



nara roesler

**josé patrício:
potência criadora infinita**

curated by paula braga

nara roesler são paulo

may 22 – july 17, 2021

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Paula Braga

Everything in the world, in its immeasurable variety, consists of a finite number of atoms that recombine to form every flower, every hair, every stone, every piece of plastic. It is an immense quantity of particles of a magnitude far greater than the human intellect can conceive. Huge, unimaginable, but finite. What is infinite is the creative power of combinations between these atoms. We call this the infinite power of Nature.

José Patrício's work is an exercise in invoking this creative force. From a fixed number of elements, such as dominoes or puzzle pieces, Patrício elaborates variations that play with the sequential possibilities of the chosen elements.

The artist's most recent works use identical plastic pieces whose colors vary in a gradient of twenty-two shades of gray, ranging from white to black. The tonal economy highlights the combinatorial structure of each work, allowing for the identification of the rule that generates the uniqueness of each work.

The artist's task is to devise a mathematical formula for each composition of pieces within the gray gradient. Thus, he starts a piece in white and goes on to black, and then starts the sequence again, mounted in spiral rows, from the edge to the center of a board. In another work, the same ordering begins in the center and opens itself towards the edges. In yet another piece, the gradient follows the diagonal lines from the vertices of the board to its center, and so on... finitely. Unlike Nature, the time that the artist has to exercise this creative power is finite.

José Patrício's insistence on the repetition of the creative process is a struggle against the painful limit of time available for each human being to create. In this sense, it is possible to understand his work as an exercise in questions of time. Every object that leaves the artist's studio not only carries the time of the craftsmanship involved in its creation, but above all, also holds a key to understanding temporality. What one deciphers with the

long contemplation of these spirals is not the forming rule of the sequence, but rather the fundamental enigma: how can we—piece by piece, step by step—constitute a charming movement in life within the time we have?

Time is also the element that carries José Patrício's work from the guidelines defined by the Concrete Art Manifesto, from 1930, to the sensitivity of the 1959 Neoconcrete Art Manifesto. The first, launched in Paris by the Dutch artist Theo van Doesburg, advocated that the art of a new era should follow six characteristics, easily identifiable in José Patrício's work:

1. Art is universal: produced in Pernambuco in the last two years, the compositions presented in this exhibition are as universal as a mathematical formula. They could exist anywhere and at any time;
2. The work of art must be entirely conceived and formed by the spirit before its execution: each arrangement by José Patrício derives from a mentally defined rule which is strictly followed;
3. The work must be built with purely plastic elements, such as planes and colors, so the final work has no other meaning than "itself": averse to representativeness, José Patrício creates structures, all of which establish a new element in the world, related only to the mathematical idea that formed it;
4. The construction of the work must be simple and visually controllable: it is possible to identify the numerical rule that led to the making of the work, such as seven black pieces, followed by six gray pieces, followed by five lighter gray pieces, and so on until the white ones;
5. The technique must be mechanical: José Patrício's works are made by the mechanical repetition of a manual gesture, of fitting, carried on the same way whatever the hand that manipulates the piece;

6. Striving for absolute clarity: there is nothing that is not in sight in José Patrício's works;

Taking a step beyond concretist rationality, every work by Patrício incites questions about time—and this is where there is a dialogue with Neoconcretism. The intellectual excitement that explicit mathematics causes in the viewer, the pursuit for the forming rule of the composition does not matter as much as the sensory effect caused by the optical kinetics of the pieces, and the psychological effect that unfolds in various temporal issues. Or, as stated by the Neoconcrete Manifesto,

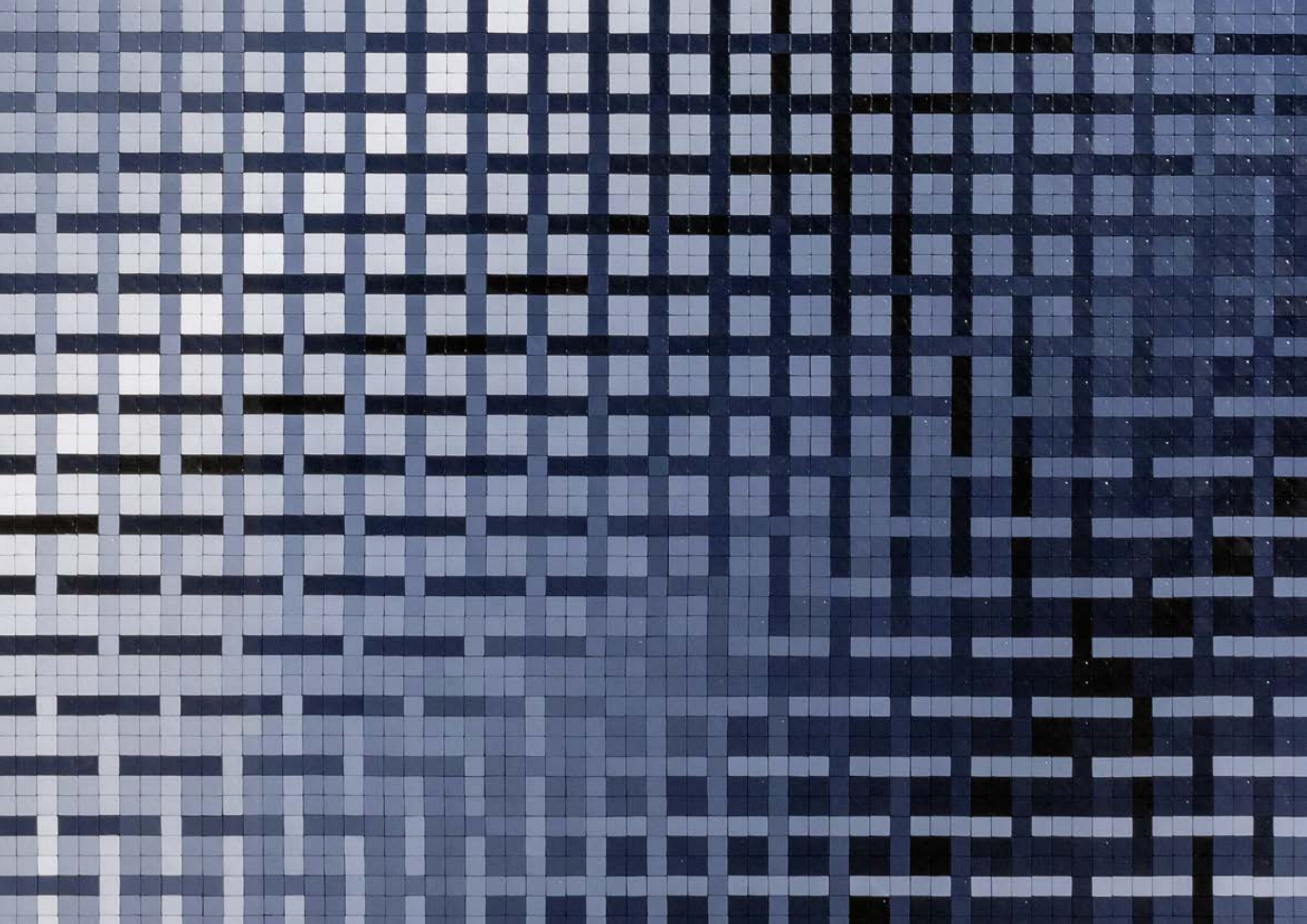
it will be of specific cultural interest to determine the approximations between artistic objects and scientific instruments, between the artist's intuition and the objective thought of the physicist and the engineer. But, from the aesthetic point of view, the work becomes of interest precisely for its possessions in what transcends these external approaches: for the universe of existential meanings that it founds and reveals at the same time.

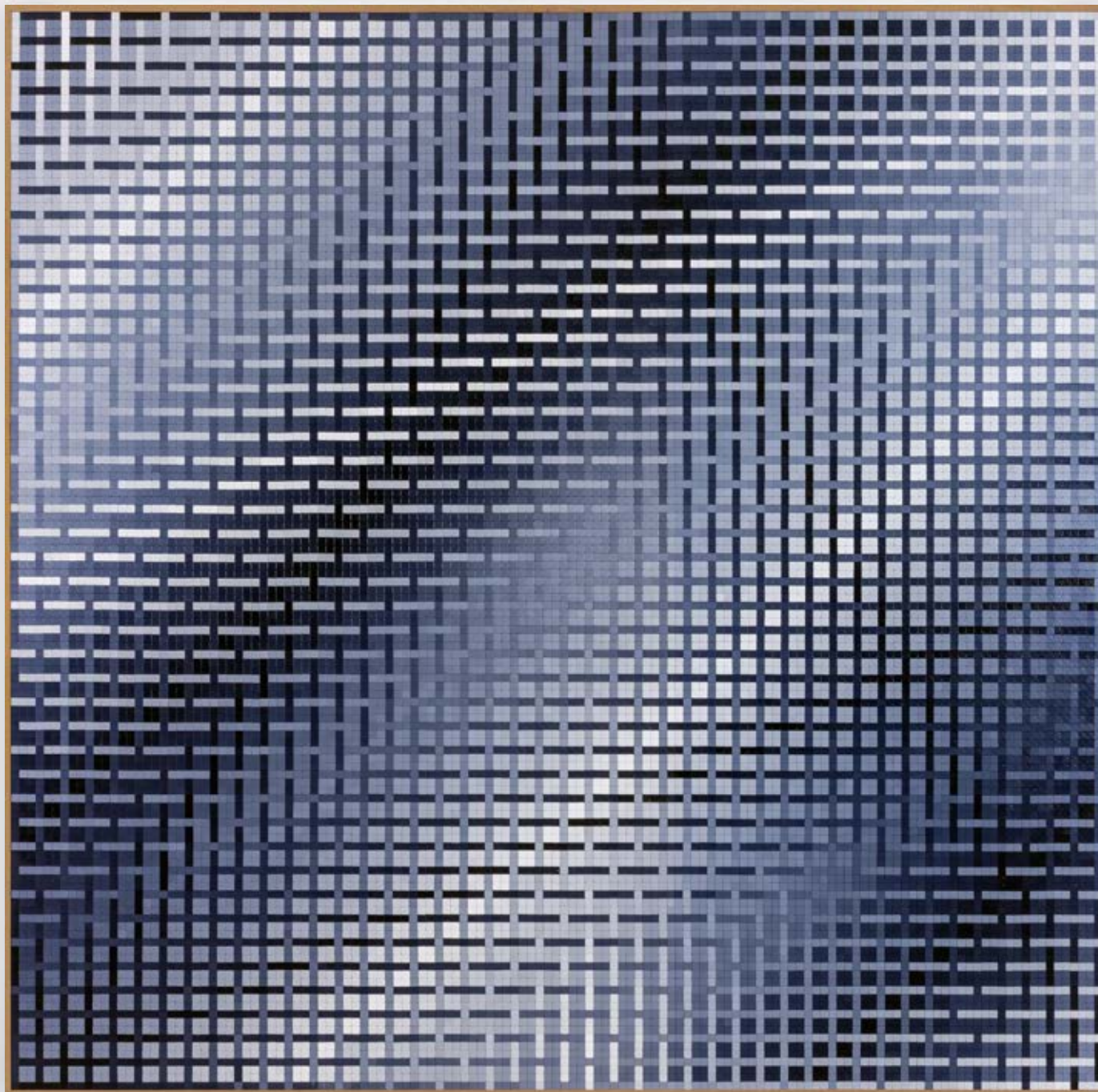
A work such as *Expansão e retração tonal* [Tonal Expansion and Retraction] is mathematically decipherable, as it consists of two squares and opposite movements, one centripetal and the other centrifugal, in the distribution of the pieces of the gray gradient. It is also mathematically understandable that the edgy rows extend themselves, without changing the color of the pieces, for a few more turns at the periphery of the board, resulting in black and white stripes. Here's the algorithm. But knowing this does not exhaust the work.

