

PRZEMEK PYSZCZEK

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Todd Merrill

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Todd Merrill Studio

For over fifteen years, Todd Merrill Studio has exhibited and purveyed the finest selection of post-war American studio furniture. In 2008, Rizzoli published Merrill's "Modern Americana: Studio Furniture from High Craft to High Glam", the first ever authoritative examination of the great studio furniture makers and designers who, from 1940 through the 1990s defined American high style. To celebrate the tenth anniversary, Rizzoli published an expanded edition in 2018, adding 60 pages to his original book. This survey of the period included two additional chapters highlighting the importance of Women Makers and Showrooms.

In 2009, shortly after the initial publication of "Modern Americana", Merrill launched Studio Contemporary, in an effort to develop and represent the work of an international group of established and emerging contemporary artists. Today, their work is sought after by a wide range of art and design patrons, from collectors and decorators, to curators and museum academics.

While their work may be functional or historically based, each artist brings a fresh perspective and a desire to express more than just decorative influence. With an ever growing range of mediums--from textile to porcelain, to marble and LEDs--their joint curation at Studio Contemporary relies

upon their shared drive to push those materials to their absolute aesthetic limits. The result: dynamic, handmade, and unique pieces that contribute to today's increasingly relevant "grey space" between art and design.

The gallery has progressively cultivated and established new artists, placing their work into private and public collections which include The Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum (New York), The Museum of Fine Arts (Boston), The Museum of Art and Design (New York), The Victoria and Albert Museum (London), Centre Georges Pompidou (Paris), The High Museum of Art (Atlanta), and The Brooklyn Museum (New York), and the Carnegie Museum of Art (Pennsylvania), amongst others.

The gallery exhibits throughout the year at some of the leading art and design fairs in the world. A selection of these includes The Salon Art + Design (New York); Design Miami (Basel, Switzerland and Miami); FOG: Design + Art (San Francisco); the Pavilion of Arts and Design (New York, Paris, Geneva, and London); Collectible (Brussels); Masterpiece (London); Collect (London); Gallery Seoul (Seoul); The International Fine Art & Antiques Dealer Show (New York); Zona MACO (Mexico City); Tajan (Paris); Design Days Dubai (Dubai); Art Wynwood (Miami); Art Toronto (Toronto)

Introduction

By Dallas Dunn

In collaboration with Todd Merrill Studio, Polish-Canadian artist Przemek Pyszczek (pronounced *p-SHEM-ek pish-check*) has translated his *Playground Structures* into high-end, playfully utilitarian furniture design. To create the structures, Pyszczek worked alongside his father, a retired industrial metalworker in Winnipeg. Employing elements of constructivism, minimalism, and postmodernism, Pyszczek's sculptures and installations thematically explore the homogeneity of mass-produced communist architecture and the visual legacy that flourished after the fall of the Eastern Bloc. The works articulate the artist's experience of Poland as an outsider looking in - an immigrant seeing something mundane with different eyes.

Pyszczek completed studies in Environmental Design (Architecture) at University of Manitoba, Winnipeg before moving to Berlin in 2010 to pursue his own artistic work. A 2012 tour of Poland, which had dramatically changed since his family's emigration to Canada in 1987, spawned a series of highly celebrated works that have been exhibited through Europe and

the United States. In 2018, he was long-listed for the Sobey Art Award.

"The idea to collaborate came about very naturally," says Todd Merrill. "Works that present a dynamic visual impact while conveying a thoughtfulness, personal to the maker, are what is driving the best of today's contemporary design. I was immediately drawn to Pyszczek's ability to distill very complex ideas into such simple, evocative pieces, and he had been considering creating a series of works that bridged the gap between conceptual and functional. Together we conceived of a collection of unique pieces, that introduced high-end materials, based on his *Playground Structures*.

The ubiquitous tubular metal playgrounds that populated the communist-built housing blocks form the basis for Pyszczek's sculptural work. These rudimentary structures were made locally, often by unregulated municipal metal workers, who would infuse their own expressions, engendering them with a sense of congenial naiveté.

In transposing these visual elements into conceptual art, Pyszczek relies on memories of these found forms. The result are fragmented compositions of broken rings and linear bars, painted with an overly-saturated palate. As the communist playground constructions were initially designed to serve the dual purpose of public art and recreation, Pyszczek's artistic works have now approached full circle. The formerly conceptual sculptures, in his signature brightly painted tubular metal, have evolved into a group of modular tables, seating, and shelving, each integrated with high end materials such as stone, brass, and high-density polycarbonate. The most directly referential piece is a commanding chartreuse leather upholstered chaise framed by a considerably large "jungle gym."

While the works share a kinship with minimalist artists like Sol Lewitt and Donald Judd, they evocatively capture a bittersweet era on the cusp of an innovation, technology, and communications boom.





