

The background of the image is a dense, abstract pattern of vertical stripes. The stripes are of varying widths and colors, including red, blue, yellow, green, and white, creating a vibrant, multi-colored effect.

MARKUS LINNENBRINK

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LETMETELLYOUWHATTHE RIVERSGONNADO

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BEYOND WALLS MARKUS LINNENBRINK LETMETELLYOUWHATTHE RIVERSGONNADO

Time

The statement may seem abrupt to anyone who discovers the colorful and bright works of Markus Linnenbrink, but let's risk it: Linnenbrink's art is, above all, about passing time. In order to fathom this idea, an examination of the formal characteristics of the artist's production over the last 20 years is imperative. Linnenbrink has mainly been using two types of formal patterns: his renowned epoxy resin *drips* and his multicolor glossy *strata*. And both of those patterns talk to passing time.

The *drips* are—as per the artist's own words—"the curtain of time" over things. They cover underlying abstract watercolor compositions (in the *drip paintings* series) or run over old photographs from his father's archives (in the *photo drip* series). Family memories are allowed to dimly filter through the translucent resin, but they are mostly eclipsed by the life that Markus Linnenbrink is living today: his shiny and colorful resin, his signature *drips*. The *Skulls* series moves beyond the artist's family circle and reaches deeper into the past. In that series, skulls epitomize the lost identities and forgotten existences of those who lived before our times. The highly chromatic *drips* that flood the skulls can be seen as an attempt by the artist to draw attention to those who lack remembrance, to provide them with individual characteristics, however artificial and incongruous they may seem. But time is unforgiving, the shiny hues are already starting to melt away, and this newly acquired identity is bound to fade once again in passing time.

The *strata*—which are present in many of Linnenbrink’s paintings (the *drills*, the *reverse*, and the *cuts*), as well as in most of his sculptures (*linear*, *organic*, or *spherical*)—are also directly evocative of extinct memories that got buried below new layers of time. The geological metaphor is operating, and the *cuts* and *drills* in the resin act like rivers carving out canyons or like scientists sampling ice cores, revealing a history that would otherwise remain out of reach. There is a paradoxical strength in Linnenbrink’s *strata* works: The exposure of fragments of buried colors and objects—reveals that most of them are actually inaccessible, lost for good in the volume of the resin. The approach is symbolic, but it is also reflexive, as the artist archives, layer after layer, the elements of their own making within his works.

But let’s not misapprehend the spirit of Linnenbrink’s art. Despite its emphasis on lost memories, it should not be seen as nostalgia, but as a celebration. A celebration of life, of its inner mechanisms, of its ability to learn from history but also of its tendency to repeat the same mistakes, to regenerate, to grow on its own ashes...Linnenbrink rejuvenates memories, brings life back into dead skulls and makes ancient pottery look less outdated by deluging it with flashy resin. This very contrast—between the earnest and the joyful—is at the core of his practice.

A body of work in Linnenbrink’s practice stands apart in its singularity: the *Wall Paintings*. They are the only major pieces, up to today, in which his two signature patterns—the *drips* and the *strata*—are used together. One could argue that the *Wall Paintings* are three-dimensional works, because they are painted on architectural elements. But they can also be seen as flat, since the paint is applied, with no thickness, on plane walls. Unlike Linnenbrink’s other works, the *Wall Paintings* do not take the form of concrete and volumetric objects; they are rather a representation, a *decor* that creates a powerful and enveloping illusion. They are transversal sketches of his *strata* works, like educational plates in a book. Unlike in his other works, everything is visually

accessible, nothing is buried within a mass of resin, nor is anything fully hidden below a *drips* curtain. For once, the present (symbolized by the *drips*) is not overshadowing the past (represented by the *strata*). Time is abolished. The *Wall Paintings* offer a sort of utopia, which solves the questions of passing time and lost memories. But like all utopias, the *Wall Paintings* do not last and cannot be reproduced: They are site-specific installations and are mostly temporary.

Breaking new grounds

Heading into 2019, Markus Linnenbrink seems to be on the verge of substantial breakthroughs. Two of the pieces created for *LETMETELLYOUWHATTHE RIVERS GONNADO*, his 2019 exhibition at the Miles McEnery Gallery, are building on the concepts developed in the *Wall Paintings* and are pushing them further.

His first audacious move has been to keep on exploring the combination of *drips* and *strata* into a single piece, which this time takes the form of an objective artwork, *OPENMELODYFOLDS*, a first-of-its-kind *drip sculpture*. The base of this piece is what the artist calls a *linear sculpture*, made up of those chromatic and orthogonal blocks of recovered resins. Color remnants from several years of studio activity—sometimes mixed with discarded objects—form an archaeological account of the artistic creation over this period of time. The *linear sculpture* is visually enhanced by drips that, driven by gravity, run perpendicular to the stratified layers. Linnenbrink updates the grid pattern of the *Wall Paintings*, letting outside forces play a defining role in his work. This is typical of the artist’s philosophy: Be permeable, accept the world as it is, abandon full control, let things happen in confidence, see the value in all things, exert different points of view... It is the approach of a wise man, who takes his time developing ideas and letting them materialize (five years for some of his sculptures). The reward can be considerable, as it is in *OPENMELODYFOLDS*,

a stunning allegory of *destiny*. The same element—a small lump of pigmented epoxy resin dribbling from a painting—takes a different shape, a *drip* or a *strata*, based on the geometry of the surface on which it is falling (horizontal or vertical). Same origin, different fates.

The second breakthrough work is the masterpiece of the show, *DAYLIGHTTEARSTOMYEYES*, a new type of mobile *Wall Painting*. It is made on a series of articulated panels, painted on both sides: black and white on the outside and in colors on the inside. The palette is unconventional for Markus Linnenbrink. It is reminiscent of the delicate and stunning pastel hue assortments of Jean Dubuffet; blush and salmon tones resonate with shades of turquoise, mauve, lavender and green beryl. But pastel is not in this instance a synonym for undertone. The color intensity of *DAYLIGHTTEARSTOMYEYES* is maximal, fueled by the deep contrasts with the black lines and by the luxurious density of the fluid drips. Unlike the walls of “classical” *Wall Paintings*, the panels of the “non-site-specific” *Wall Painting* are now entirely embedded into the artwork, making it a full-blown three-dimensional work. The mobile *Wall Painting* is freed from the main limitations of its predecessors, which were restricted in time or in space. It is now an autonomous and evolutionary piece that can concurrently be the same *and* change in its different environments. A room within a room, *DAYLIGHTTEARSTOMYEYES* constitutes a layer of a new type, vertical rather than horizontal. It is placed at a small distance from the room walls, creating a narrow oppressing black-and-white corridor and optical layer in the space between the actual walls and the panels, and reinforcing the sublime floating effects of the central colored environment. Another strength of the panel *Wall Painting* is that it boosts—by its very constitution—one of the main features of the site-specific *Wall Paintings*: the way perspective is deflected by the inclined color lines, which do not strictly follow horizontals. With the panels, lines not only bear the break points drawn by the artist, but also those given by the angles between the panels. This sharpens the sensation of being in a different place, like a haven that escapes gravity and obeys

different laws. *DAYLIGHTTEARSTOMYEYES* establishes Linnenbrink as a master of organic Op art, a genre that addresses our contemporary demand for visual stimulation and our yearning for benevolence.

