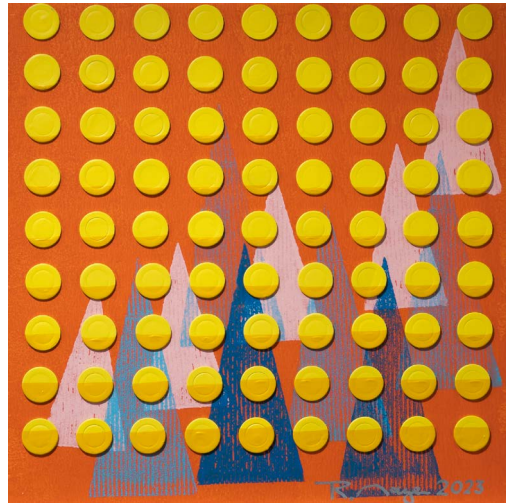


RENÉ MAYER
Waiting, 2025
Acrylic and painted casino chips on canvas
180 x 140 cm
CHF 7'000 + VAT

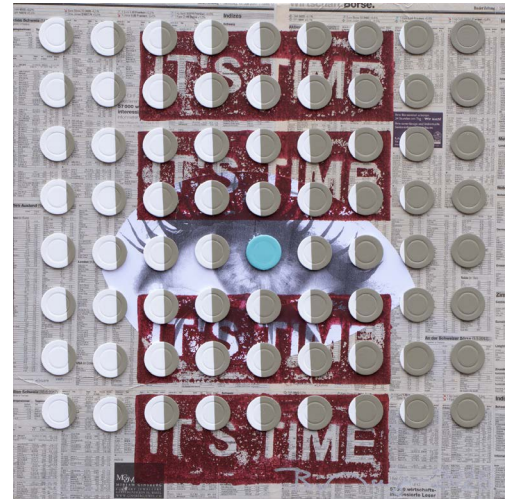


RENÉ MAYER
Starry sky, 2018
Acrylic and painted casino chips on canvas
180 x 140 cm
CHF 7'000 + VAT





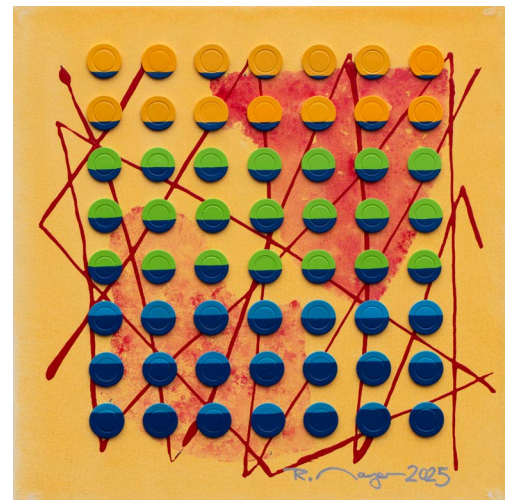
RENÉ MAYER
The little forest no. 2, 2023
Acrylic and painted casino chips on canvas
56 x 56 cm
CHF 1'800 + VAT



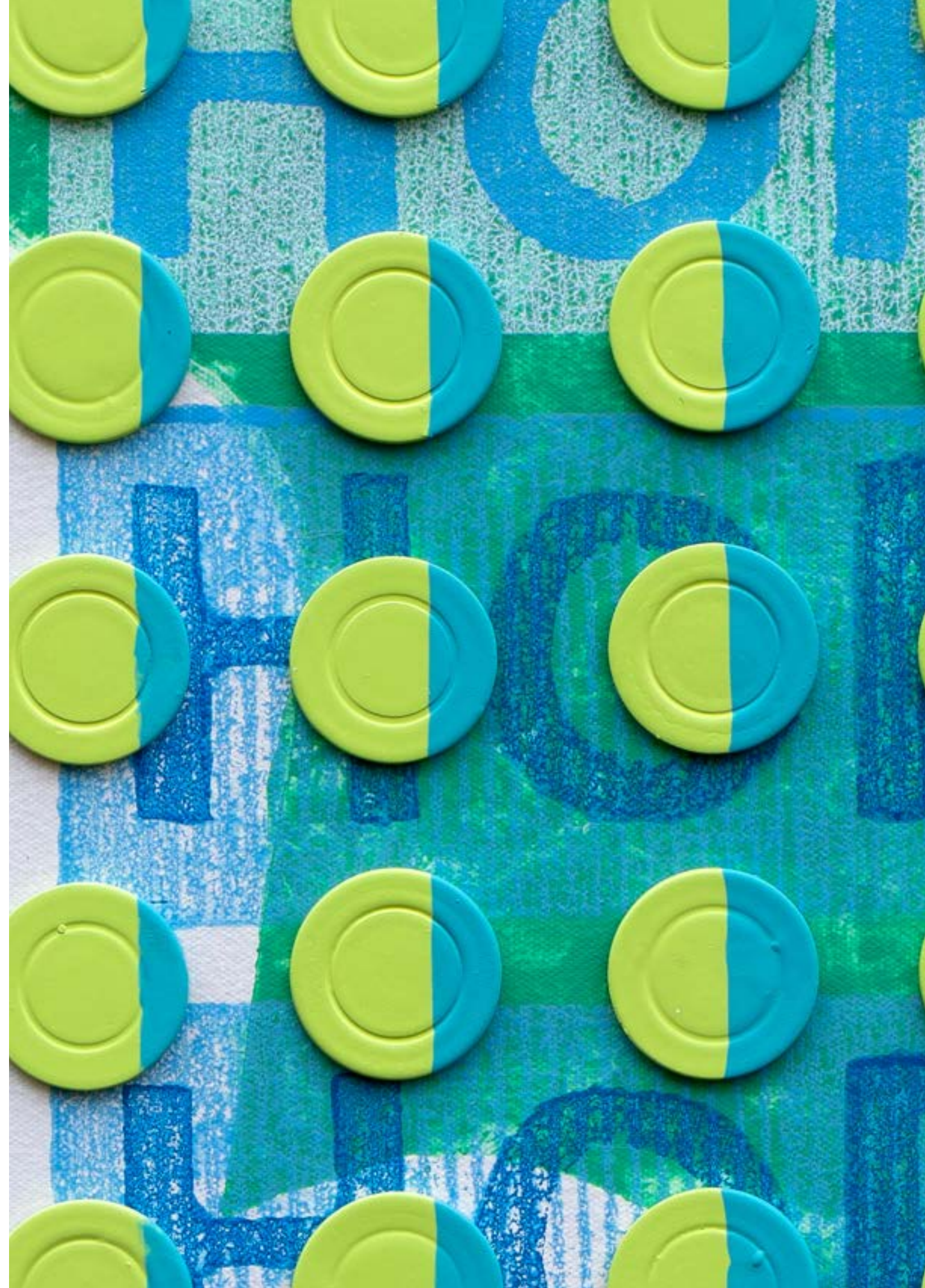
RENÉ MAYER
In Sight, 2025
Acrylic and painted casino chips on canvas
56 x 56 cm
CHF 1'800 + VAT