Chaise Lounge Jungle Gym, CA, 2019

painted aluminum, leather upholstery
96h x 112w x 38.50d in // 243.84h x 284.48w x 97.79d cm





Three Stepped Wall Mounted Shelf, CA, 2019

painting aluminum, acrylic
69h x 69w x 12.50d in // 175.26h x 175.26w x 31.75d cm

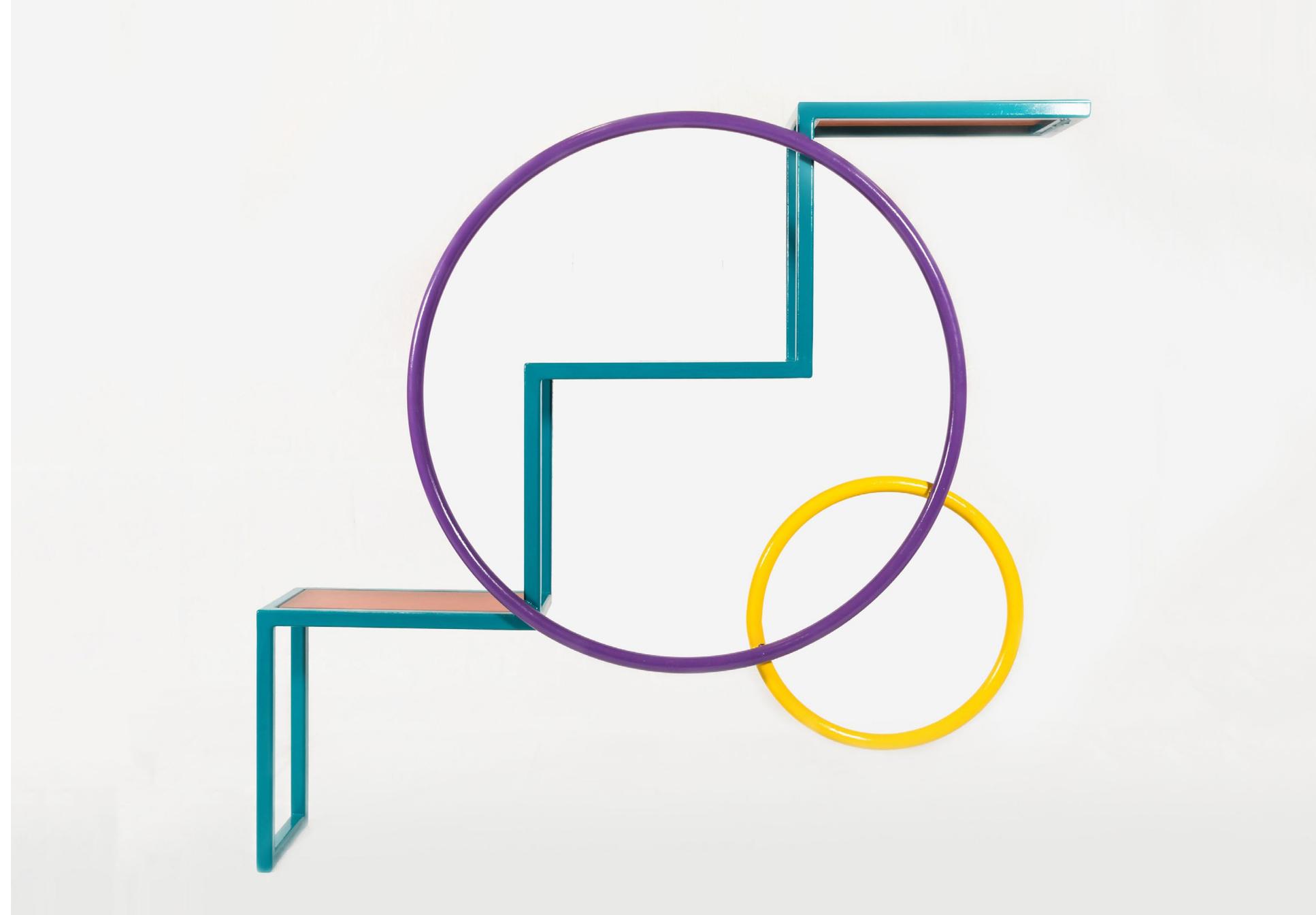




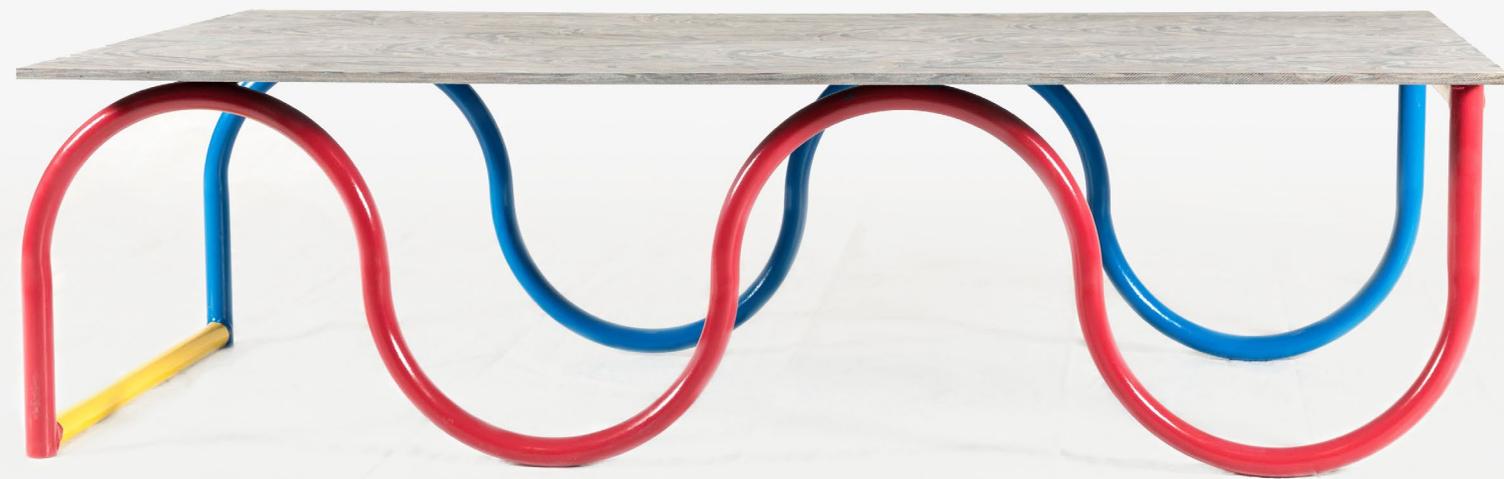
Table with Red Ring, CA, 2019

painted aluminum, brass, acrylic, Corian
36h x 50.50w x 20.50d in // 91.44h x 128.27w x 52.07d cm



Squiggle Low Table, CA, 2019

Painted aluminum, Corian
17h x 60w x 30d in // 43.18h x 152.40w x 76.20d cm





Wall Mounted Shelf with Seat, CA, 2019

72h x 73w x 18d in // 182.88h x 185.42w x 45.72d cm
painted aluminum, acrylic



Table with Teal Ring, CA, 2019

painting aluminum, brass, acrylic, Corian
37h x 37w x 37d in // 93.98h x 93.98w x 93.98d cm





Playground Sculpture No. 1, CA, 2019