It is hard these days to make art that is not rooted in our world, that does not *address, denounce, talk to, illustrate, or question* our times. Even abstraction—with Markus Linnenbrink at its forefront—has succeeded in repositioning itself at the core of this battle, freeing itself from the dead end, disconnected from reality, that it was stuck in for years. But sometimes contemporary abstraction forgets the basics of the game. Expressive power. Pictorial quality. Emotions. Markus Linnenbrink does not. He feeds us with radiant and fascinating art. And he keeps going. Looking forward to his next show. ■

Frédéric Caillard is an artist, critic, and curator. He is the artistic director of Abstract Room, a nonprofit organization dedicated to contemporary art.

WESHAREADREAMLETSSTEP OUTSIDE/TRUSTTHEWORDSOFSTEVIE, 2017

Epoxy resin and pigments on wood

72 x 96 inches

182.9 x 243.8 cm



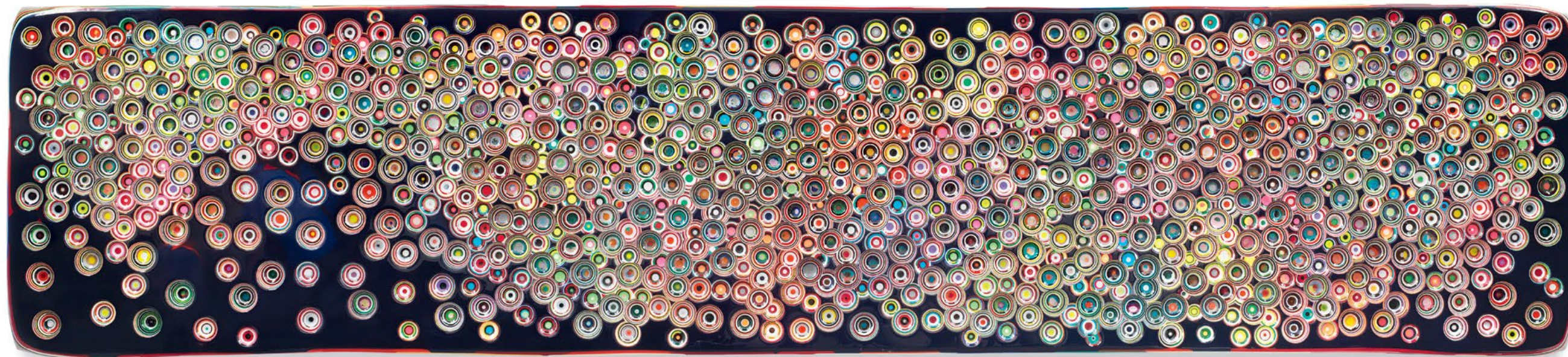


YOU DONT QUIT YESTERDAY TODAY AND TOMORROW, 2017

Epoxy resin and pigments on wood

24 x 108 inches

61 x 274.3 cm



HELLOWORLDOULAYITDOWN, 2017

Epoxy resin and pigments on wood

24 x 108 inches

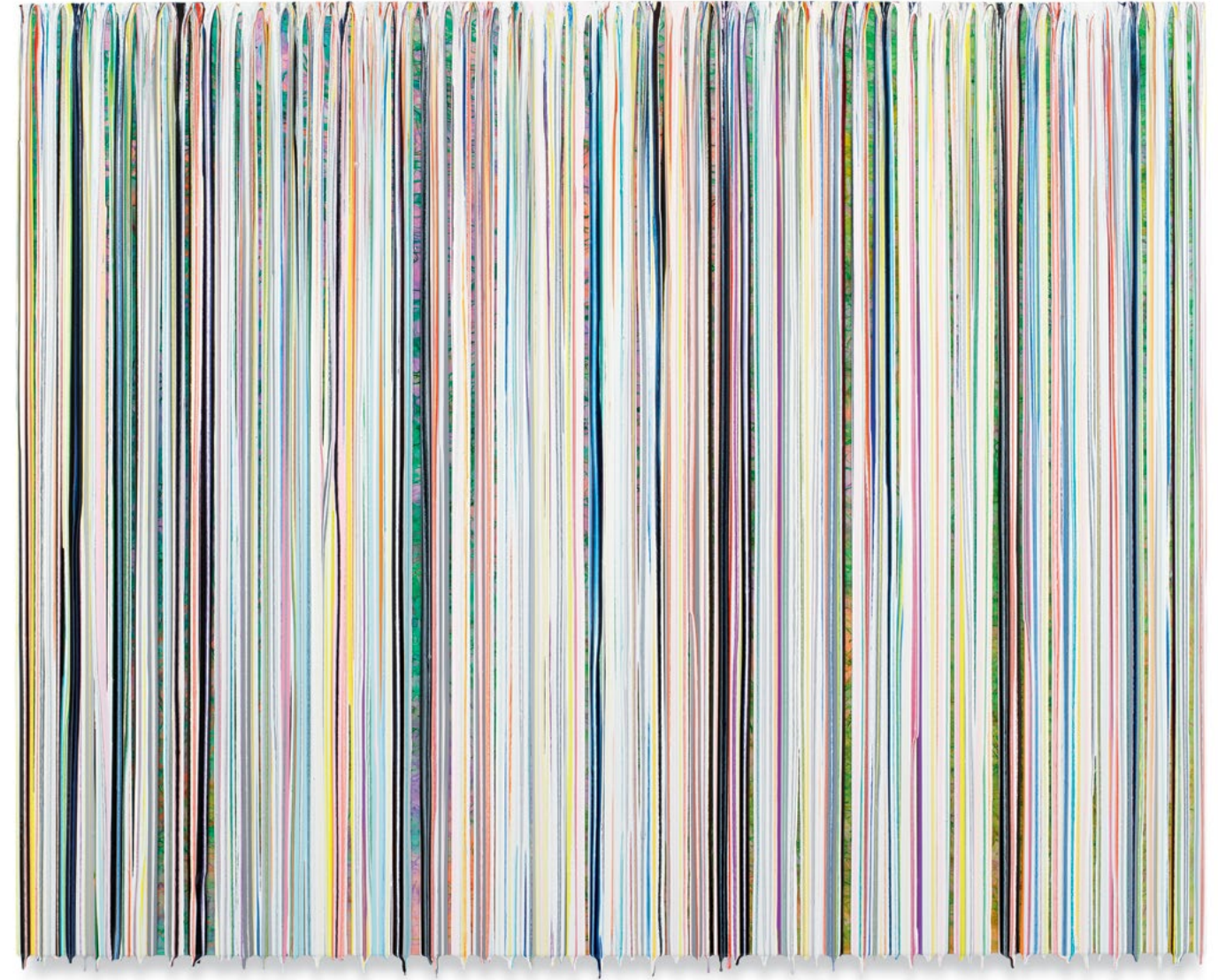
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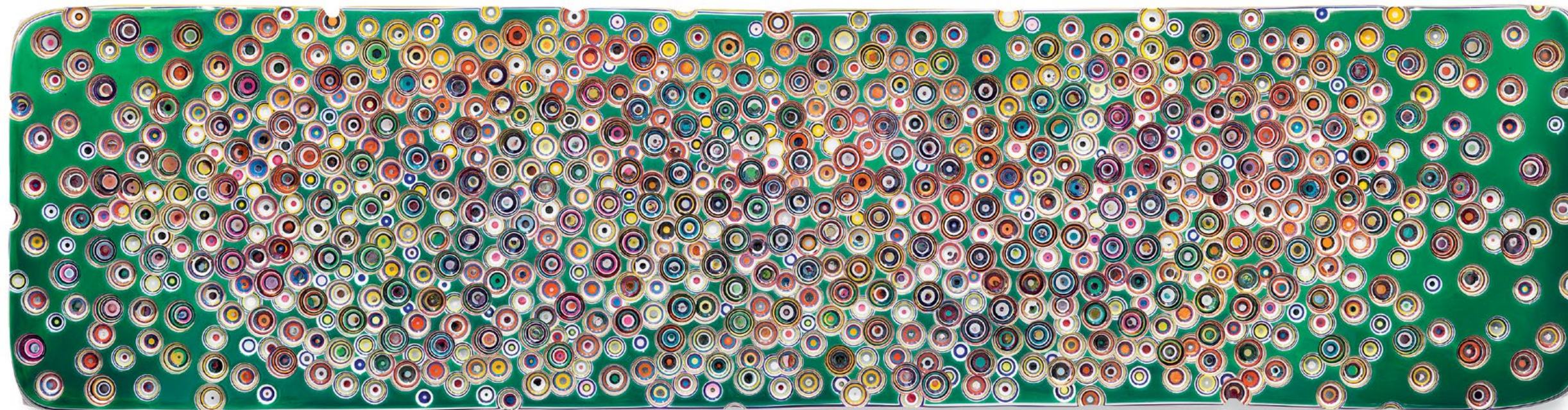
MEANTWELLBUTDIDNOTKNOWHOW, 2018