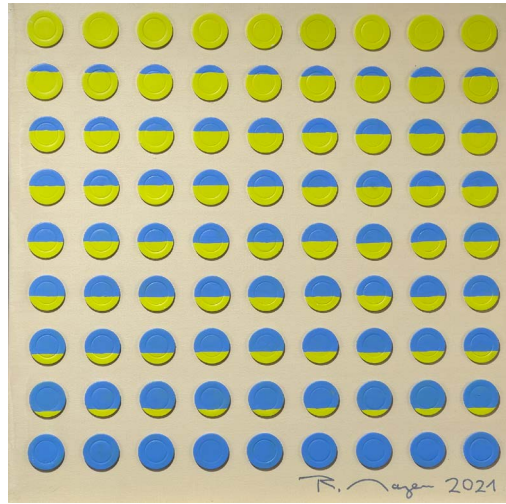


RENÉ MAYER
Hope, 2025
Acrylic and painted casino chips on canvas
56 x 56 cm
CHF 1'800 + VAT

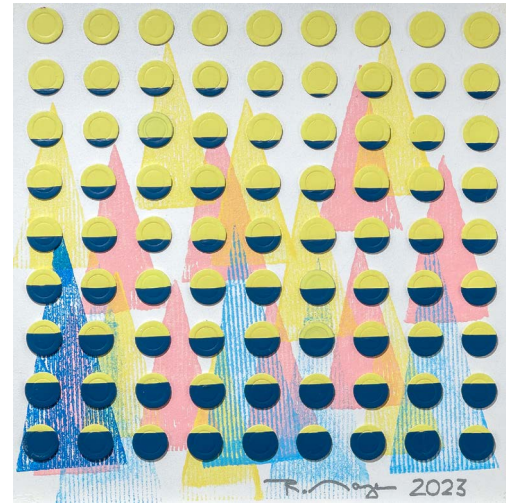


RENÉ MAYER
Connections, 2025
Acrylic and painted casino chips on canvas
56 x 56 cm
CHF 1'800 + VAT

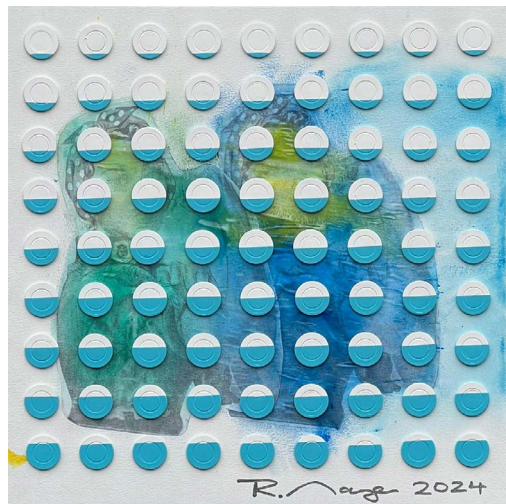




RENÉ MAYER
The rebirth, 2021
Acrylic and painted casino chips on canvas
56 x 56 cm
CHF 1'800 + VAT