Sensorially, this composition seems to draw our eye to the center of each square, which is bright on one side and dark on the other. The black and white stripes on the edges confuse perception: are there two or three bands of each color? The analysis of the work becomes even more interesting when

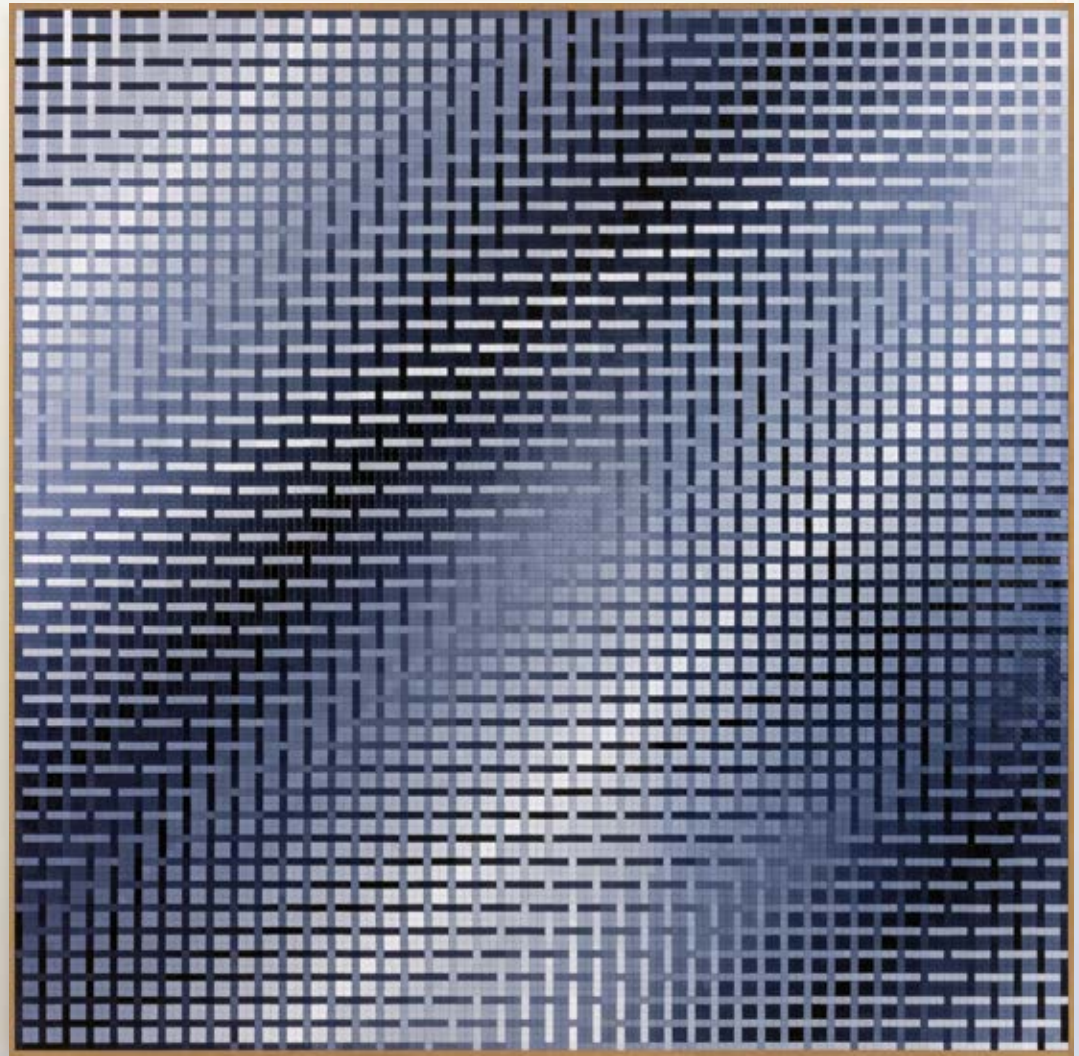
it addresses the psychological reactions of the viewer who faces the two vortexes of the composition. What are they? Naked, raw autonomy produces a kind of semiological distress. Even if we recognize the connection with everyday life that the puzzle pieces suggest—something more easily identifiable in the dice and dominoes of other series by José Patrício —, they defy, in their structural totality, our efforts to connect them to something previously known. It is as if they were the “quasi-corpus” of the Neoconcrete Manifesto: ‘a being whose reality is not limited to the external relations of its elements; a being that, decomposable in parts by analysis, is only fully given to the direct, phenomenological approach.’

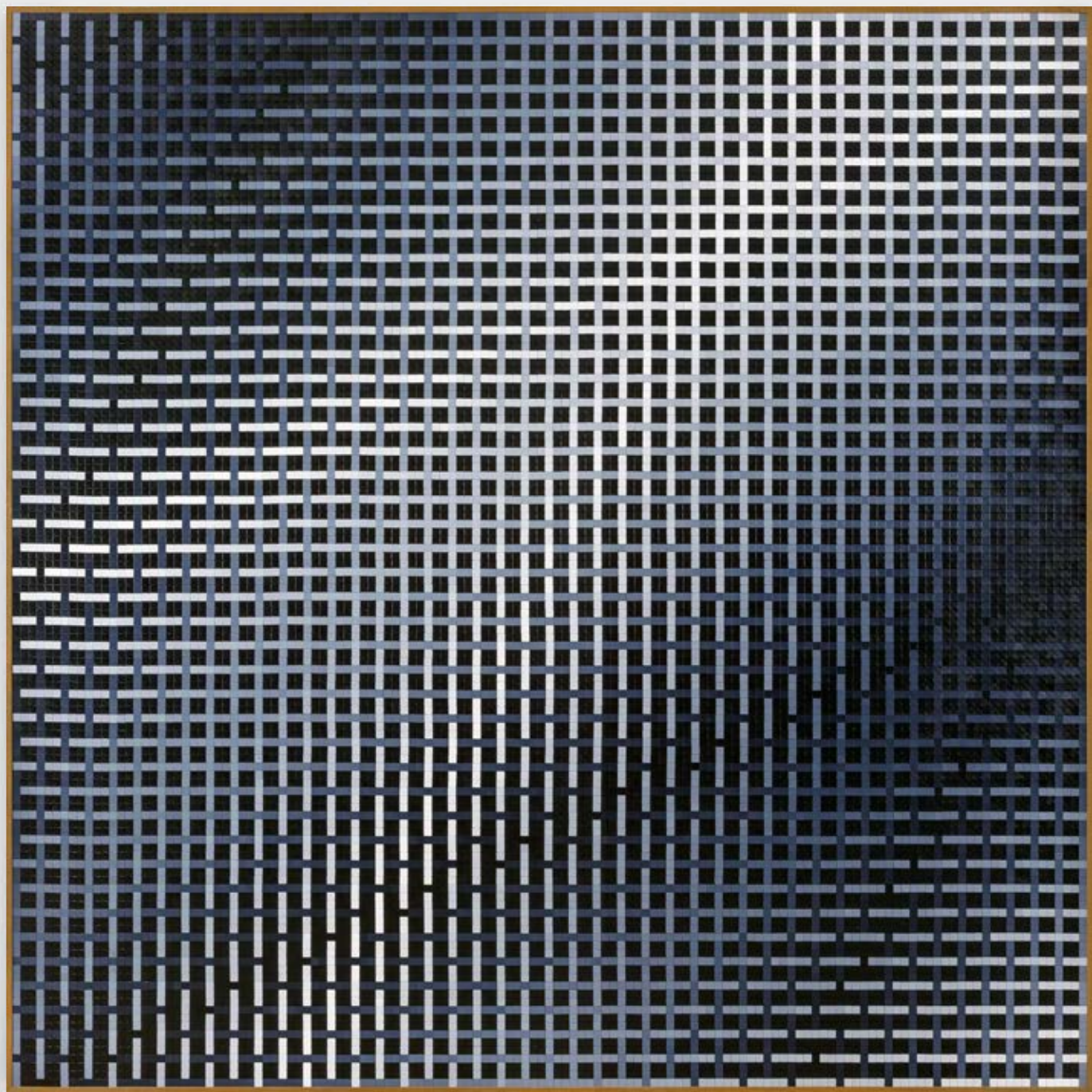
The works of the exhibition *José Patrício: Infinite Creative Power* are beings that demand coexistence to be known. All we can do is to start this relationship, from being to being, with the work, which is extremely independent, self-sufficient, as if it could live well without our eyes. It is certainly not a living organism, but it is an aesthetic organism, which is beyond the mere object. And what gives these works the character of independence and silent existence is precisely the time. They were laboriously built in time, given time from the hand that fit each piece of the puzzle. And now they pulse in a perennial temporality, which has the eternity of mathematics. And we, the viewers, are much more finite than that.