painting aluminum
52h x 45w x 8d in // 132.08h x 114.30w x 20.32d cm



Pyszczyk's vibrant *Façade Paintings* emulate the bold, post-communist public murals superimposed on the prefab housing blocks that had been built to accommodate displaced people in the years after the Second World War. After the fall of Communism, these buildings were renovated with a skin of Styrofoam and stucco to address heating concerns. Graphic murals were painted on the sides of the buildings in somewhat ludicrous colors with deceptively pleasant geometric themes, to mask the buildings' austere origins.

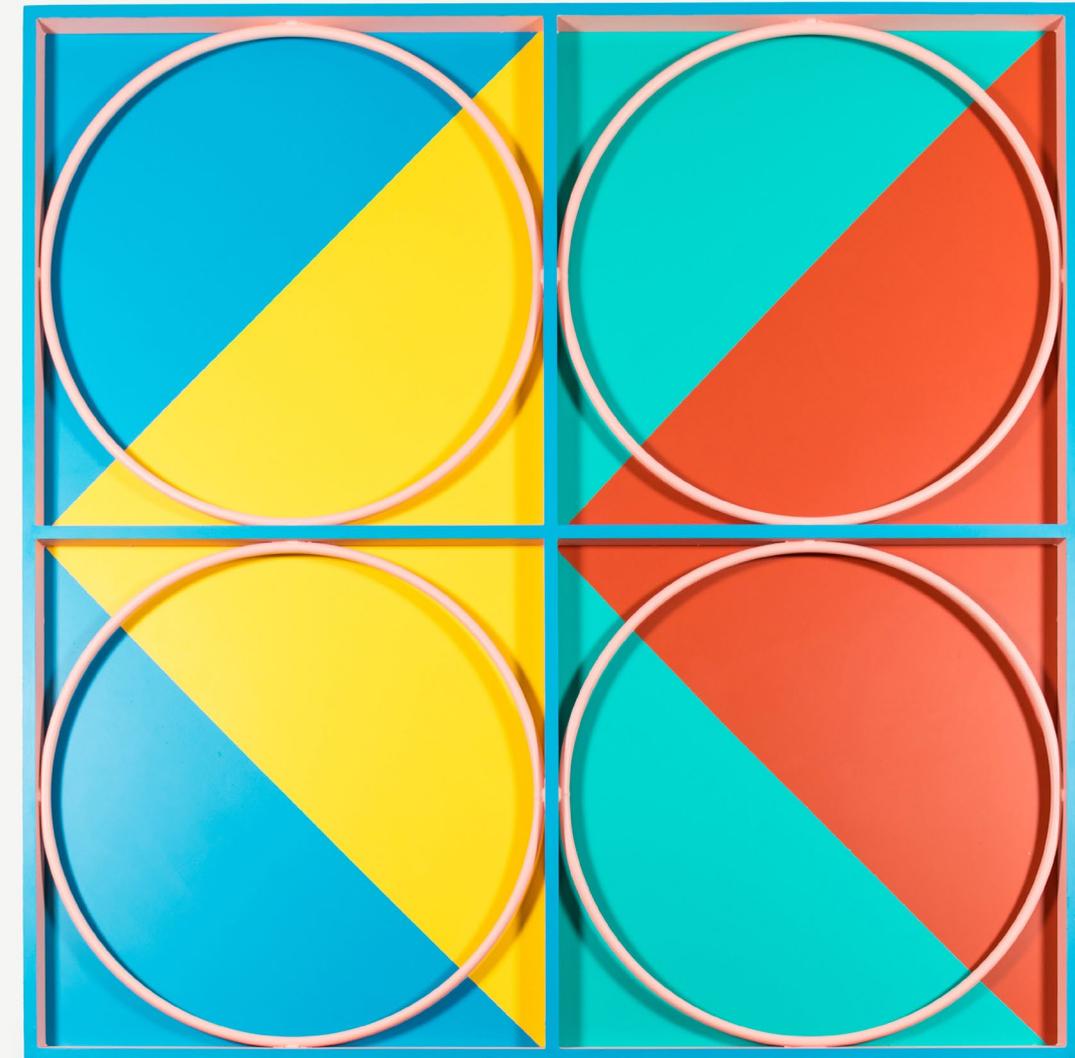
Pyszczyk's painted Dibond panels are superimposed with aluminum tubular frames. The geometric frames are patterned after the omnipresent metal window security bars and railings traditionally found in Eastern Europe going back to communist times.