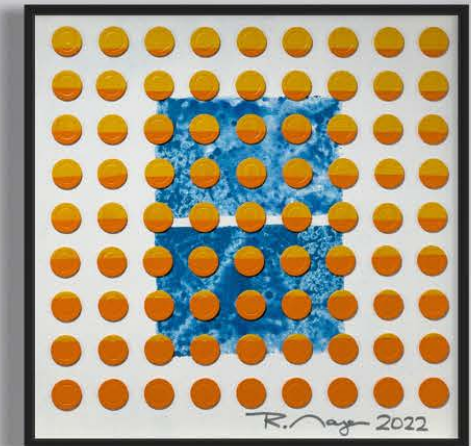
RENÉ MAYER
The little forest no. 1, 2023
Acrylic and painted casino chips on canvas
56 x 56 cm
CHF 1'800 + VAT



RENÉ MAYER
Light Reflections, 2023
Acrylic and painted casino chips on canvas
56 x 56 cm
CHF 1'800 + VAT



RENÉ MAYER
It's time, 2025
Acrylic and painted casino chips on canvas
56 x 56 cm
CHF 1'800 + VAT



Sandpaper

**Selected Works of the series
*Sandpaper***

We are pleased to present for the first time *Sandpaper*, a powerful series by René Mayer, which he began in 2012 and will be premiering at Art International Zurich 2026 this May.

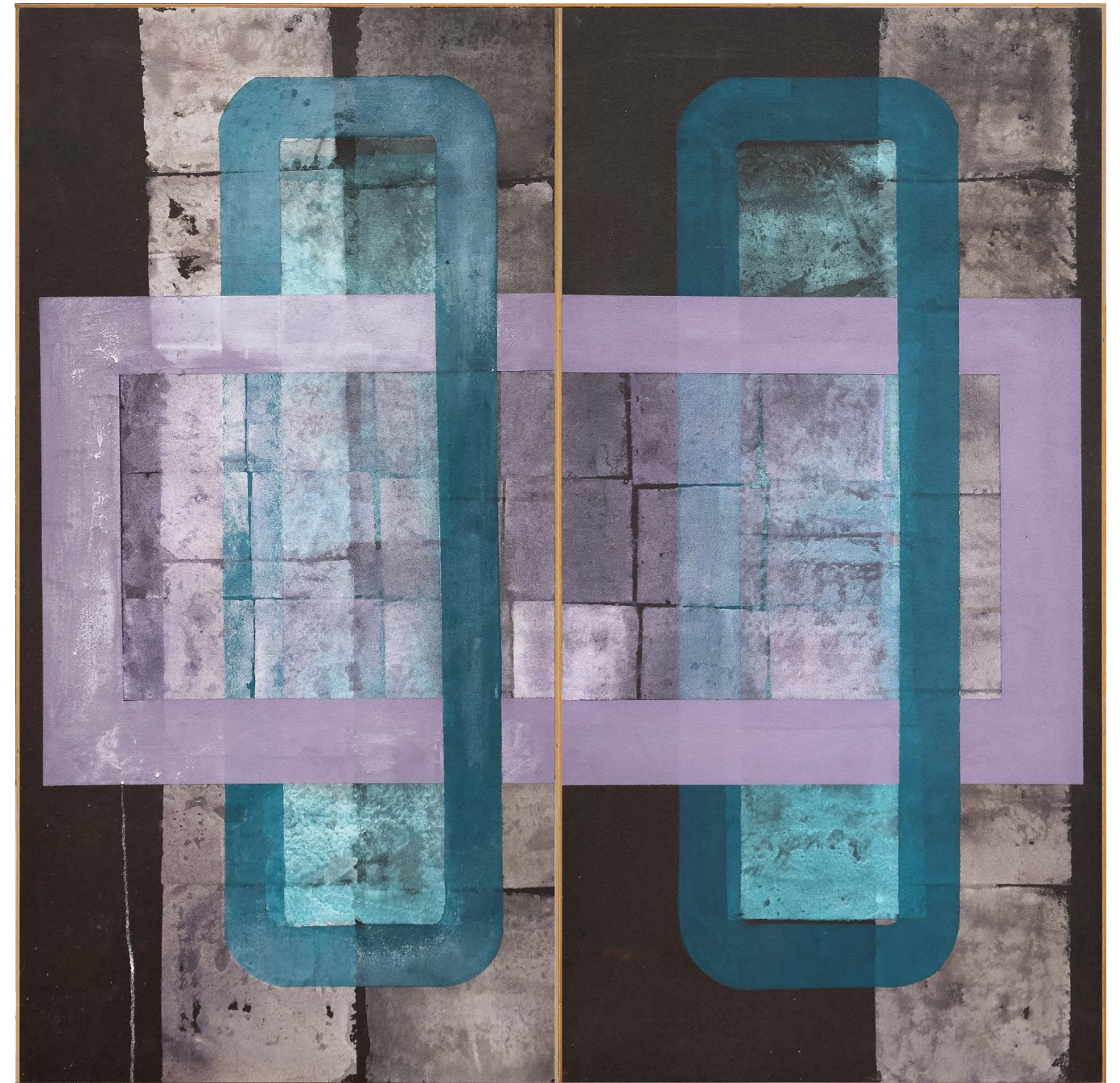
Rooted in the passage of time and in what it leaves behind, this body of work reflects on surfaces that carry the memory of everything they have absorbed, much like human skin, which ages, scars, and marks with every passing year. The works read like a visual diary of experience, and a meditation on the resilience of the human body.