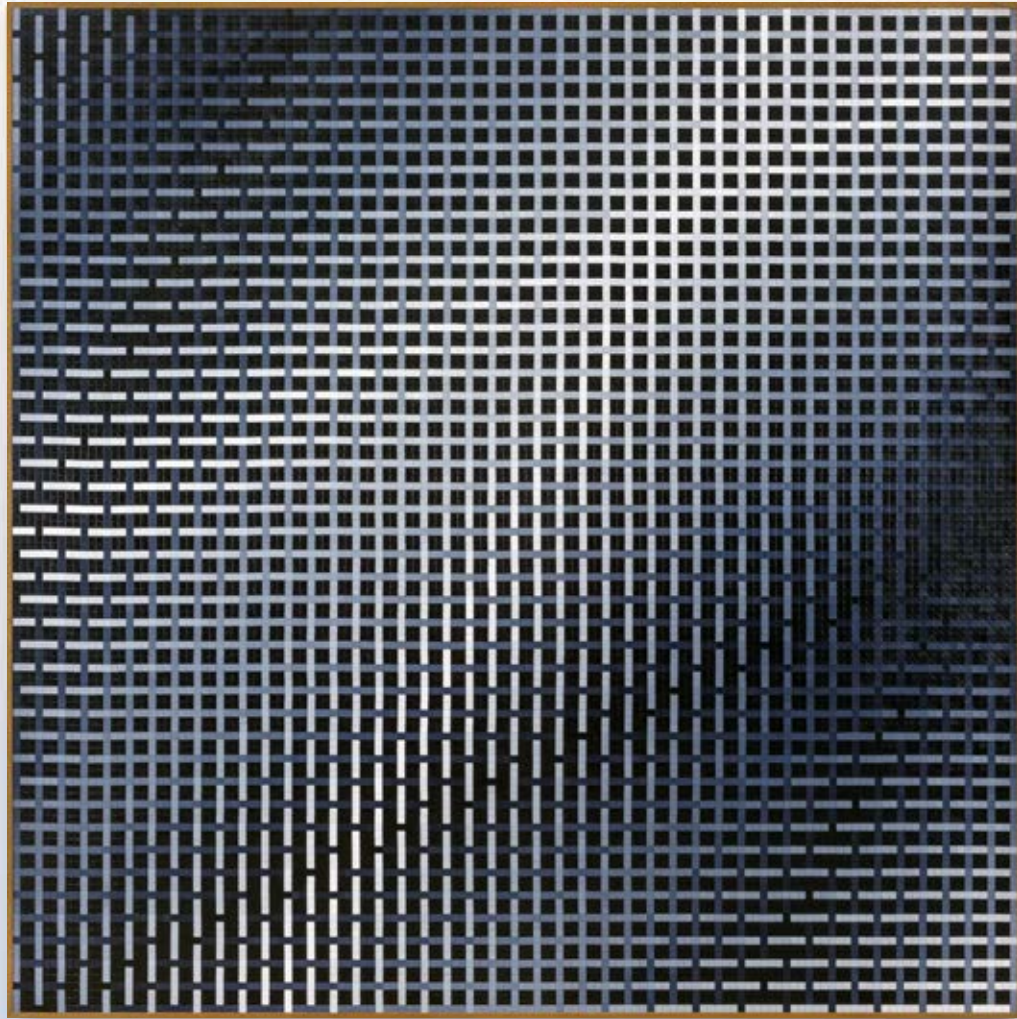


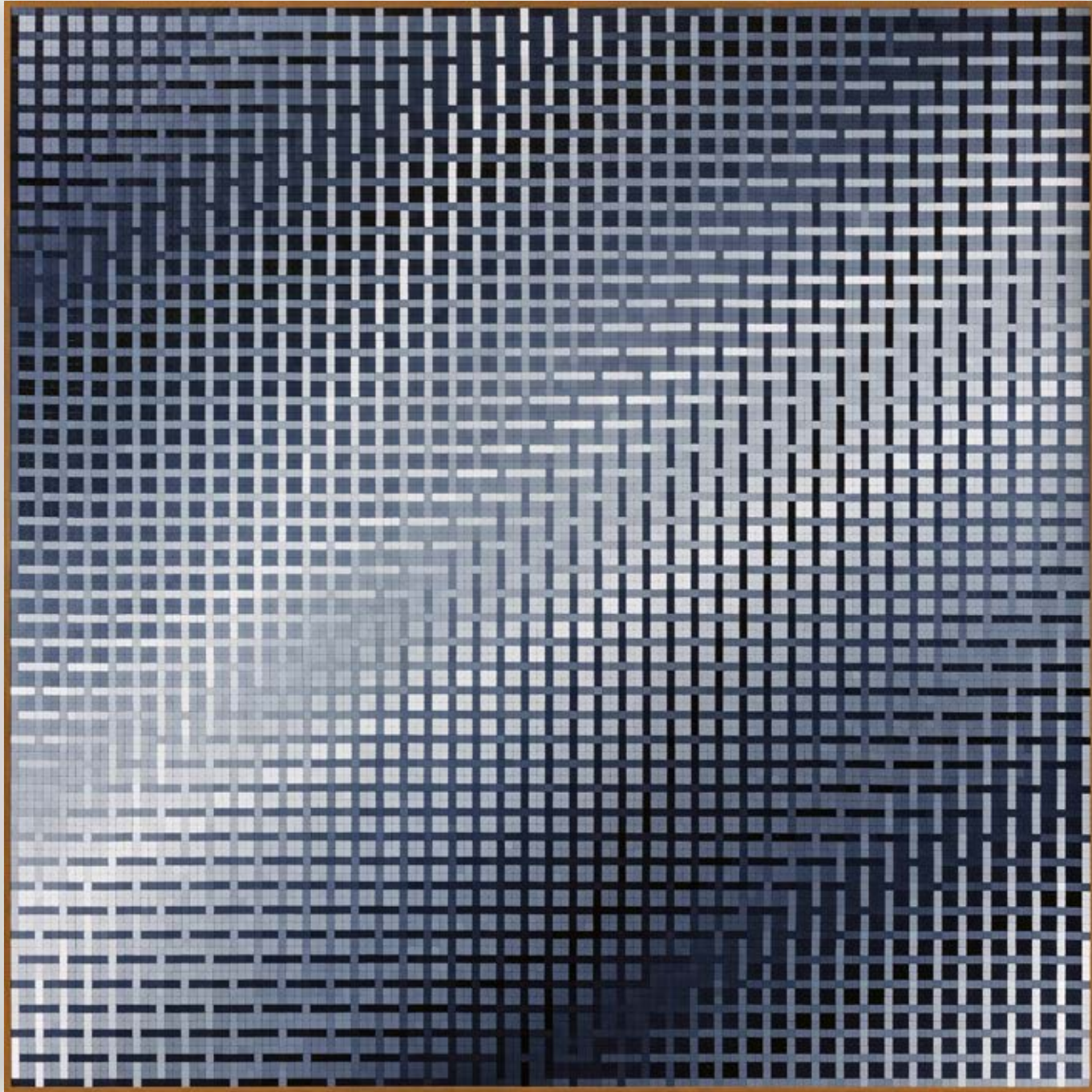
Tramas tonais I, 2020
synthetic enamel on
plastic pieces on wood
unique
190 x 190 x 4 cm
74.8 x 74.8 x 1.6 in



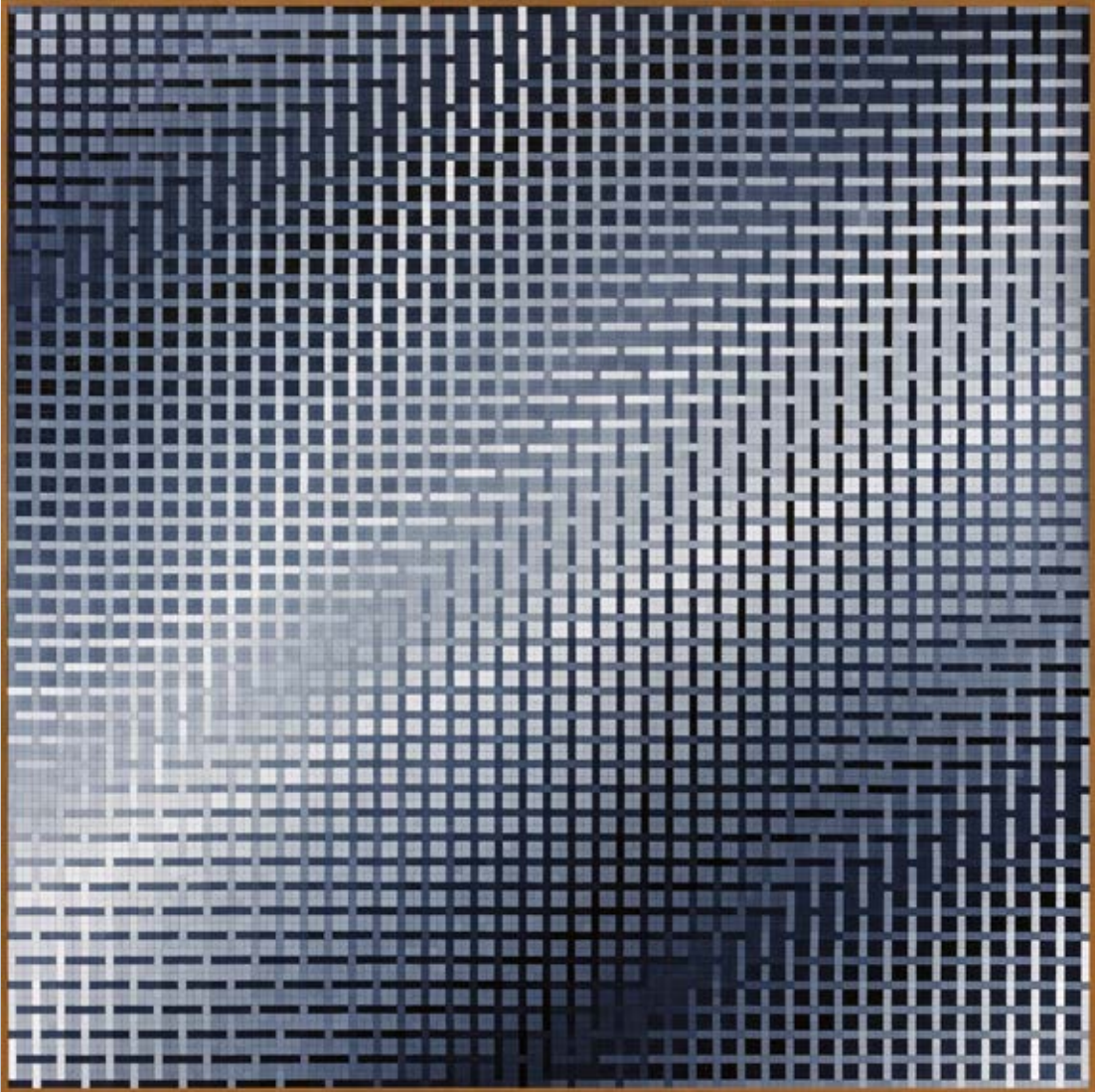


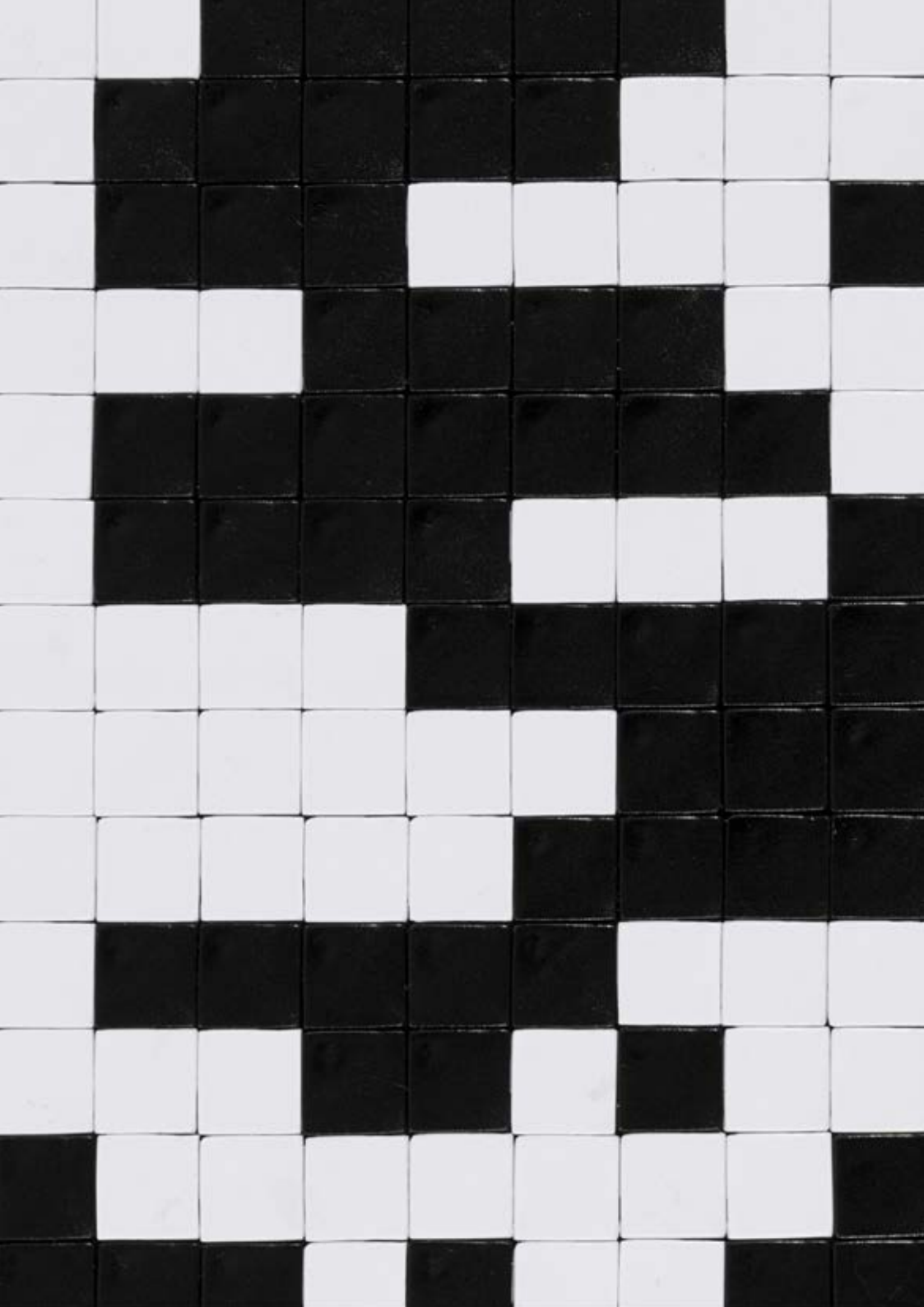
Tramas tonais V, 2020
synthetic enamel on
plastic pieces on wood
unique
190 x 190 x 4 cm
74.8 x 74.8 x 1.6 in