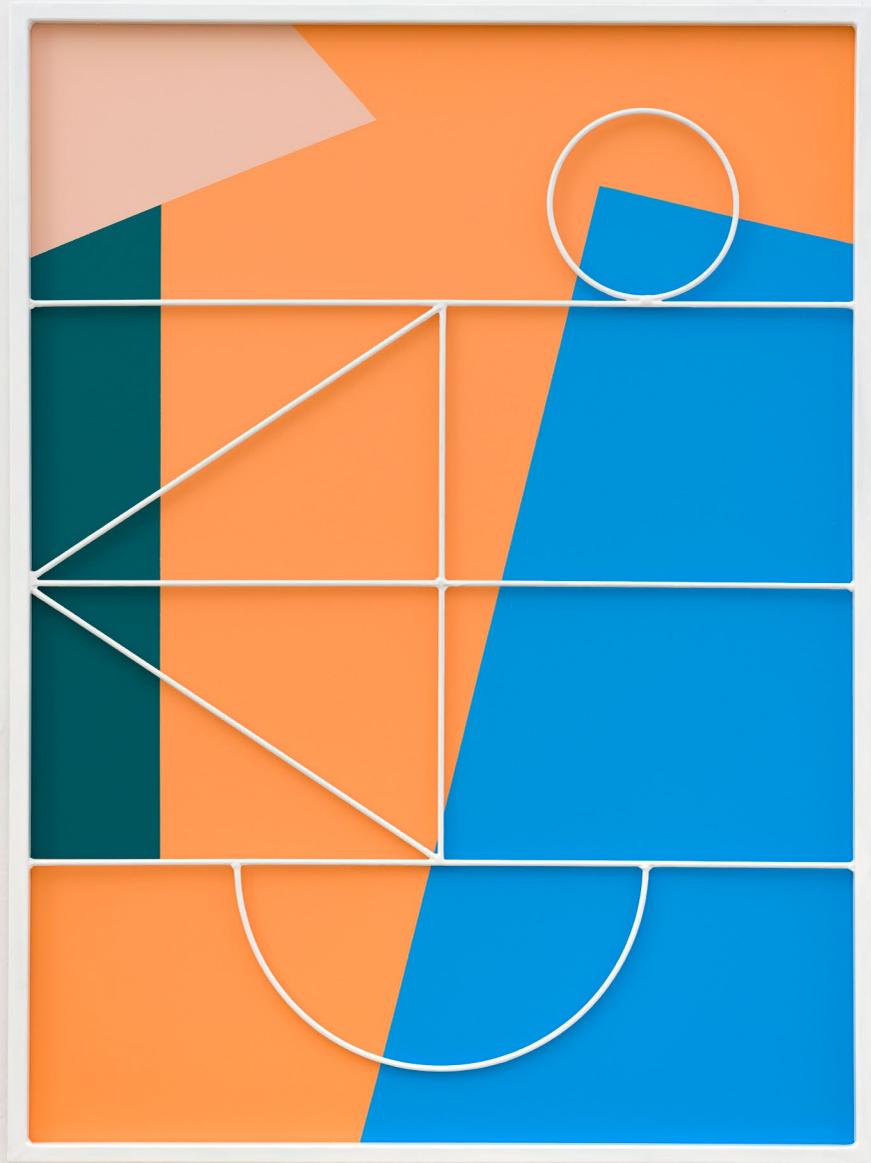
"People couldn't readily import commercial products and so they had to rely on the limited amount of goods that could be imported from other communist countries or make things themselves," says Pyszczyk. "This person who's not a designer or artisan, he's just a metal worker, ends up expressing some innate creative impulse in this very practical task of making a railing or bars for a window."