The choice of material came to Mayer from this reflection on time and wear. During a visit to an wood-processing facility, he was fascinated by the massive sanding machines used to smooth timber on an industrial scale, equipped with wide abrasive belts that move endlessly through cycles of friction and erosion. He couldn't help but ask himself the question: what happens when one paints on sandpaper?

This curiosity led to a series of experiments that quickly revealed the particular nature of the medium. *Sandpaper* absorbs acrylic paint in an unusual way. The first layers sink into the surface and nearly disappear, as if swallowed by the grain itself. In order for color to persist, Mayer had to return to it again and again, applying multiple layers until the image slowly began to hold. He then decided to mount the wide abrasive bands onto wooden panels and make them the support for each composition. As with many of his works, painting becomes a process of repetition, accumulation, and patience. The surface never fully gives in. The grain remains visible, resisting complete coverage, forcing the image to negotiate its presence rather than to impose itself.

Mayer deliberately works with used sanding belts rather than new ones. These surfaces already carry traces of labor, friction, and time. Scratched, worn, uneven, the grain remains visible, asserting itself beneath the paint.

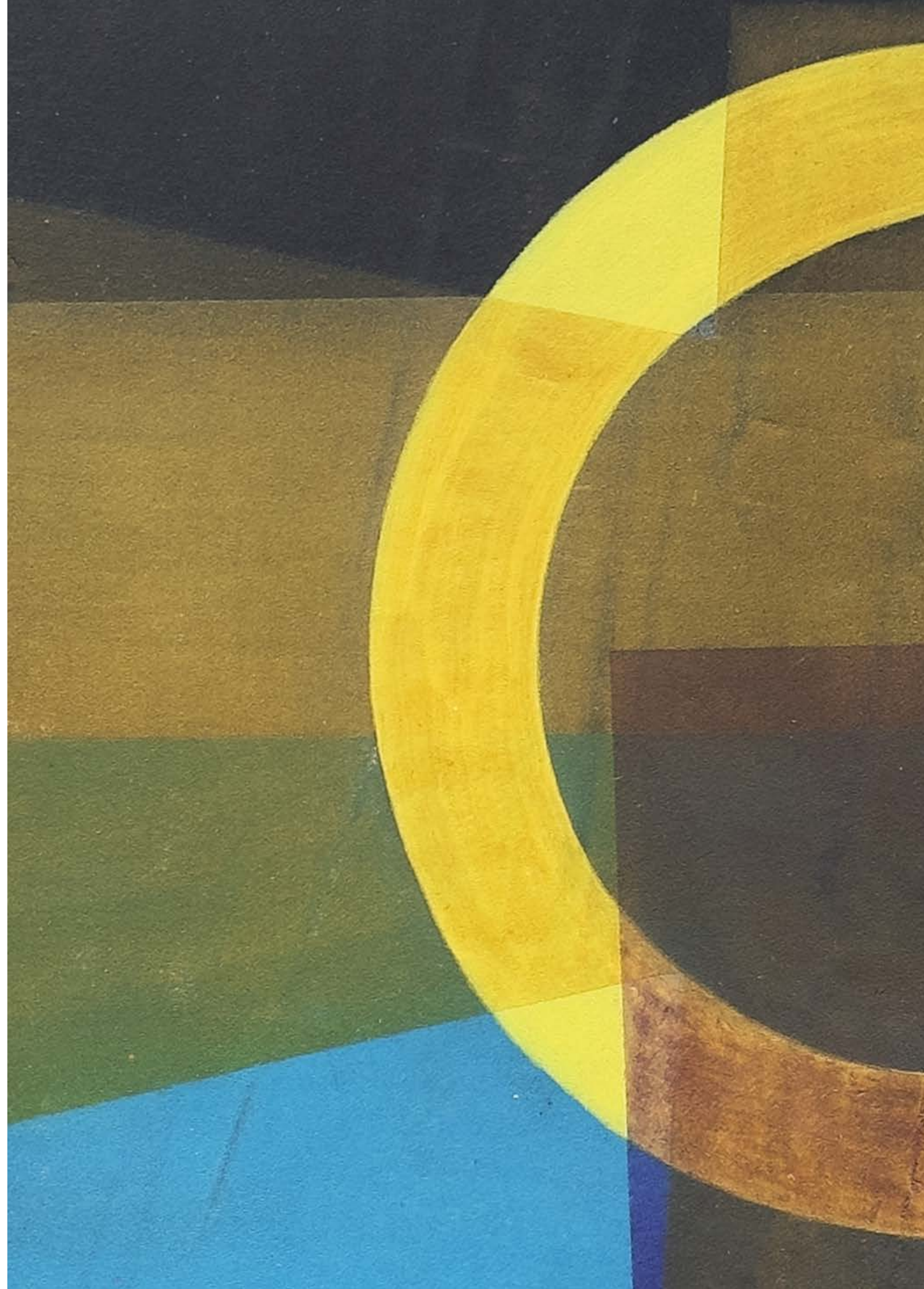
At its core, *Sandpaper* reflects themes that run throughout Mayer's practice: time, transformation, and the many layers of human experience. Each work becomes a kind of visual diary of what has been lived. Surface, here, is understood as something rough, unique and often abrasive, yet it is precisely these imperfections that give rise to beauty. What Mayer reveals is a celebration of endurance through the act of making art on material that has been worn but not erased, and of the dignity found in the visible traces of a life lived.