Epoxy resin and pigments on wood

48 x 60 inches

121.9 x 152.4 cm





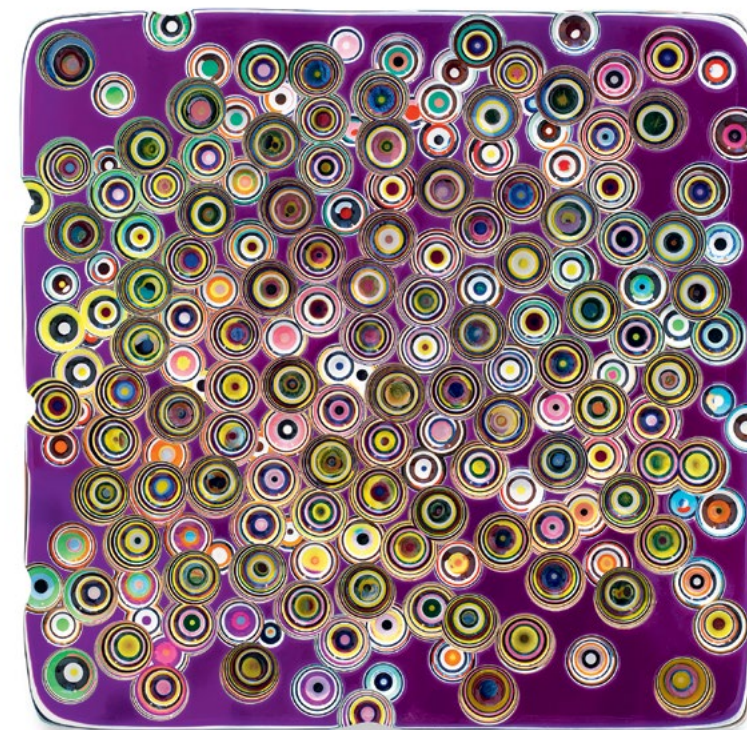
WEREWEASKEDIFWEWANTEDTOLIVEORNOT(BLUMFELD), 2018

Epoxy resin and pigments on wood

24 x 96 inches

61 x 243.8 cm

FROM ETERNAL GREY, 2018
Epoxy resin and pigments on wood
24 x 24 inches
61 x 61 cm





CROSSINGTROMPEL'OEILS, 2018

Epoxy resin and pigments on wood

24 x 96 inches

61 x 243.8 cm

HERE WE STAND TWO FOOLS IN LOVE, 2018

Epoxy resin and pigments on wood

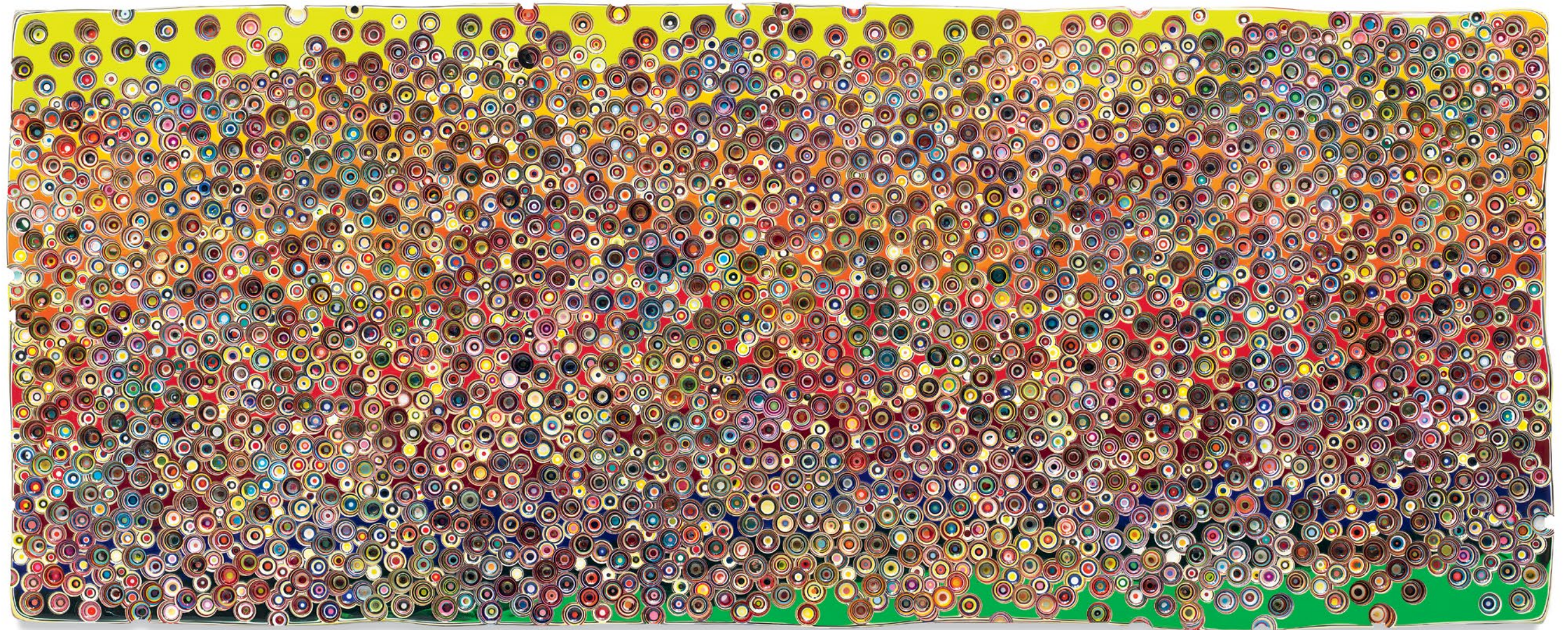
60 x 60 inches

152.4 x 152.4 cm



TIME IS A SOCIAL INSTITUTION, 2018
Epoxy resin and pigments on wood
48 x 96 inches
121.9 x 243.8 cm