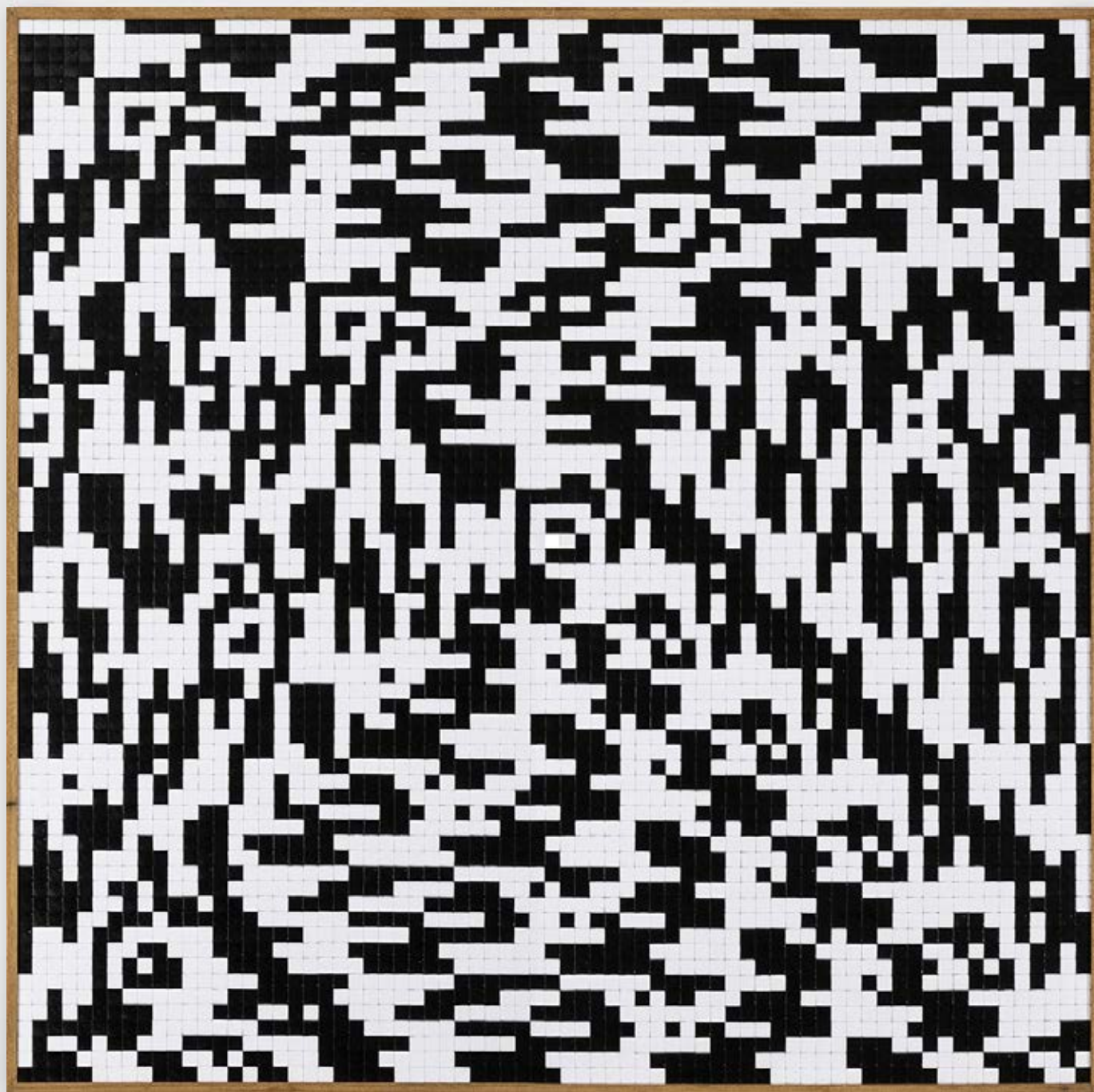
Tramas tonais VI, 2020
synthetic enamel on
plastic pieces on wood
unique
190 x 190 x 4 cm
74.8 x 74.8 x 1.6 in





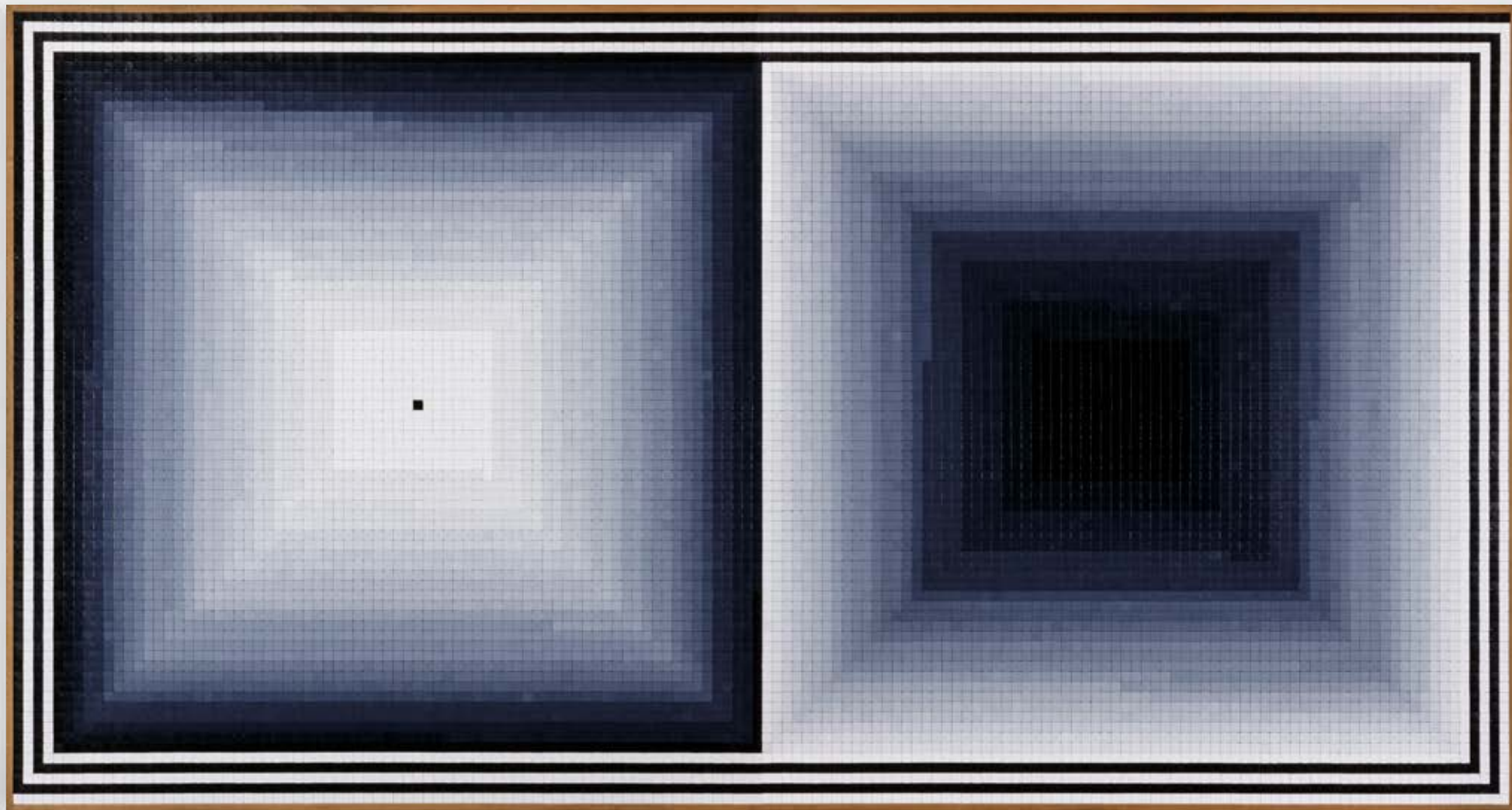
‘Progressively, as I searched for materials that could be used in new ways and given new roles in my artistic practice, I began working with readymade elements, which originated from the industrial circuit of production, with the intention of integrating them to my process of creation in relation to their possibilities of formal arrangements’

— **José Patrício**

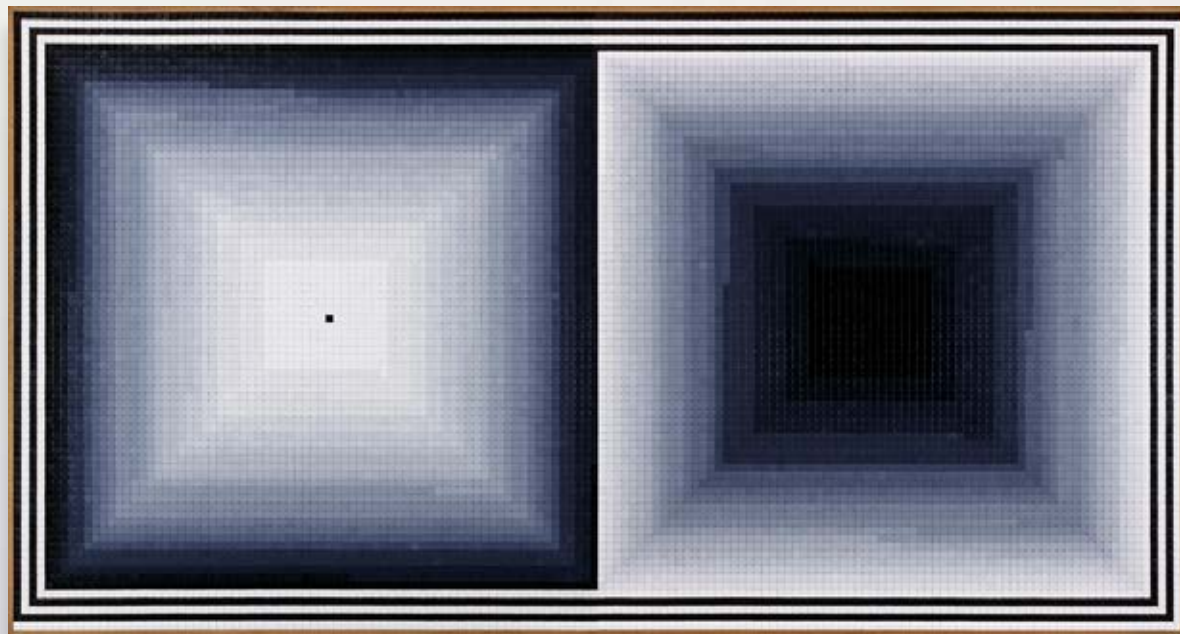


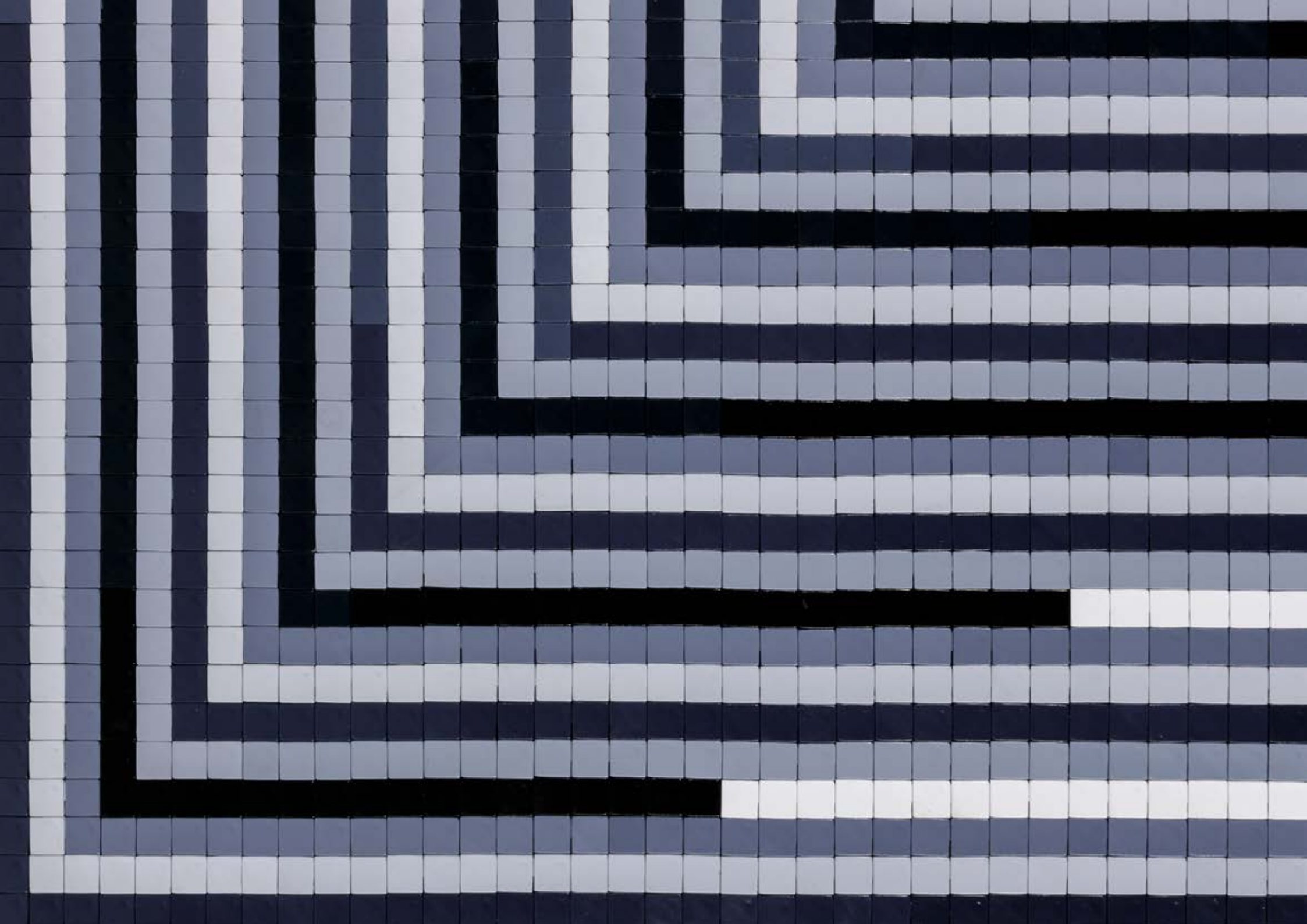
Sequências em preto e branco, 2019
plastic puzzle pieces on wood
unique
103 x 103 cm
40.6 x 40.6 x 1.6 in