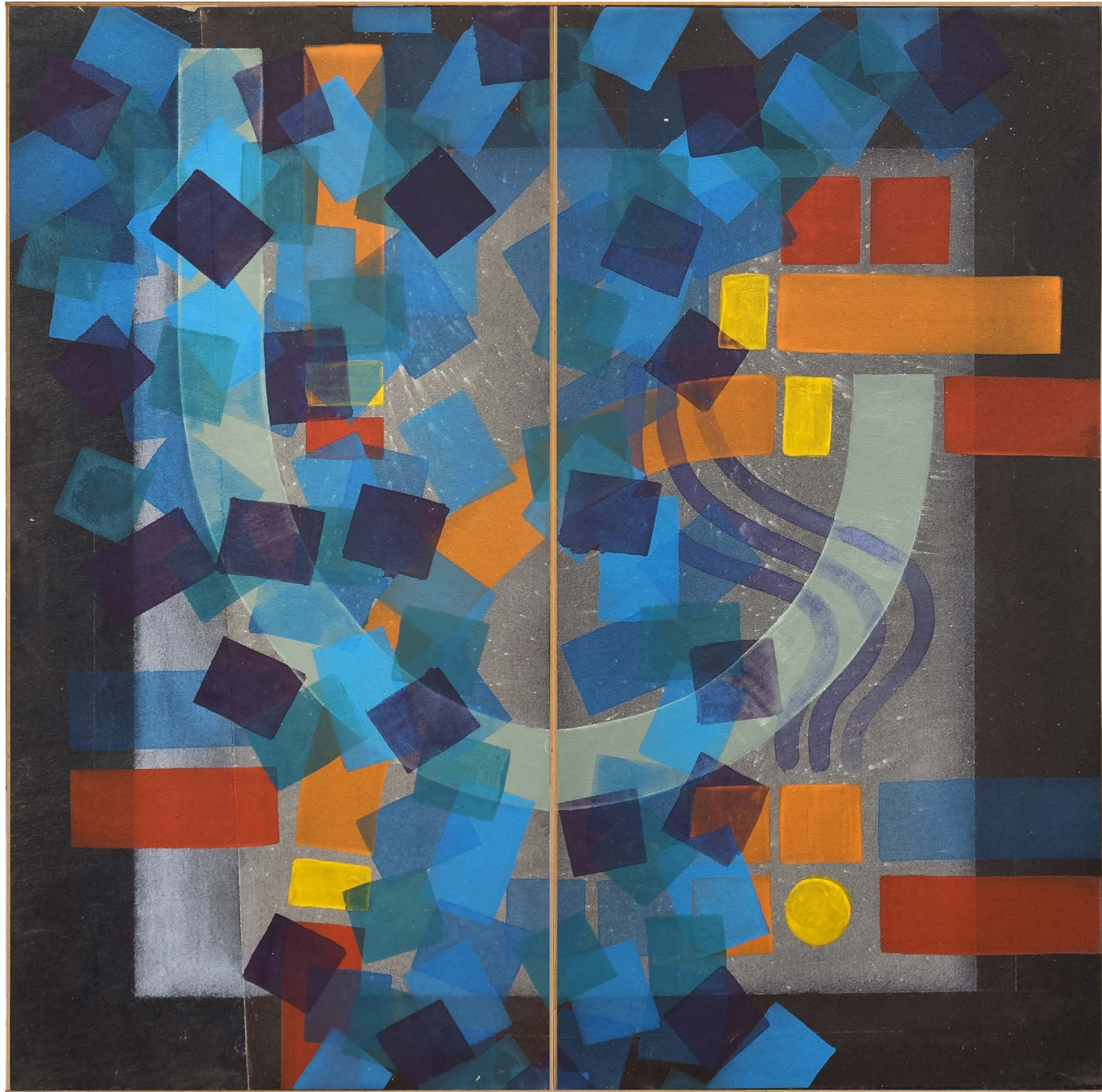


RENÉ MAYER
Teamwork, 2012
Acrylic on sandpaper mounted on wood board
180 x 180 cm
CHF 9'000 + VAT



RENÉ MAYER
High Circle, 2012
Acrylic on sandpaper mounted on wood board
180 x 180 cm
CHF 9'000 + VAT





RENÉ MAYER
Long Road, 2012
Acrylic on sandpaper mounted on wood board
180 x 180 cm
CHF 9'000 + VAT



Viva Viva

Viva Viva introduces color and movement more openly into René Mayer's sculptural work. The terracotta figures appear animated, often arranged in sequences that suggest collective presence rather than isolated form. Their vitality may recall references as diverse as ancient Mexican figurines, the carnivalesque processions of Basel's Fasnacht, or the rhythmic clarity of Matisse, yet these echoes are never illustrative.