INTOTHE RAINBOW VEIN (CYCLES OF OPPOSITION), 2018

Epoxy resin and pigments on wood

48 x 120 inches

121.9 x 304.8 cm



RAINBOWDRIFTER, 2018
Epoxy resin and pigments on wood
17 x 17 inches
43.2 x 43.2 cm

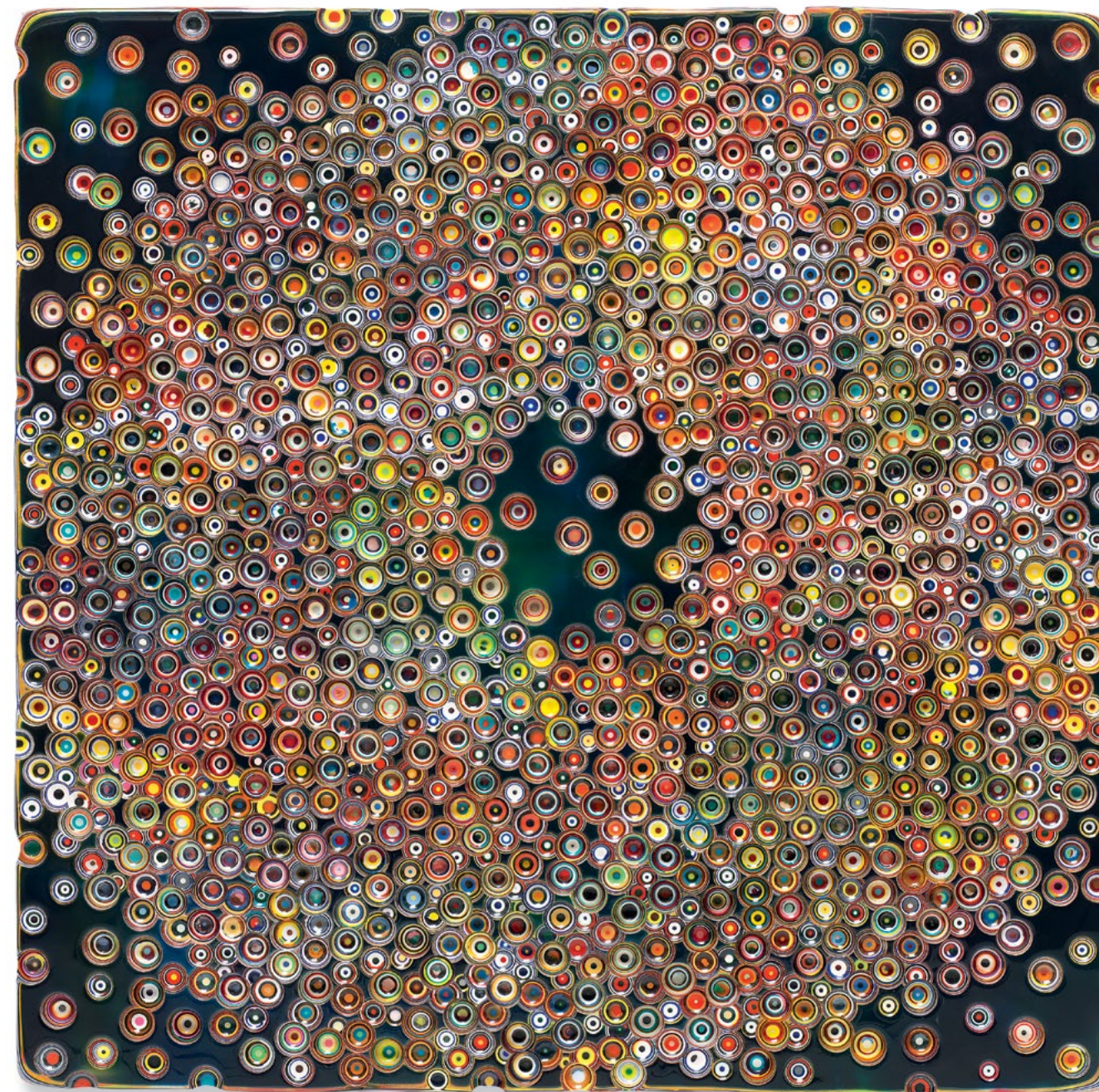
STANDMEUP, 2018
Epoxy resin and pigments on wood
17 x 17 inches
43.2 x 43.2 cm

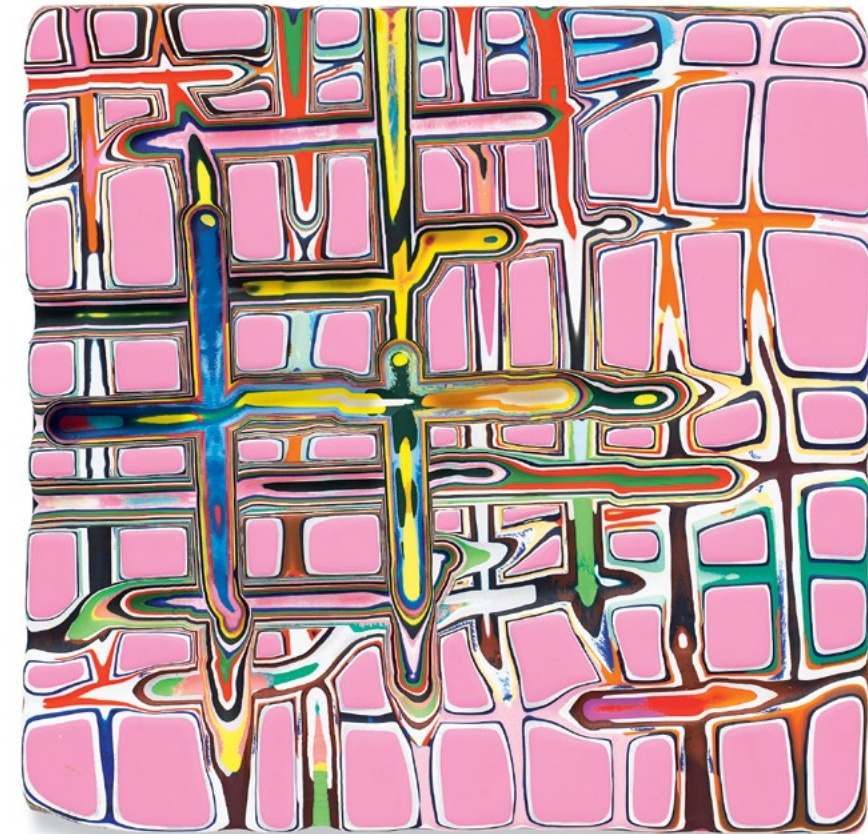


ONLYINAMERICA, 2018
Epoxy resin and pigments on wood
60 x 96 inches
152.4 x 243.8 cm