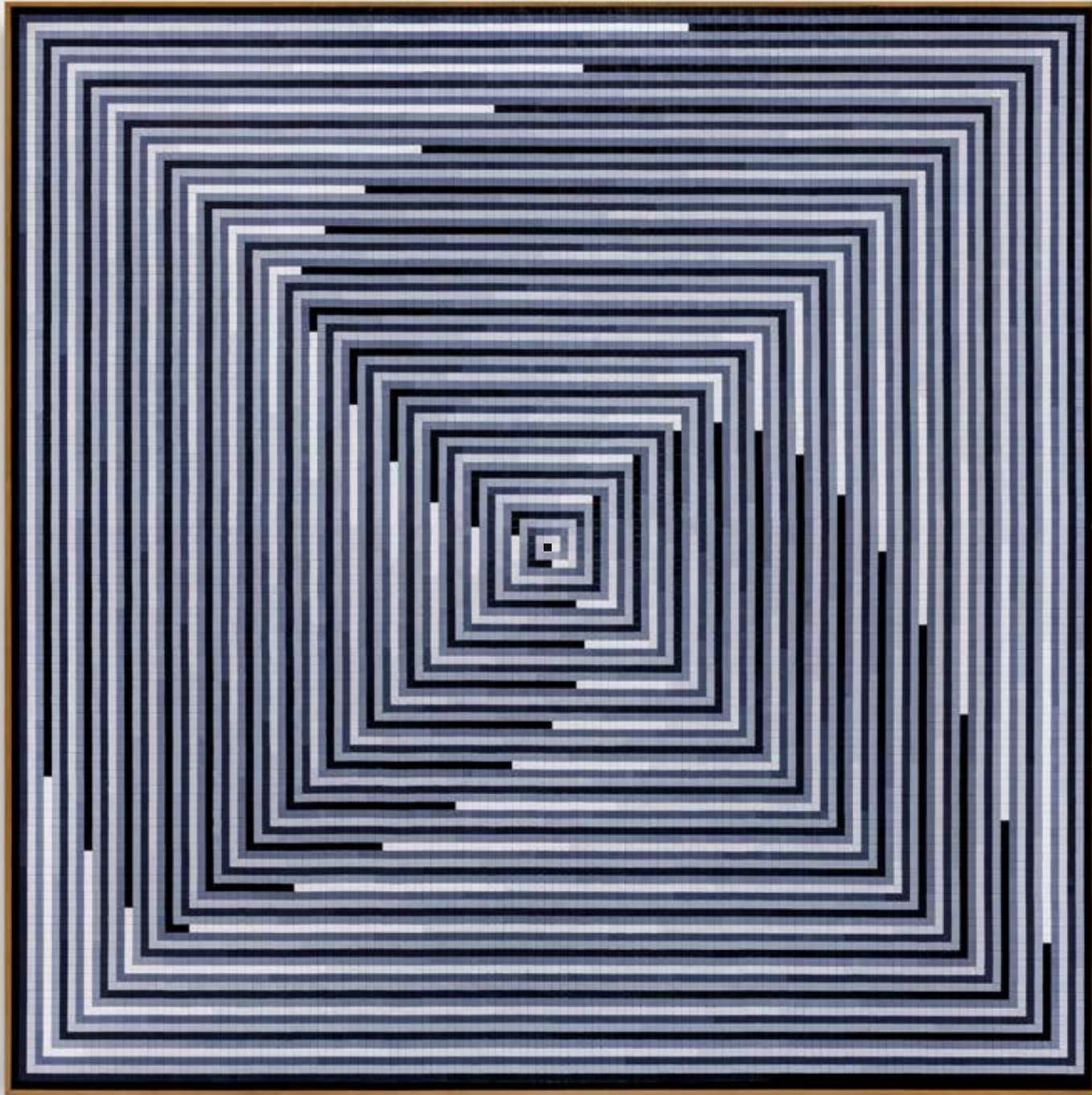




Expansão e retração tonal – Infinito, 2019
plastic puzzle pieces on wood
edition of 3 + exhibition copy
114,5 x 215 cm
45.1 x 84.6 in

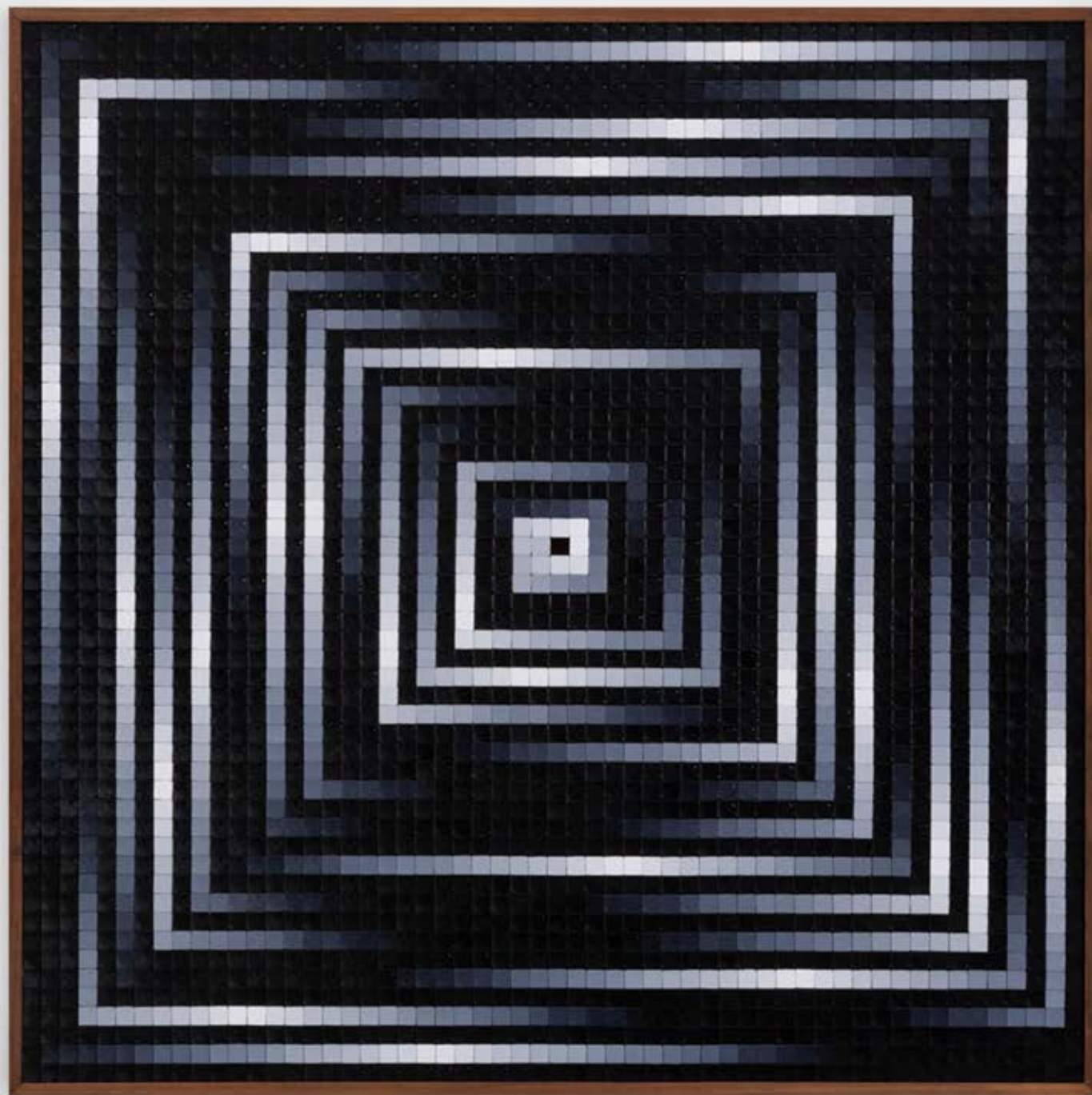






*Circuito tonal em progressão
crescente I, 2019*
plastic puzzle pieces on wood
unique
190 x 190 x 4 cm
74.8 x 74.8 x 1.6 in





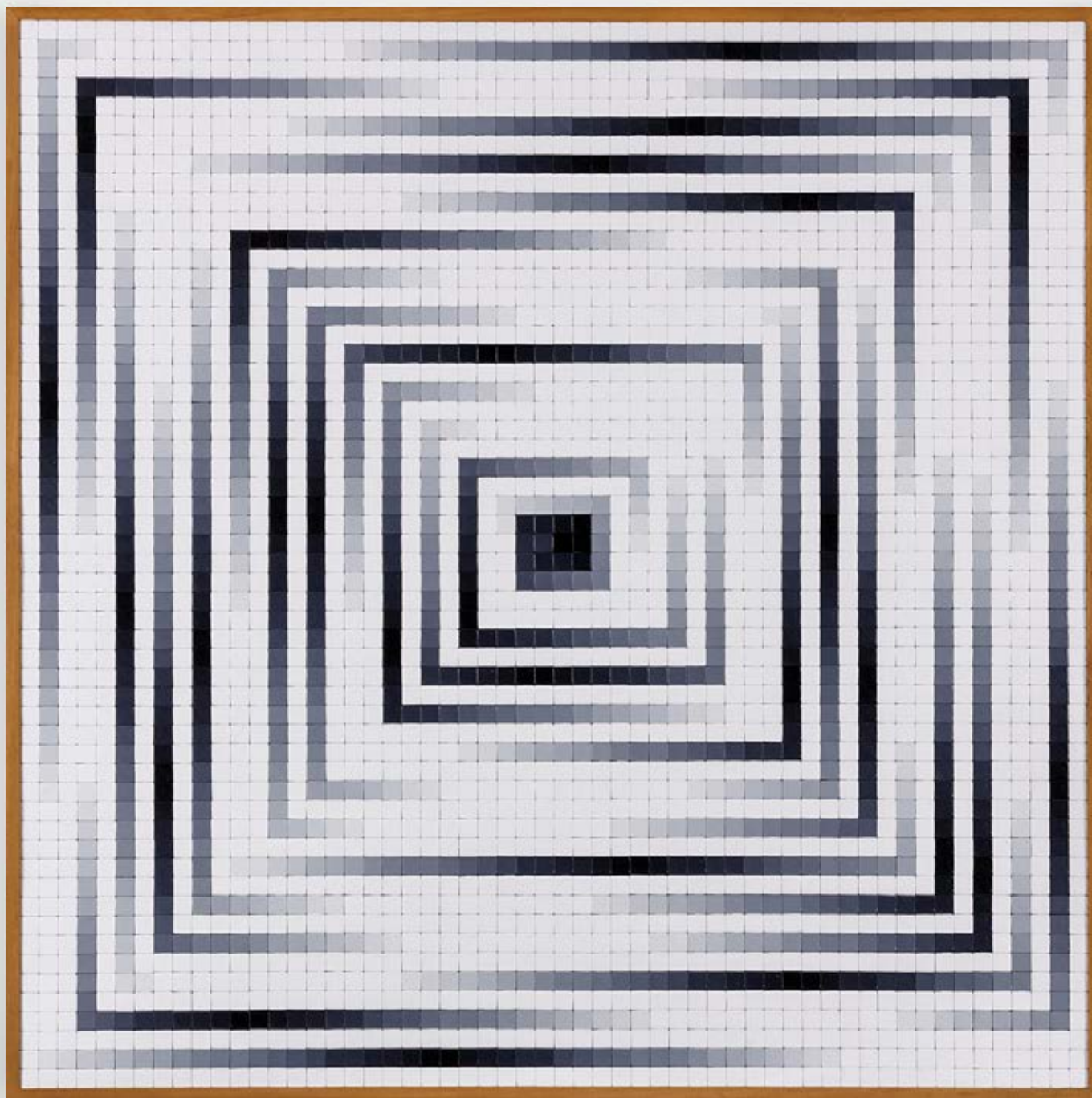
Circuito tonal I, 2019
plastic puzzle pieces on wood
edition of 3 + exhibition copy
81 x 81 x 4 cm
31.9 x 31.9 x 1.6 in



‘I began to see geometry as something that, somehow, brought me safety while also allowing for the works to occur in a rather objective manner. And so, generally, there isn’t much space for subjectivity in my work. It can and does happen, but that subjectivity transpires from a parameter of precision. Geometry collaborates, in the sense that it brings a certain concision, a certain precision in the execution, in the emergence of ideas.’