Through a lens of contemporary constructivism Pyszczyk's *Façade Paintings* represent an autobiographical homage to the culturally revisionist legacy of his native home.

Facade Paintings, CA, 2019

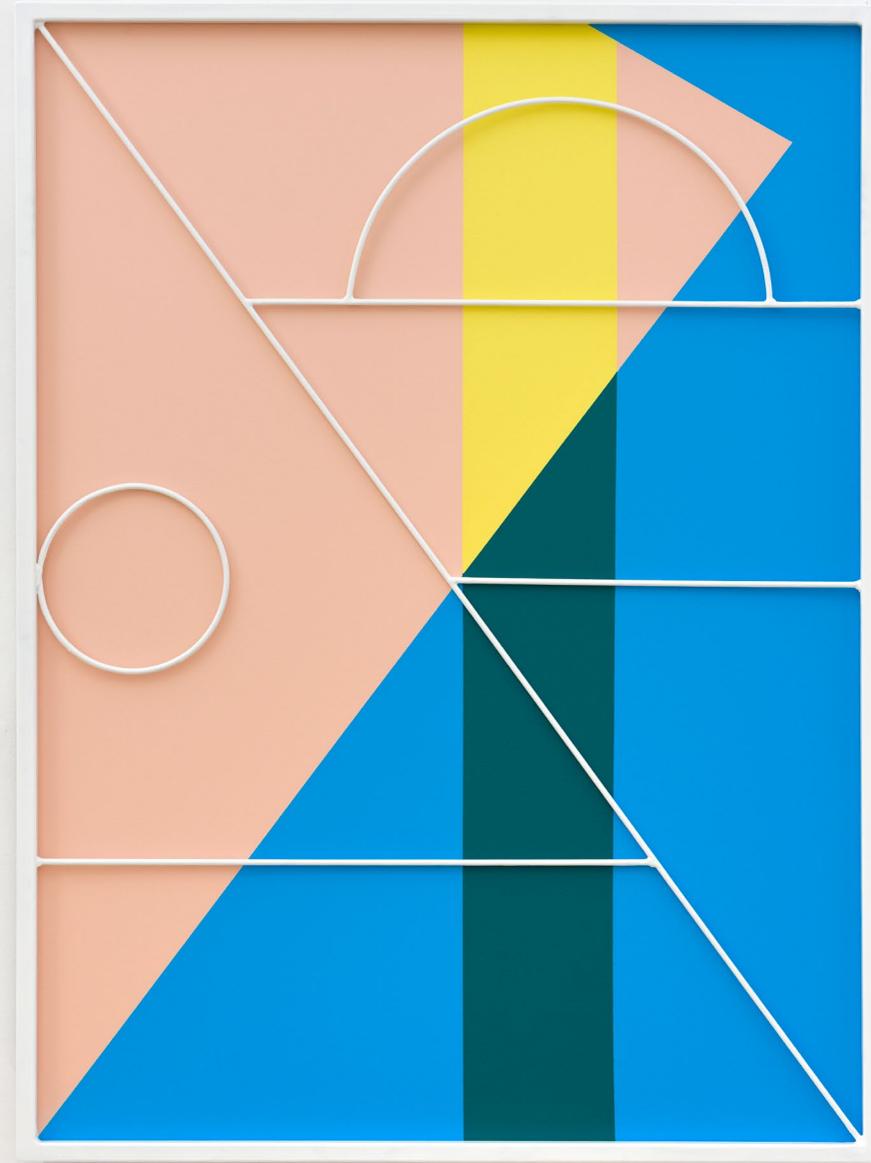
Dibond, painted steel, acrylic paint
60h x 60w x 1.50d in // 152.40h x 152.40w x 3.81d cm