HENRIROUSSEAUDREAM, 2018
Epoxy resin and pigments on wood
60 x 60 inches
152.4 x 152.4 cm





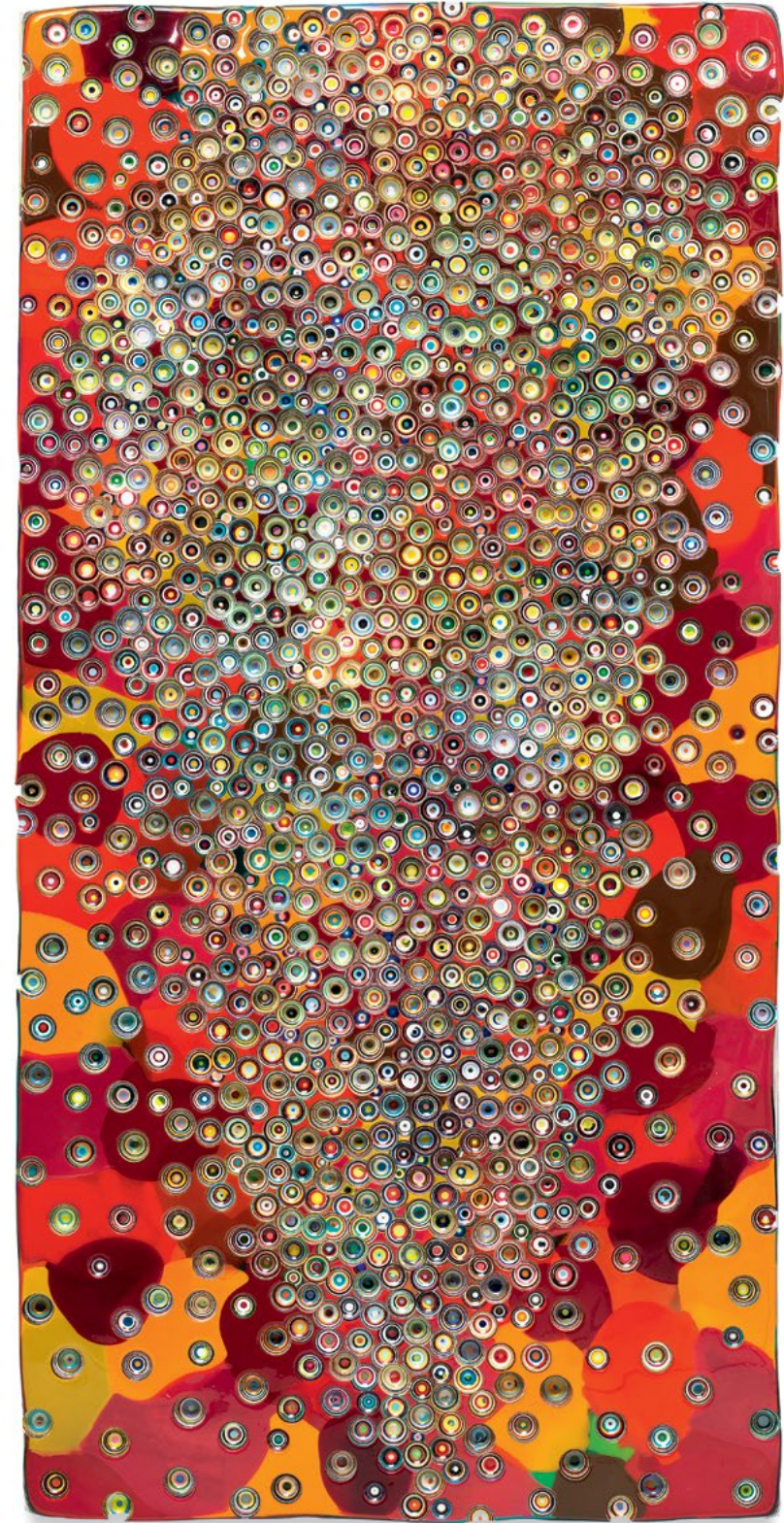
BADGIRLS, 2018
Epoxy resin and pigments on wood
24 x 24 inches
61 x 61 cm

POCKETS(YOUCOULDFEELTHESKIES), 2018

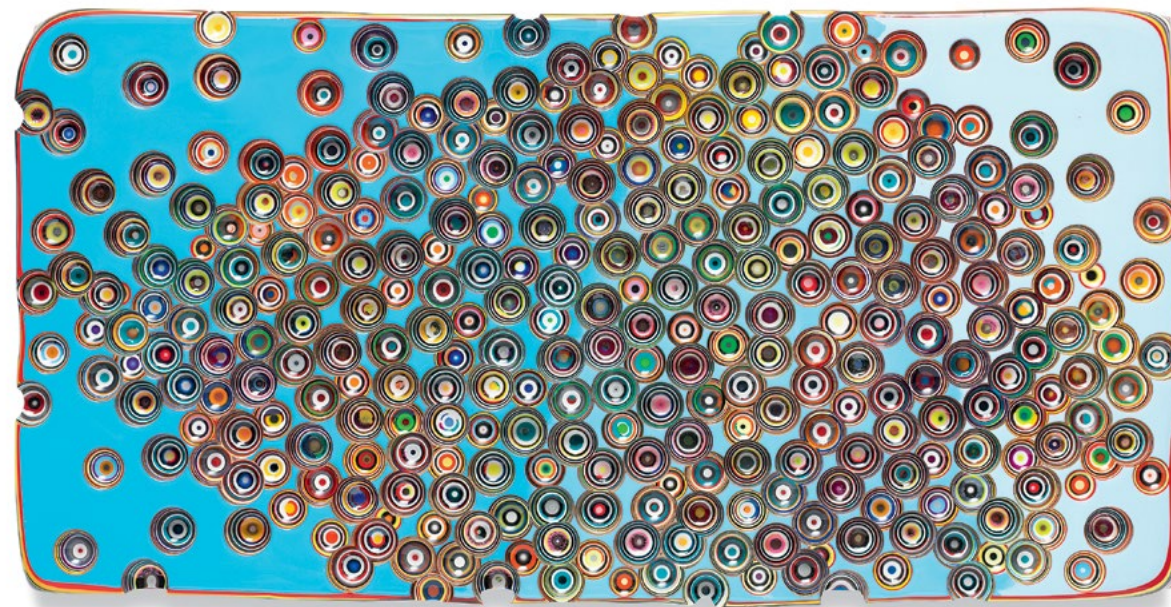
Epoxy resin and pigments on wood

96 x 48 inches

243.8 x 121.9 cm



MITDIRINDERGEGEND, 2018
Epoxy resin and pigments on wood
24 x 48 inches
61 x 121.9 cm