Color is applied decisively, without hesitation or modulation, affirming the vital, almost jubilant character of the series. This apparent spontaneity is held in check by a constant attention to proportion, rhythm, and balance. Faces often turn away; eyes are hollowed, pierced, or protruding, functioning less as organs of vision than as formal elements. Vision is displaced, the relationship with the viewer remains indirect. *Viva Viva* does not illustrate joy—it constructs it as a sculptural condition.

Selected Works of the series
Viva Viva



In this column, from top to bottom:

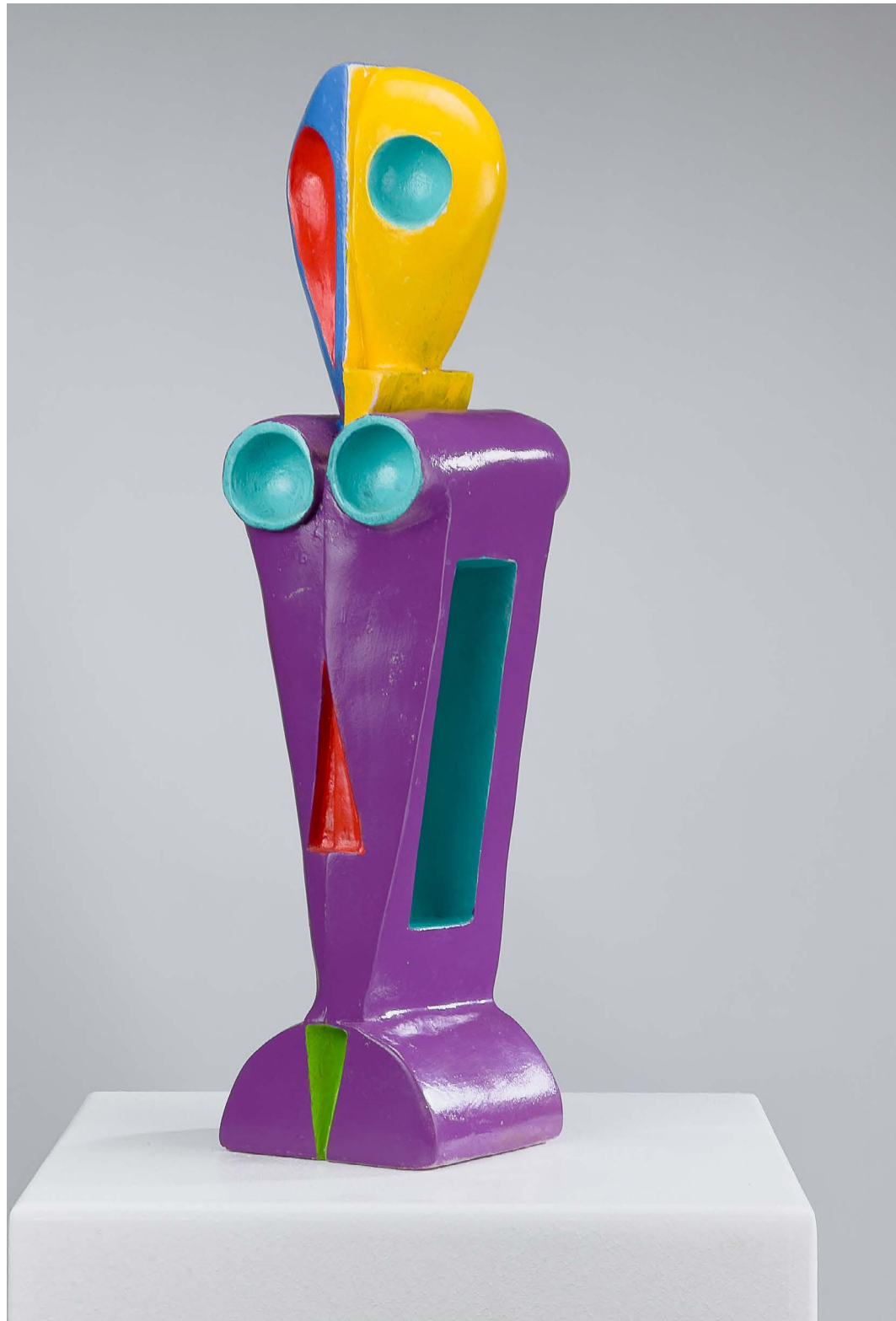
- What are you doing?*, 2017-2018, CHF 1'800
- Sleeping King*, 2018, CHF 1'800
- Balanced*, 2017-2018, CHF 2'000
- Intimate conversation*, 2017-2018, CHF 1'800

In this column, from top to bottom:

- Piercing glaze*, 2017-2018, CHF 1'800
- Four winds*, 2017-2018, CHF 2'000
- Incredible*, 2017-2018, CHF 1'800
- Touches*, 2017-2018, CHF 2'000

In this column, from top to bottom:

- Family*, 2017-2018, CHF 2'000
- Piercing glaze*, 2017-2018, CHF 1'800
- The resting one*, 2017-2018, CHF 1'800
- The radiance*, 2017-2018, CHF 1'800