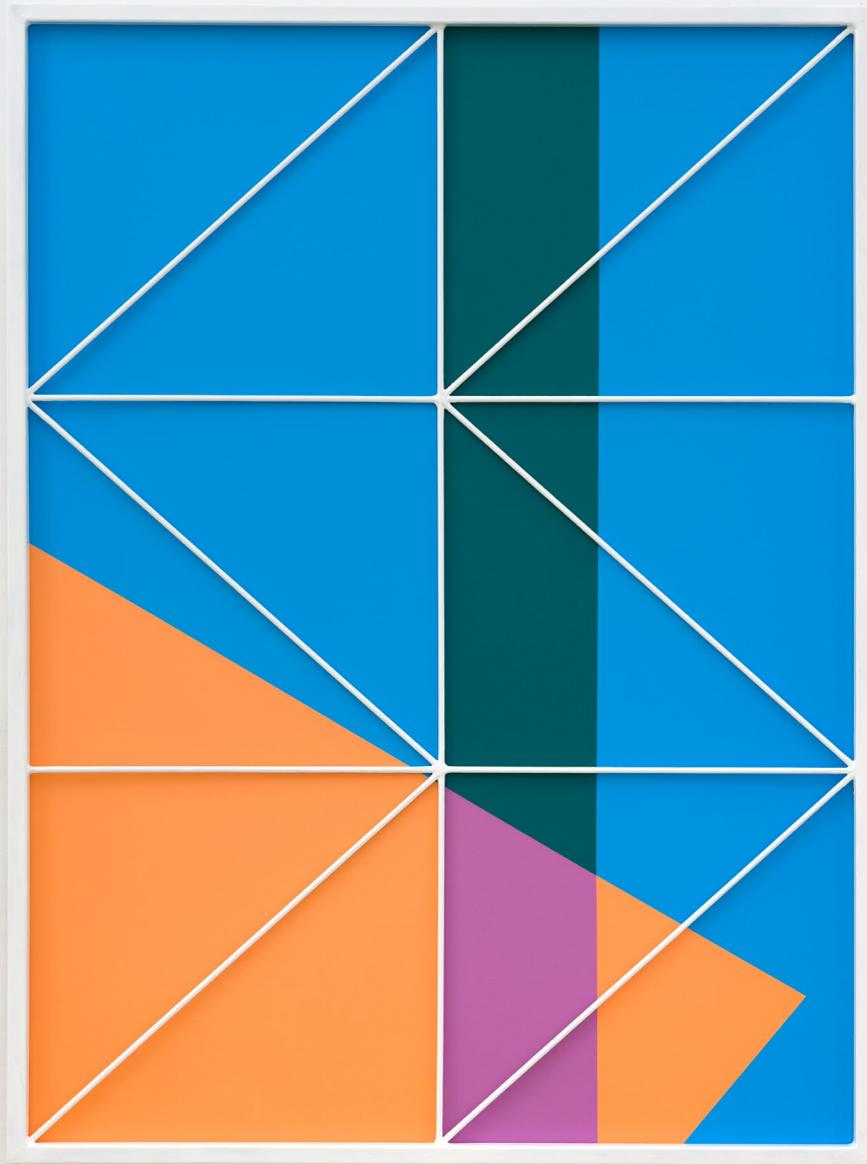




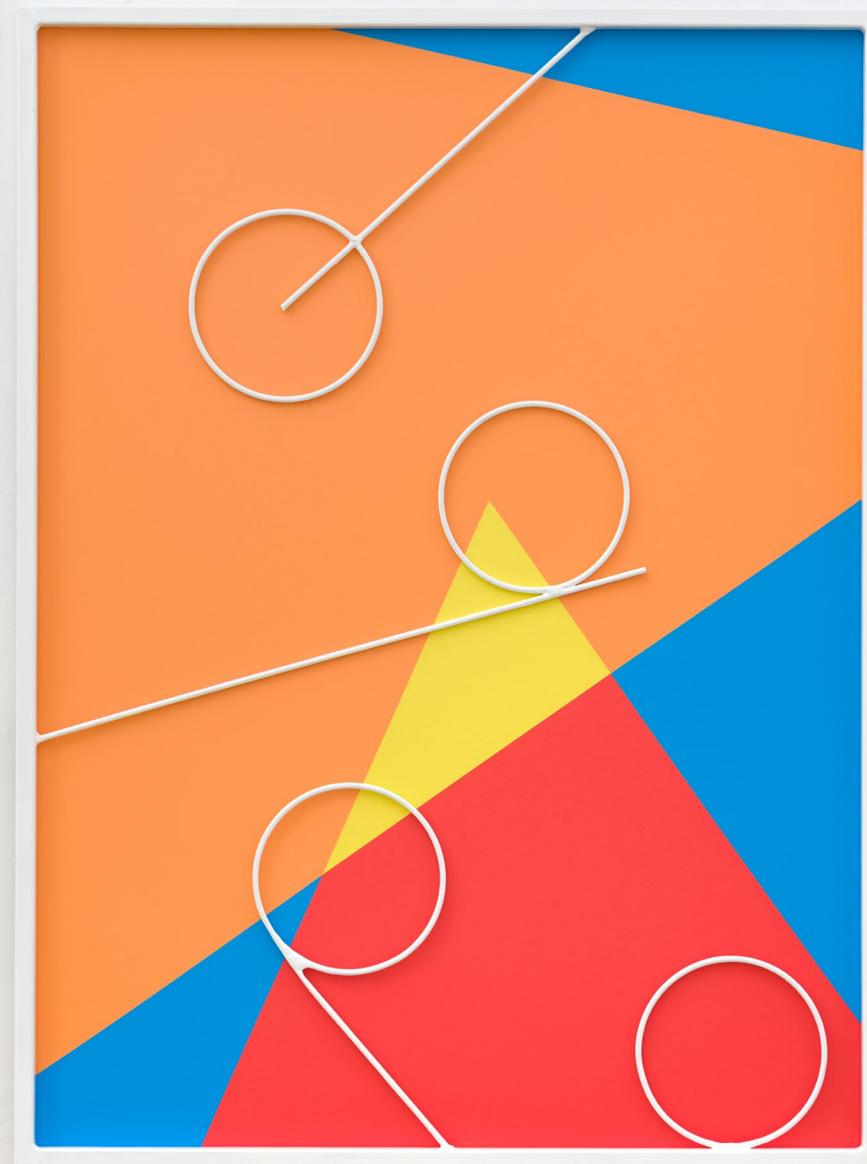
Dibond, painted steel, acrylic paint
60h x 60w x in // 152.40h x 152.40w cm