JUSTINCASEHARDCOREGUTS, 2018

Epoxy resin and pigments on wood

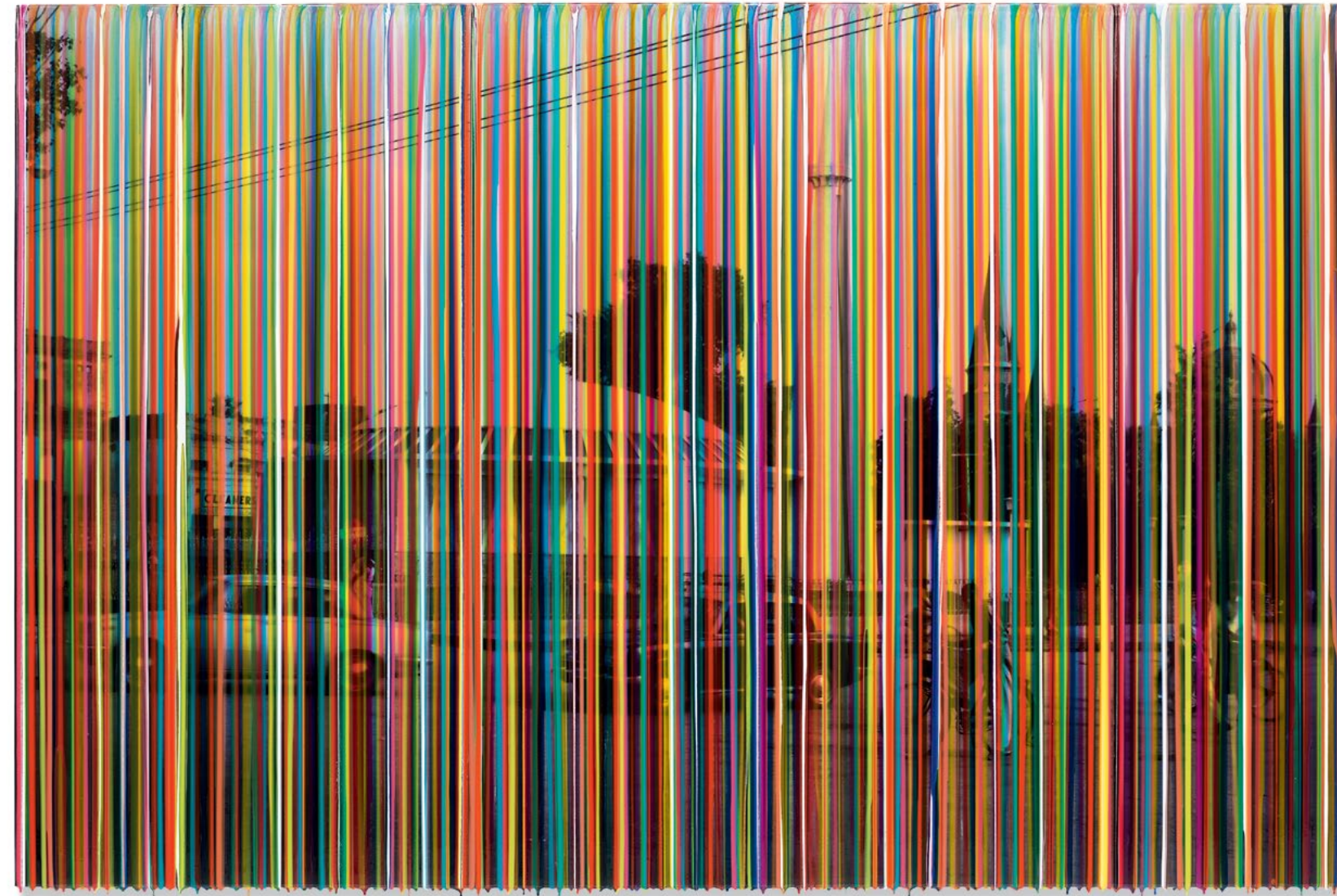
24 x 24 inches

61 x 61 cm

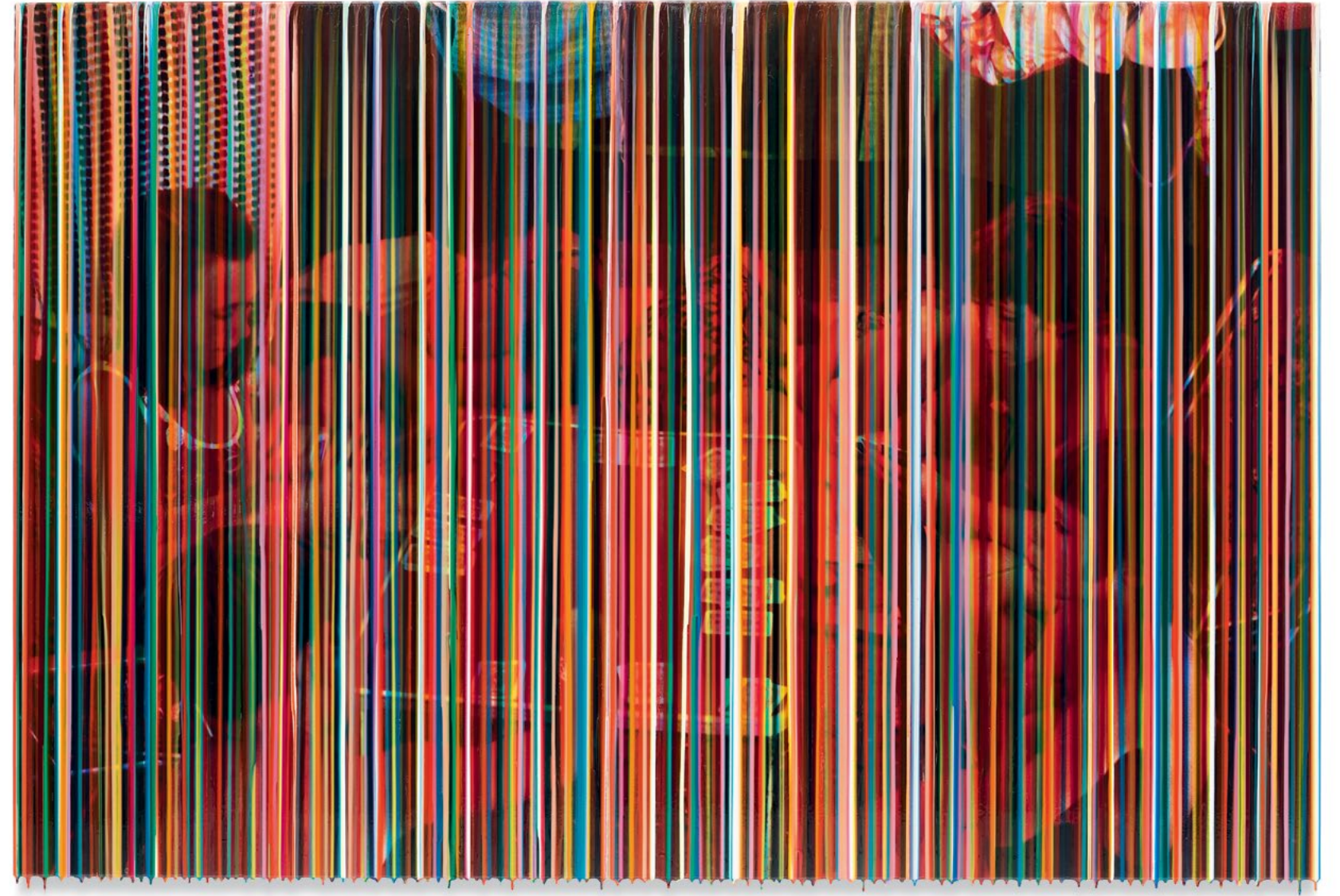


BASIC VOCABULARY, 2018
Epoxy resin and pigments on wood
24 x 108 inches
61 x 274.3 cm