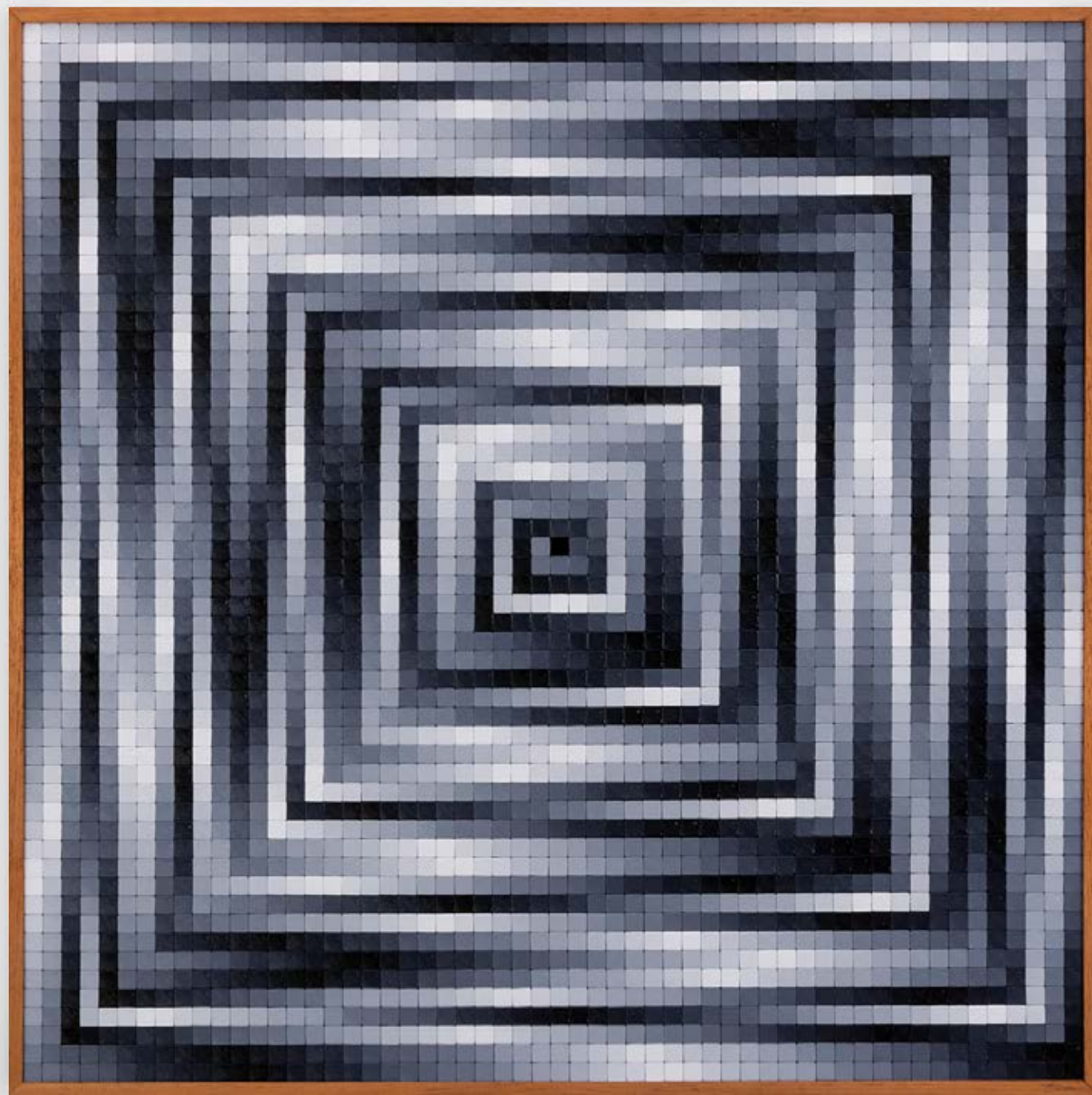
— José Patrício





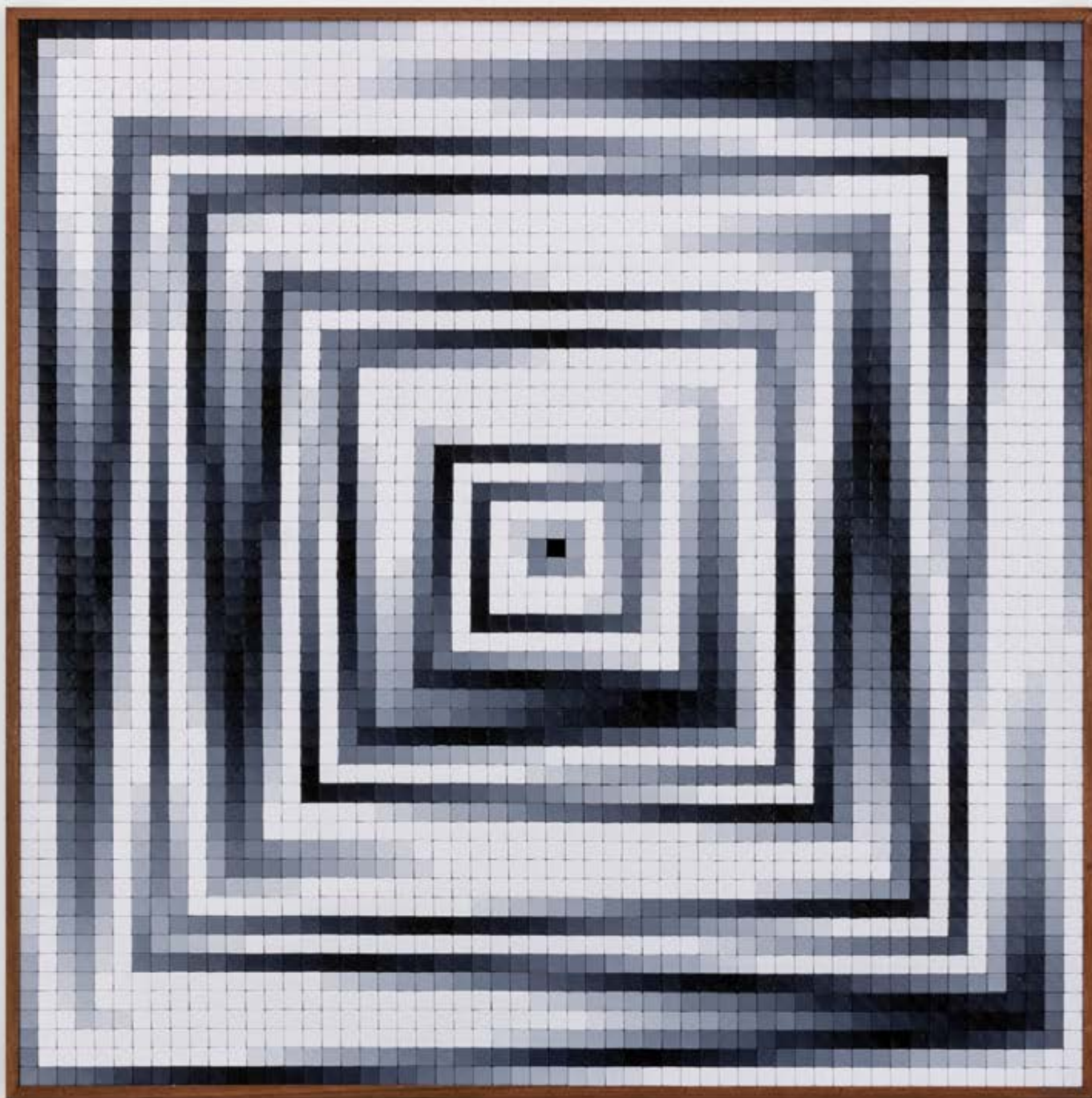
Circuito tonal II, 2019
plastic puzzle pieces on wood
edition of 3 + exhibition copy
81 x 81 x 4 cm
74.8 x 74.8 x 1.6 in





Circuito tonal III, 2019
plastic puzzle pieces on wood
edition of 3 + exhibition copy
81 x 81 x 4 cm
31.9 x 31.9 x 1.6 in