RENÉ MAYER
Steadfast Woman, 2017
Terracotta and Acrylic
14 x 12 x 37 cm
CHF 1'800 + VAT



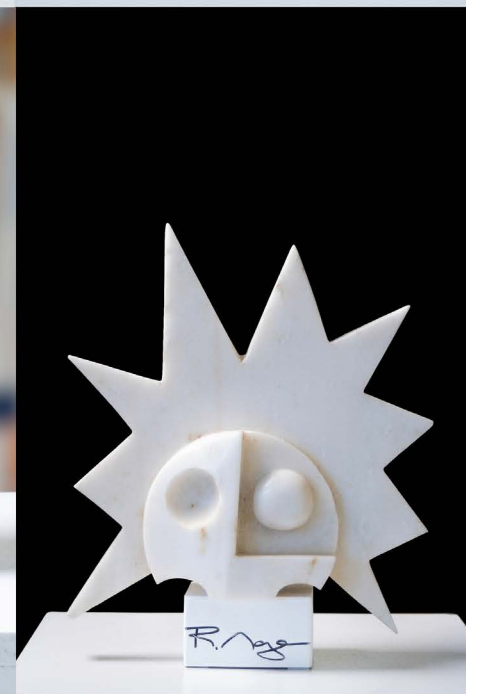
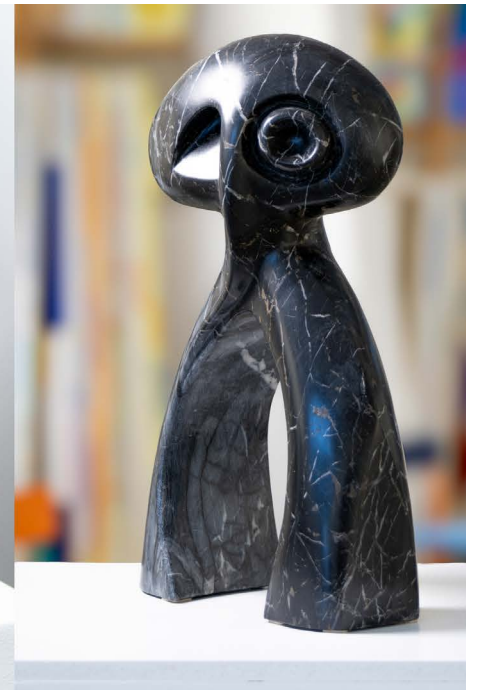
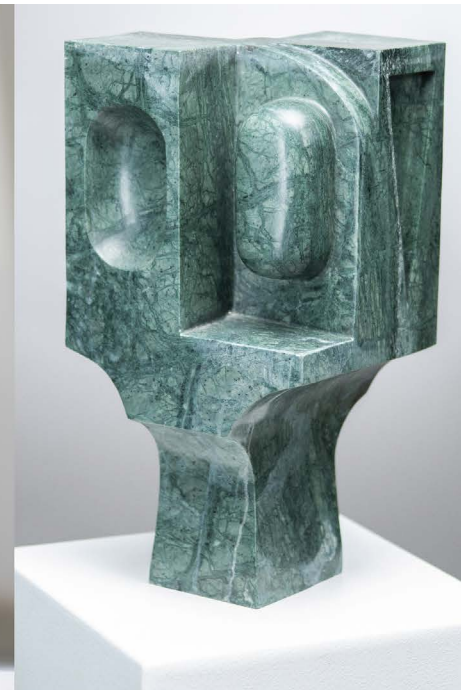
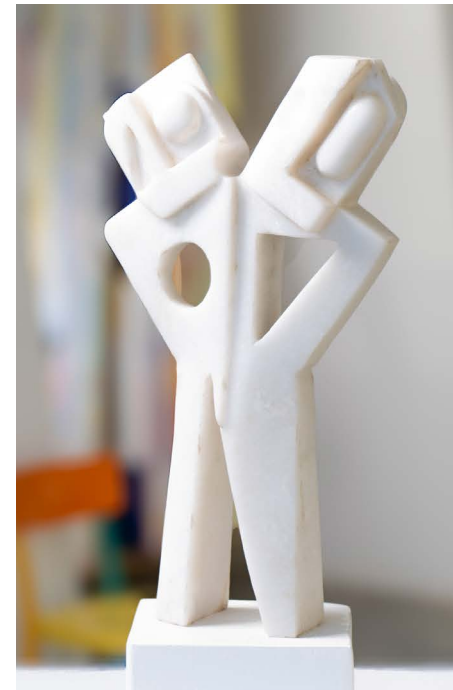
RENÉ MAYER
The Mask, 2017
Terracotta and Acrylic
23 x 17 x 26 cm
CHF 1'800 + VAT

Marble & Granite

The *Marble & Granite* series explores how reduction can *increase* intensity. René Mayer works with a limited vocabulary – heads, torsos, paired volumes – to sharpen what is at stake: attraction and distance, duality, balance, masculine and feminine. Nothing is added for effect; meaning is carried by proportion, tension and the way forms meet, separate, or hold an empty space