EXPANDEDCONTROVERSIES, 2018
Epoxy resin, c-print, and pigments on wood
60 x 90 inches
152.4 x 228.6 cm



LESJOUERSDESCARTES, 2018
Epoxy resin, c-print, and pigments on wood
60 x 90 inches
152.4 x 228.6 cm



BOOGIEWOOGIEFEVERDREAM, 2018
Epoxy resin and pigments on wood
36 x 48 inches
91.4 x 121.9 cm



UPSTAIRSANDBACKTOBASICS, 2018
Epoxy resin and pigments on wood
24 x 48 inches
61 x 121.9 cm

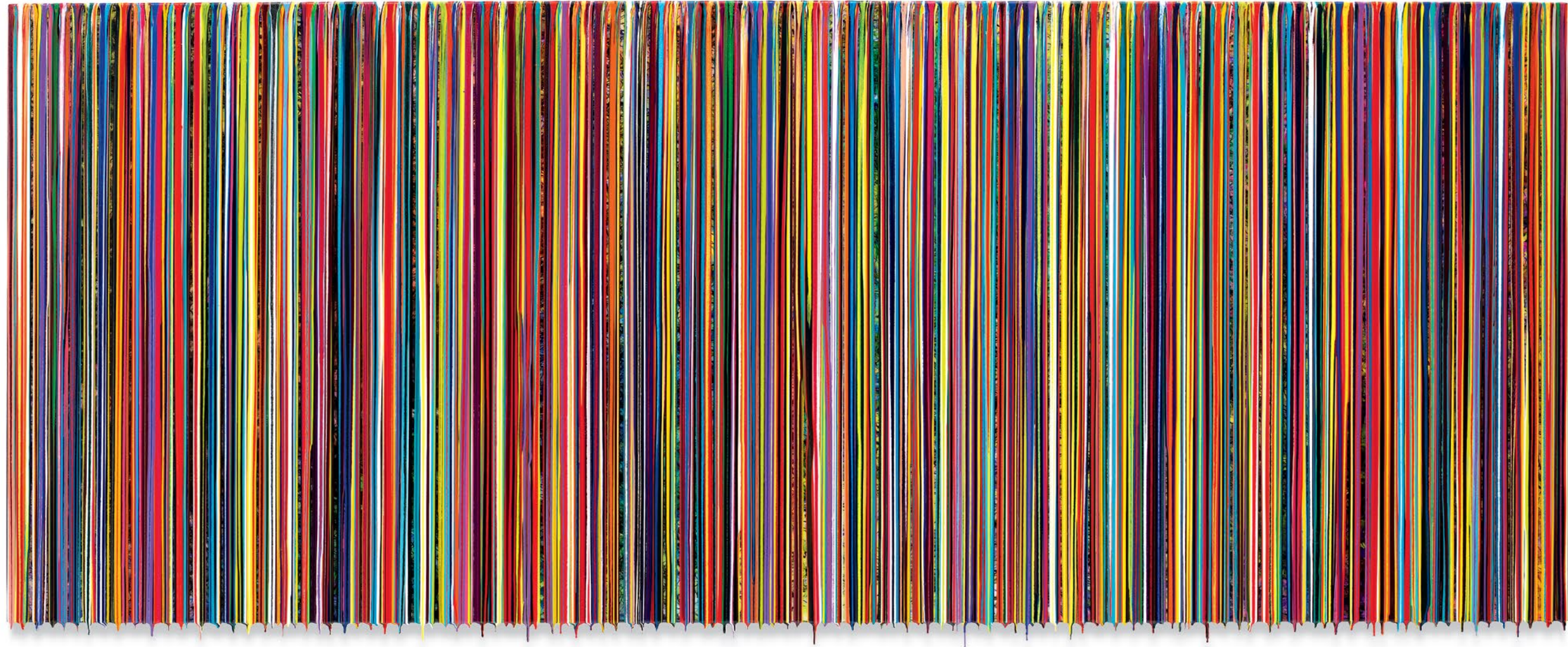


BECAUSE FINALLY I AGREE (YES), 2018

Epoxy resin and pigments on wood

48 x 120 inches

121.9 x 304.8 cm

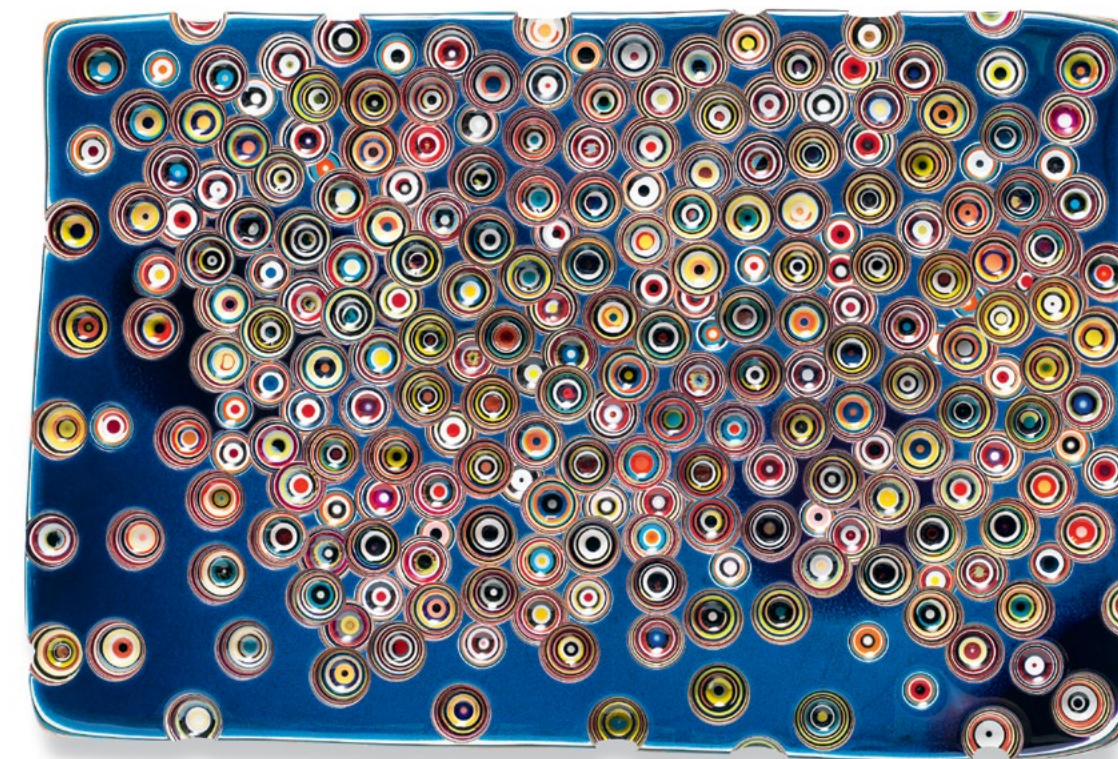


THEDEVILSGOTMYNUMBER, 2018
Epoxy resin and pigments on wood
72 x 72 inches
182.9 x 182.9 cm



UNDERTHECOKESIGN, 2018
Epoxy resin and pigments on wood
24 x 48 inches
61 x 121.9 cm