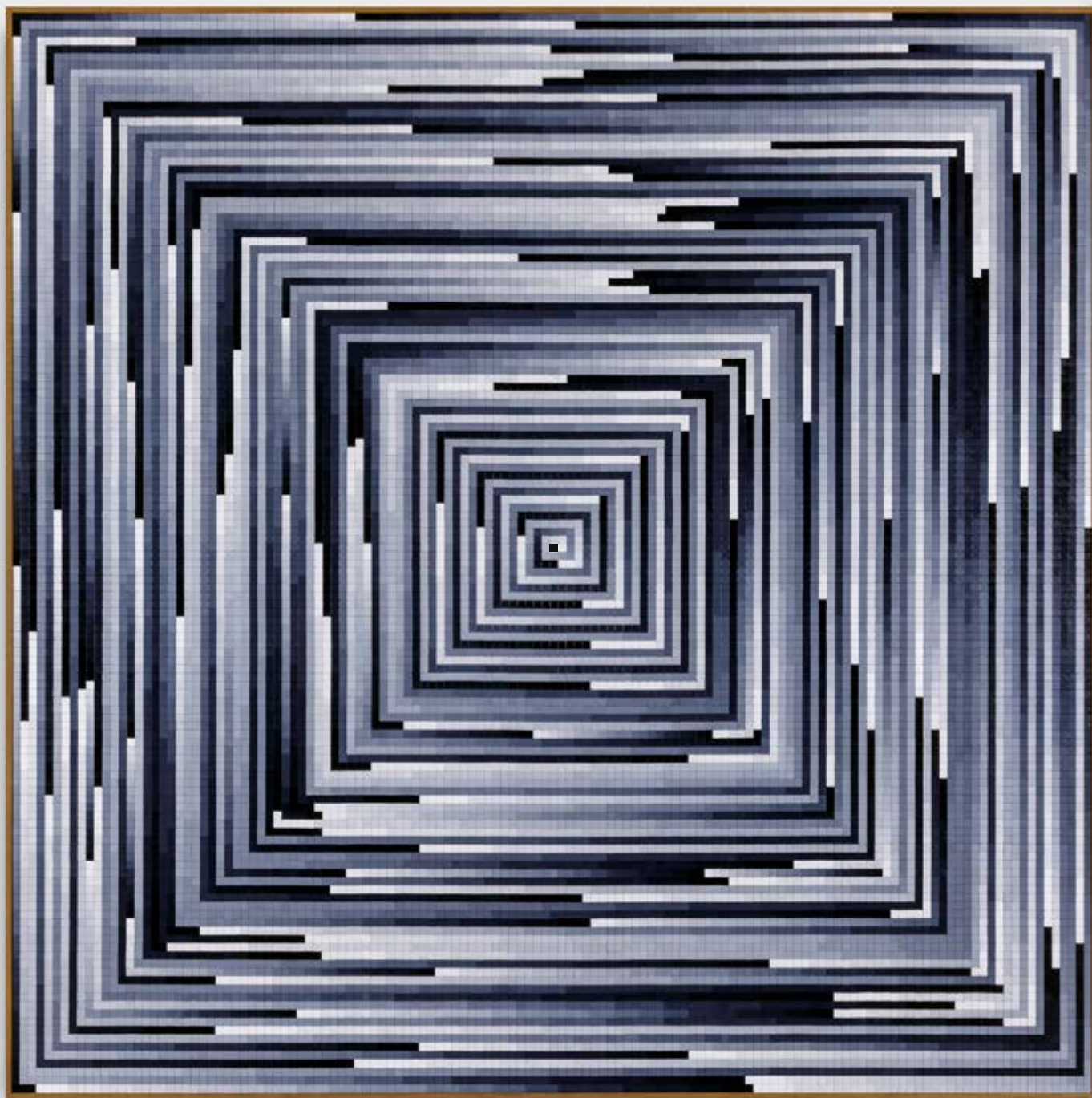




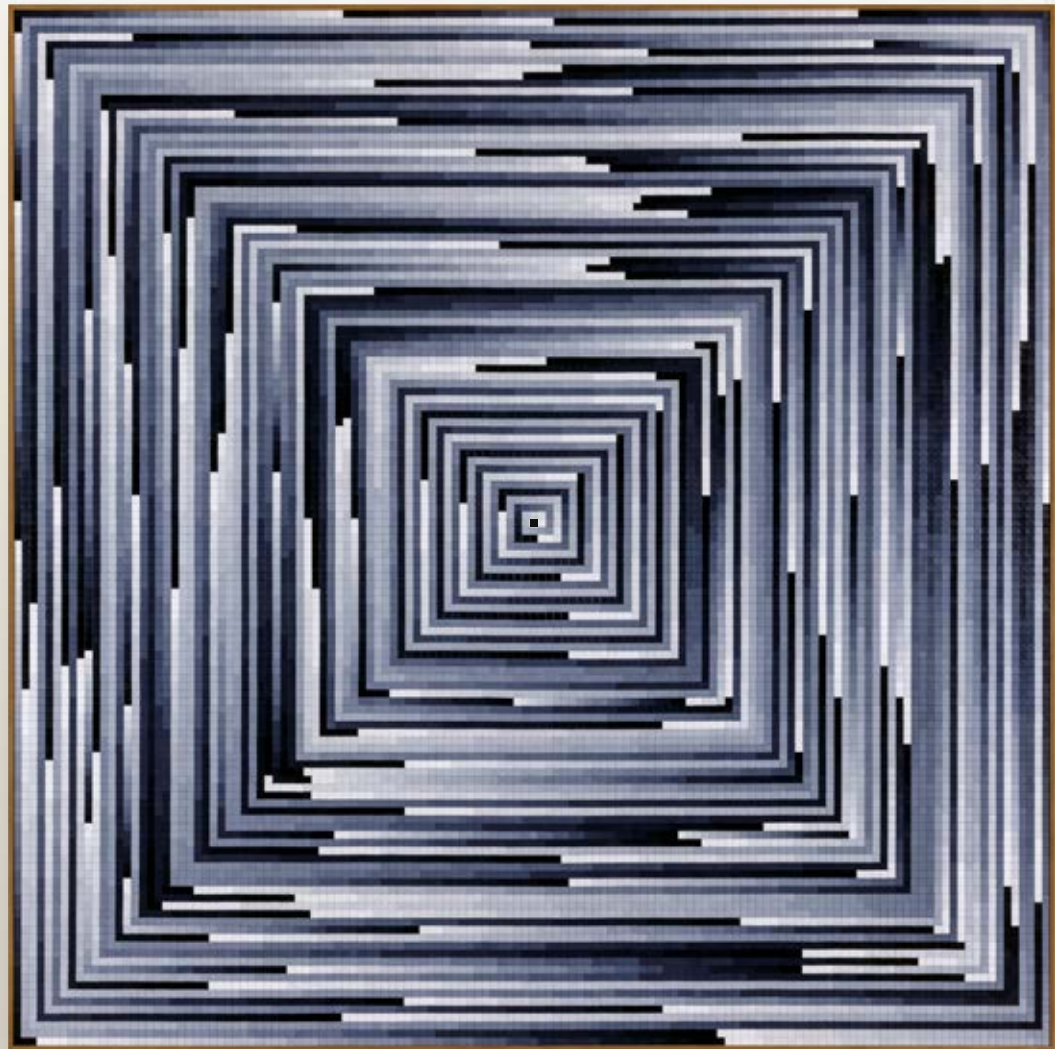
Circuito tonal IV, 2019
plastic puzzle pieces on wood
edition of 3 + exhibition copy
81 x 81 x 4 cm
31.9 x 31.9 x 1.6 in

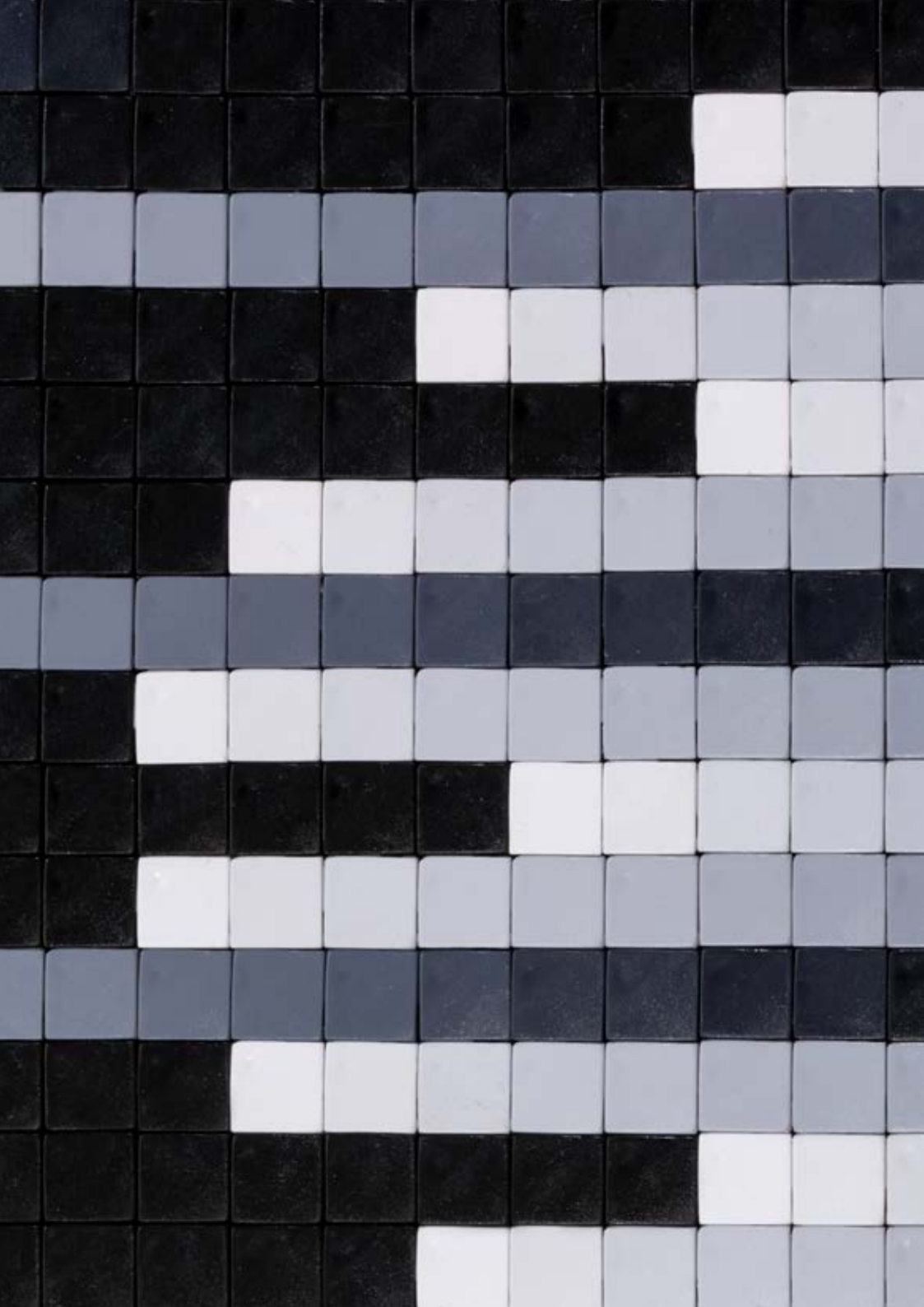






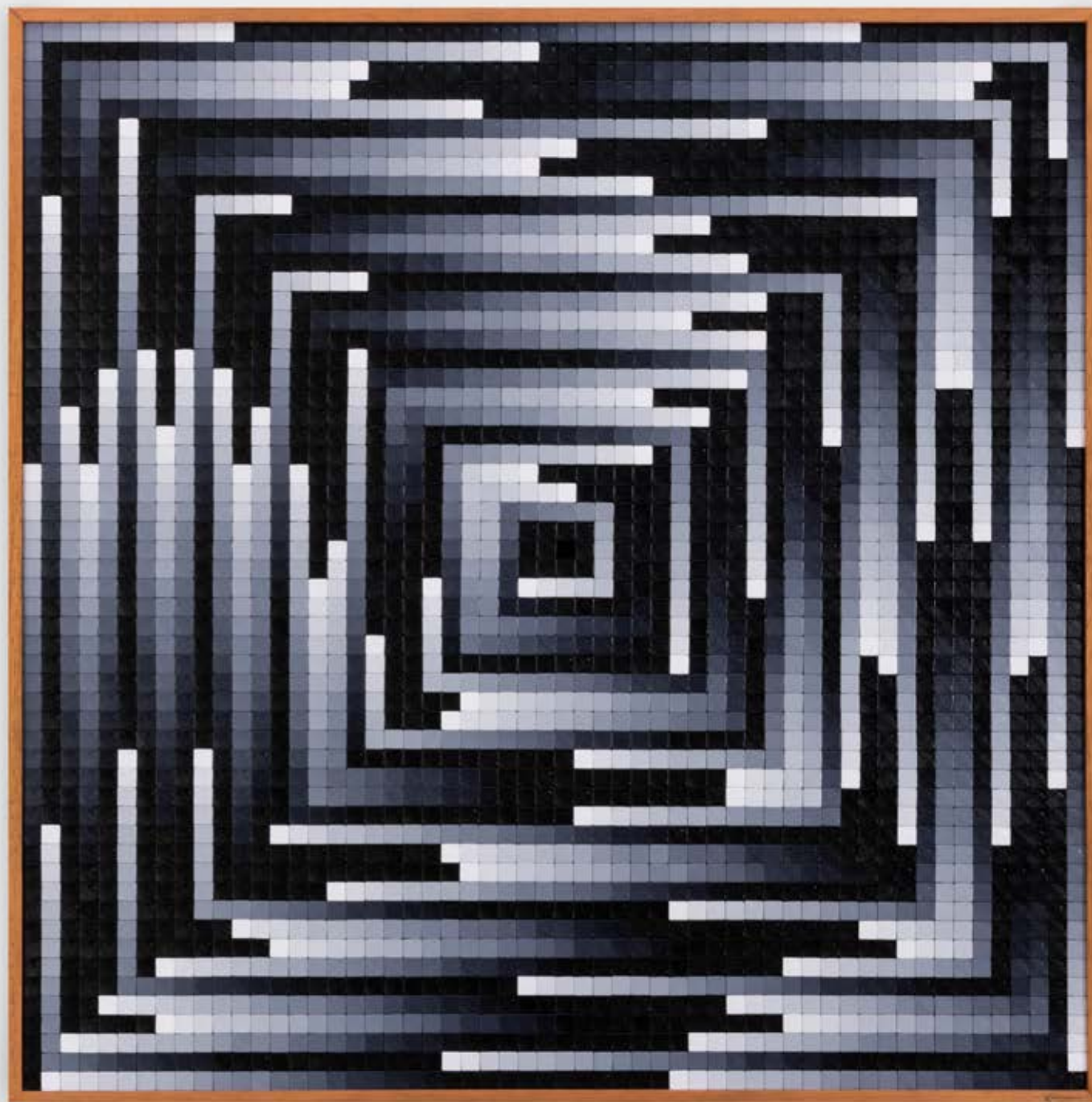
*Circuito tonal em progressão
crescente II*, 2019
plastic puzzle pieces on wood
unique
190 x 190 x 4 cm
74.8 x 74.8 x 1.6 in