The sculptures are first conceived in clay, then realised in marble or granite by specialised workshops under close oversight. What matters is the translation of weight and gravity into a compact presence. As Dr. Paolo G. Bonfiglio notes, these works absorb an archaic memory of sculpture – African, Mediterranean, geometric – without quoting it. The recurring eyes and bifacial heads do not “express” emotion; they create a direct encounter, where intensity comes from measure and restraint rather than narration

**Selected Works of the series
*Marble & Granite***



In this column, from top to bottom:

The couple, 1996, CHF 2'600

The Egoist, 1996, CHF 3'500

In this column, from top to bottom:

The Physicist, 1994, CHF 3'500

The Strong Woman, 1996, CHF 2'600

In this column, from top to bottom:

Here I am!, 1996, CHF 3'500

The Charisma, 1996, CHF 2'600



RENÉ MAYER
The Prince, 1994
Marble
19 x 19 x 69 cm
CHF 3'500 + VAT



RENÉ MAYER
The strong one, 1994
Granite
36 x 25 x 36 cm
CHF 3'800 + VAT



RENÉ MAYER
Holy moly, 1994
Granite
10,5 x 10,5 x 61,5 cm
CHF 3'500 + VAT



RENÉ MAYER
Farsighted, 1994
Marble
13 x 12,5 x 63 cm
CHF 3'500 + VAT

Exhibitions

Art International Zurich	8-10 May 2026	René Mayer will be present at the Art International Zurich with two booths. The well-established art fair, held at Puls 5 in Zurich, serves as an international platform for contemporary art and attracts galleries, artists, and collectors from around the world.
Galerie Hergiswil, Hergiswil	June 2025	Galerie Hergiswil hosted René Mayer's first major retrospective, presenting a remarkable selection of 17 paintings and 27 sculptures spanning fifty years of his artistic creation.
AtelierRoshi, Baar	Mai 2025	Under the provocative title <i>Happy Anxiety</i> , René Mayer presented his works in a solo exhibition at AtelierRoshi in Baar, bringing together two of his iconic series: <i>Imperceptible Shift</i> and <i>Viva Viva</i> .
Vision Art Platform Istanbul, Turkey	April – July 2025	René Mayer took part in the group exhibition <i>Kesismeler / Intersections</i> , organized by the Vision Art Platform gallery in Istanbul. It was curated by Firat Arapoglu, a well-known figure in the contemporary art scene in Turkey.
Fresa y Chocolate, Vevey	December 2024 January 2025	René Mayer took part in the group exhibition <i>Artistes unis pour l'eau</i> , organized by the gallery Fresa y Chocolate by Dayami Hayek in Vevey, in collaboration with the organization <i>What Water</i> .
SAB Spazio Arte Bubbio Bubbio, Italy	June – August 2024	Solo exhibition <i>Imperceptible Shift</i> , curated by Luca Beatrice, the late president of the Quadriennale in Rome.
Chapel San Sebastiano Bergolo, Italy	Mai 2021	In the deconsecrated chapel of San Sebastiano in Bergolo — a small yet culturally vibrant village in Piedmont — René Mayer held his first exhibition in 2021, under the direction of Dr. Paolo G. Bonfiglio, a professor and curator who had discovered his work almost by chance.



René Mayer during the installation of his exhibition at Galerie Hergiswil

Curriculum Vitae of René Mayer

1947	Born on June 19 in Zug, Switzerland
1954 – 1964	Compulsory education: Primary school, Basel Mathematics and Natural Sciences High School (MNG), Basel, Section C (Sciences and Geometry)
1964	Foundation course at the School of Applied Arts, Base
1965 – 1967	Specialized class at the School of Applied Arts, Basel Prof. Rieser, painter: portraits, nudes, still lifes Prof. Walter Bodmer, painter: theory of color Prof. Joos Hutter, painter: graphics, perspective drawing Prof. Alfred Gruber, sculptor: bronze casting, stone and marble sculpture
1968 – 1970	Photographer apprenticeship with Hans Hinz in Basel: Professional color photography Assignments for the art publisher Skira
1971	Assistant photographer with Hans Looser, advertising agency Advertising campaigns for Volkswagen, Reemtsma, etc.
1974	One year in Paris. Head of the photo studio "Studio 111"
1975 – 1979	Various management positions in advertising agencies in Zurich as a photographer
1974	Beginning of artistic work — painting on canvas and ceramics
1979	Founded Mayer & Bosshardt AG with Karin Bosshardt in Basel — distribution of handcrafted ceramics
1993 – 1997	Sculpture series <i>Marble and Granite</i>
1997 – 2025	Painting series <i>Experiments</i>
1998 – 2000	Painting series <i>Eyes</i>
2000 – 2014	Painting series <i>Boxes</i>
2004 – 2008	Painting series <i>Finiteness</i>
2012	Painting series <i>Sandpaper</i>
2014 – 2017	Sculpture series <i>Terracotta</i>
2016 – 2018	Painting series <i>Moving Earth</i>
2017 – 2018	Sculpture series <i>Viva Viva</i>
2018 – 2025	Painting series <i>Imperceptible Shift</i>
2024 –	Painting series <i>From Beginning to Finiteness</i>



reнемayer.art

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IDE: CHE-439.226.190

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