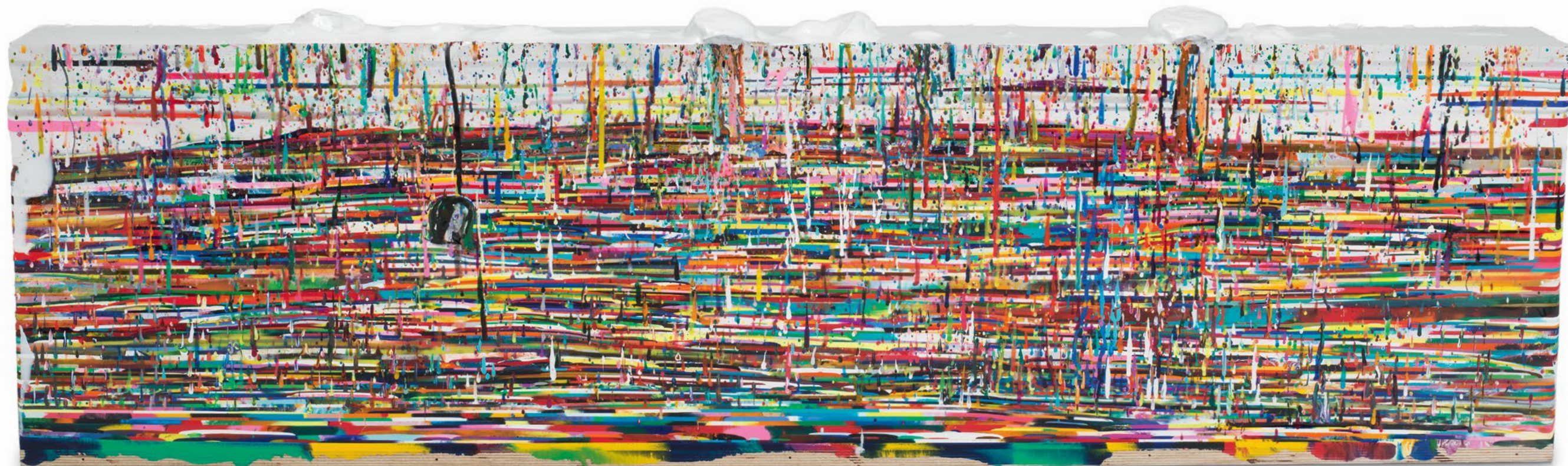


ASECRETLIFE, 2018
Epoxy resin and pigments on wood
24 x 36 inches
61 x 91.4 cm



SANDED MOON, 2017/18
Epoxy resin, foam and pigments on wood
45 x 39 x 36 inches
114.3 x 99.1 x 91.4 cm

OPENMELODYFOLDS, 2013/18
Epoxy resin and pigments on wood
18 x 61 x 6 inches
45.7 x 154.9 x 15.2 cm





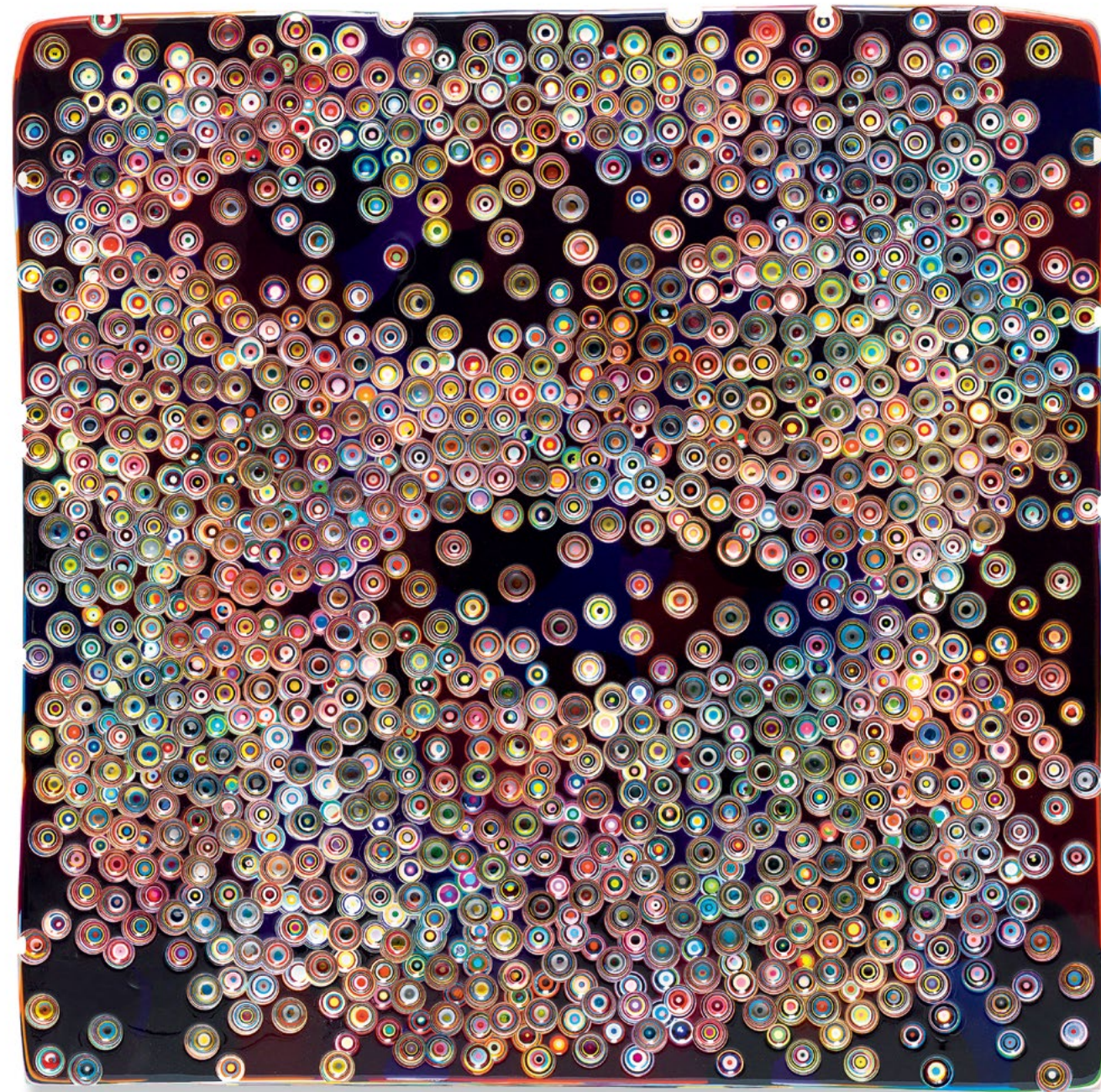
DORAMAAR, 2018
Epoxy resin and pigments on wood
17 x 14 inches
43.2 x 35.6 cm

CYCLOPS(THESECONDFACE), 2018

Epoxy resin and pigments on wood

60 x 60 inches

152.4 x 152.4 cm





DAYLIGHTTEARSTOMYEYES, 2018
 Acrylic binder, pigments and sumi ink on wood and aluminum core
 104 x 396 x 1 inches
 264.2 x 1005.8 x 2.5 cm



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MARKUS LINNENBRINK
LETMETELLYOUWHATTHE RIVERS GONNADO

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