Dibond, painted steel, acrylic paint
60h x 60w x in // 152.40h x 152.40w cm

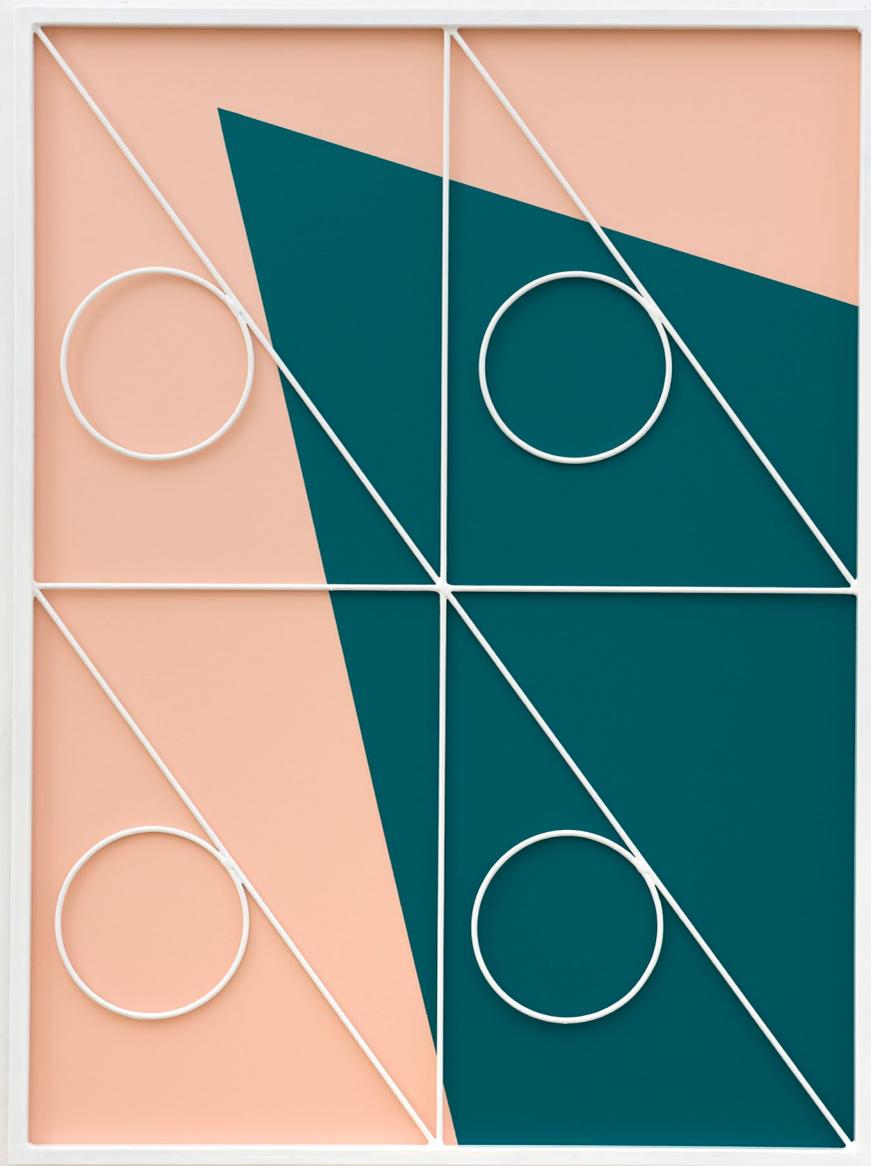




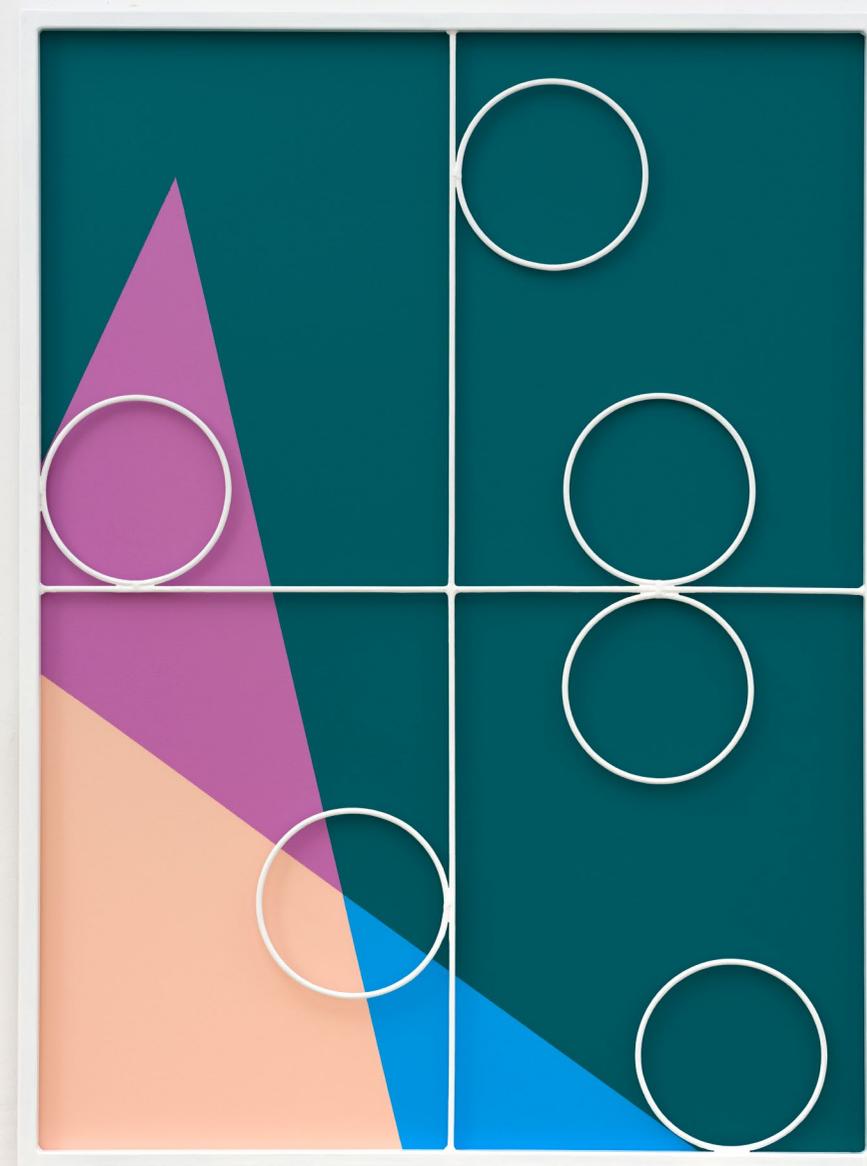
Dibond, painted steel, acrylic paint
60h x 60w x in // 152.40h x 152.40w cm



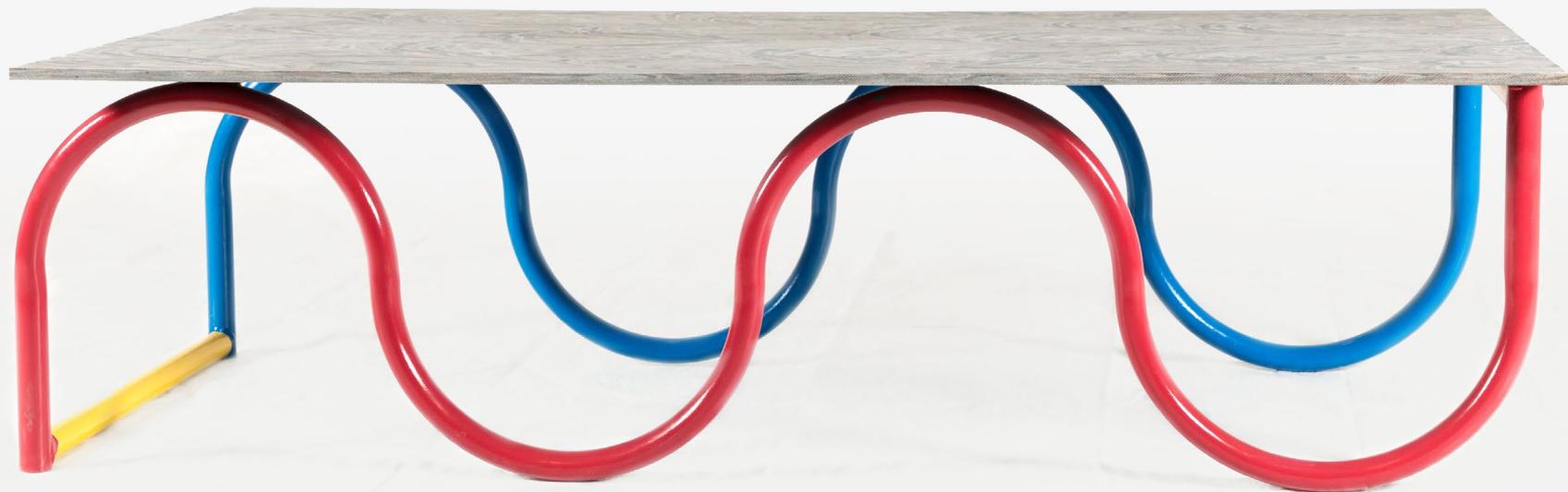
Dibond, painted steel, acrylic paint
60h x 60w x in // 152.40h x 152.40w cm



Dibond, painted steel, acrylic paint
60h x 60w x in // 152.40h x 152.40w cm



Dibond, painted steel, acrylic paint
60h x 60w x in // 152.40h x 152.40w cm



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