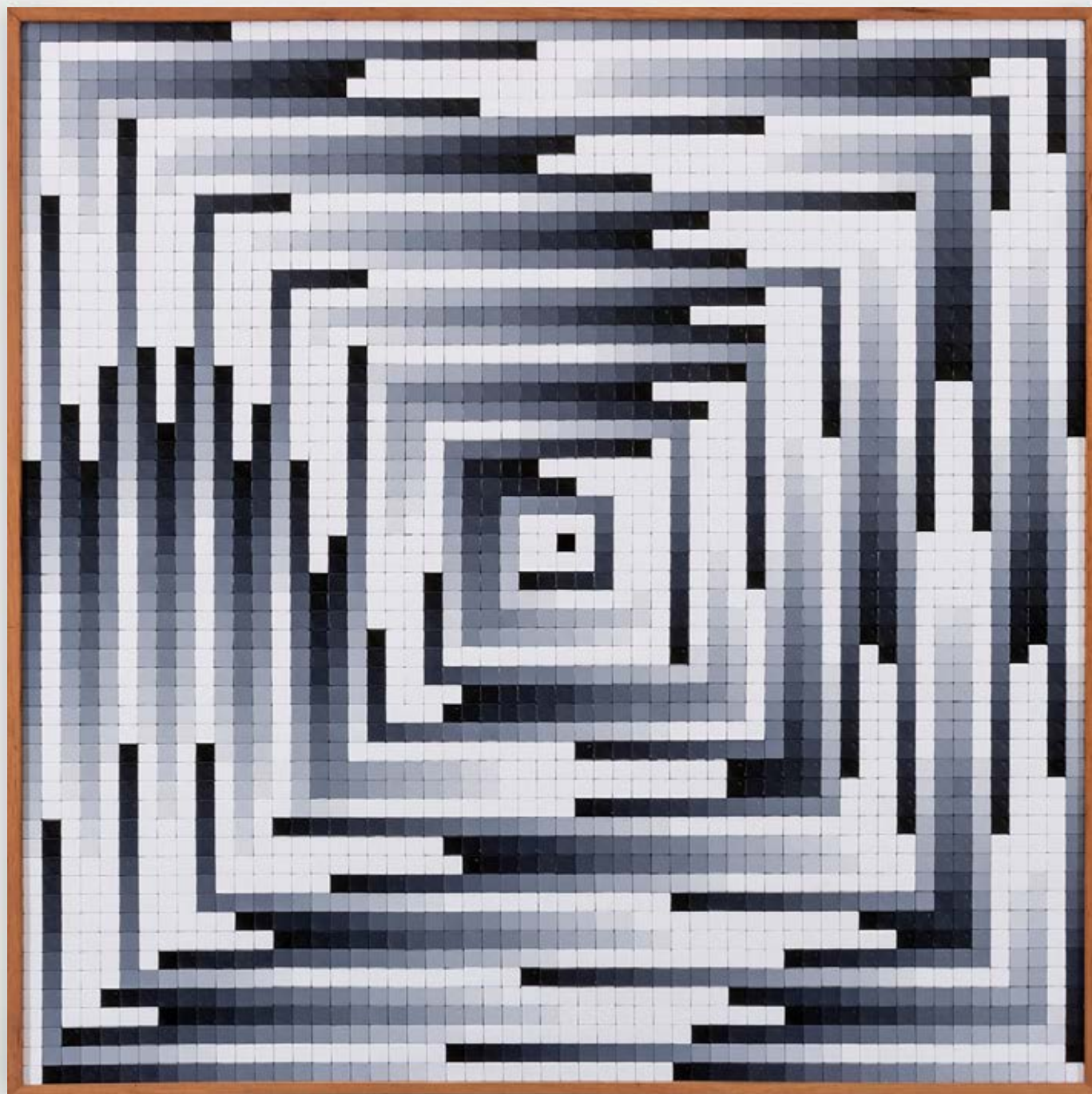
‘It is always about playing with rules and chance, which some elements allow for. Some works are an expression of radicalism, in that they only use one element repeated exhaustively. It is almost an obsession, in the sense of occupying a space with a single element, and thus achieving a tactile surface.’

— **José Patrício**



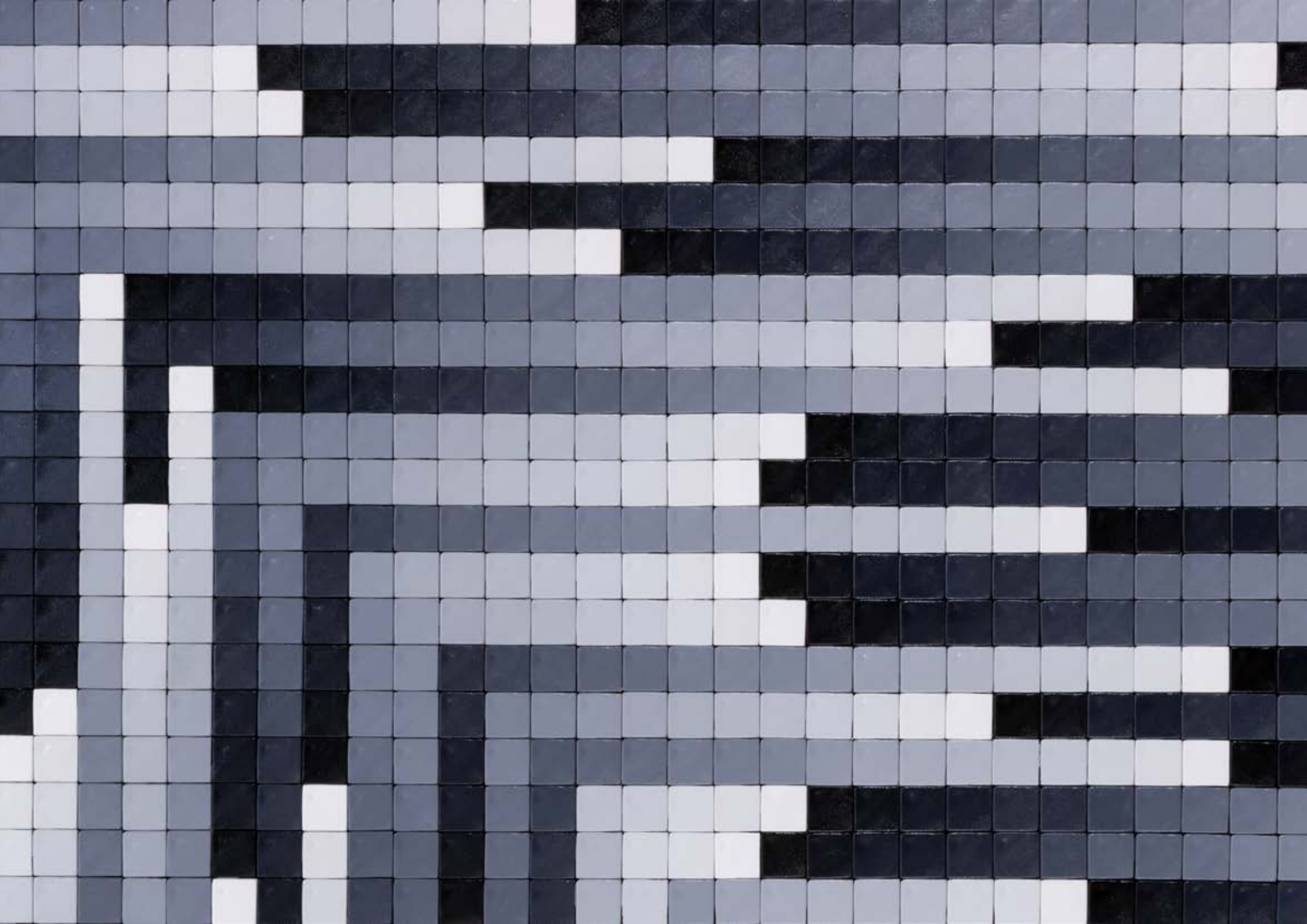
Circuito tonal V, 2019
plastic puzzle pieces on wood
edition of 3 + exhibition copy
81 x 81 x 4 cm
31.9 x 31.9 x 1.6 in

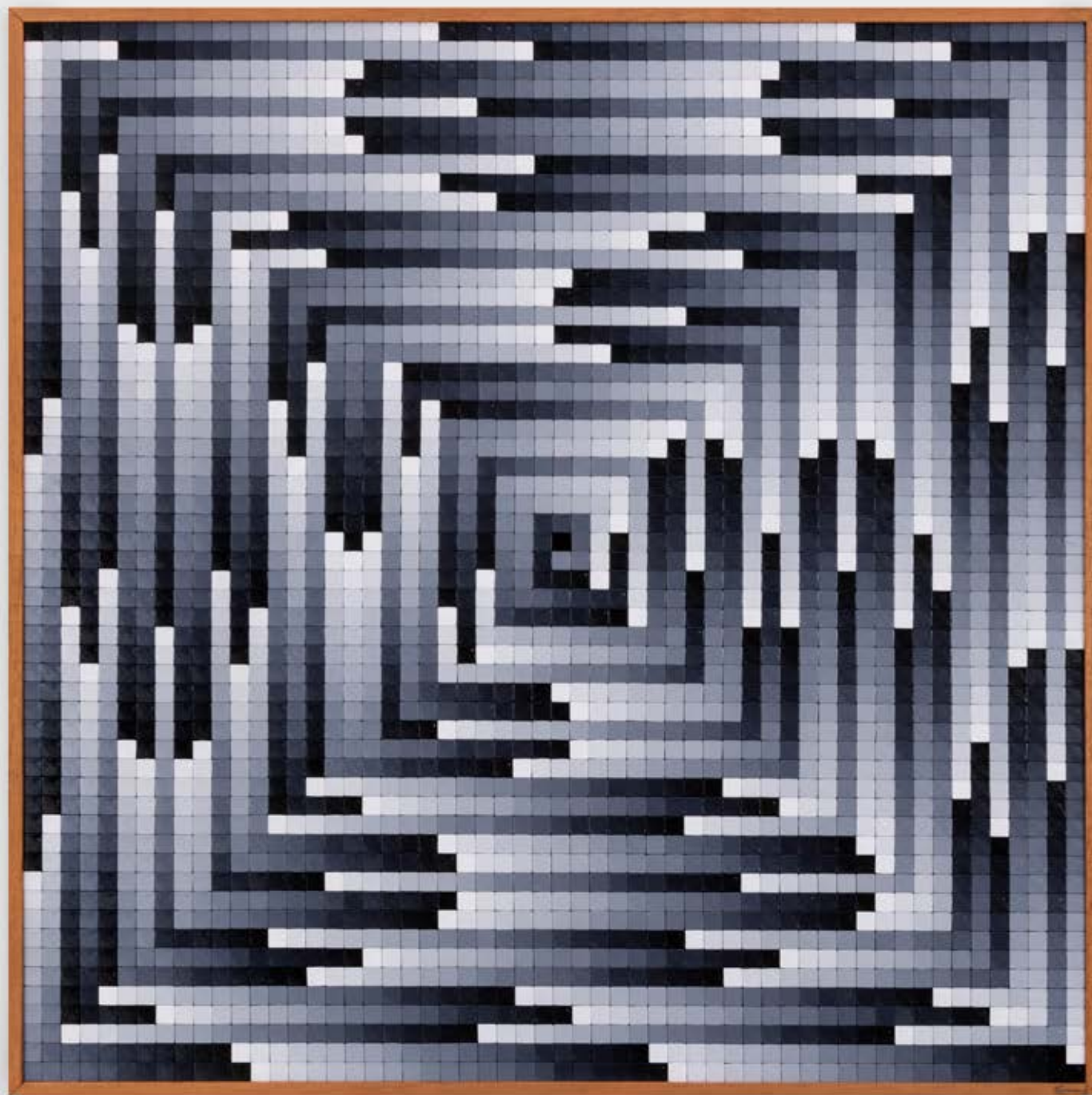




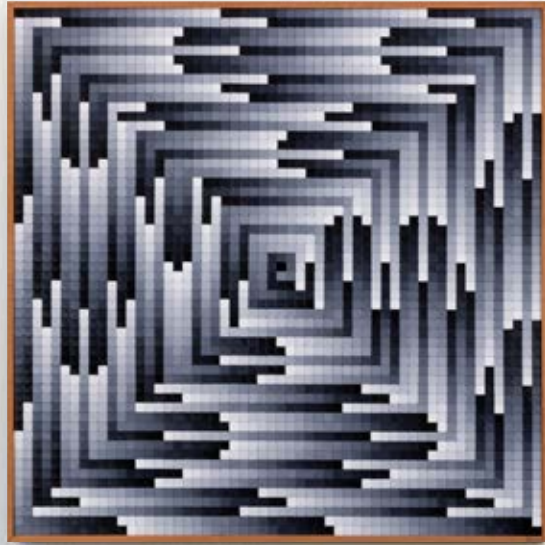
Circuito tonal VI, 2021
plastic puzzle pieces on wood
edition of 3 + exhibition copy
81 x 81 x 4 cm
31.9 x 31.9 x 1.6 in

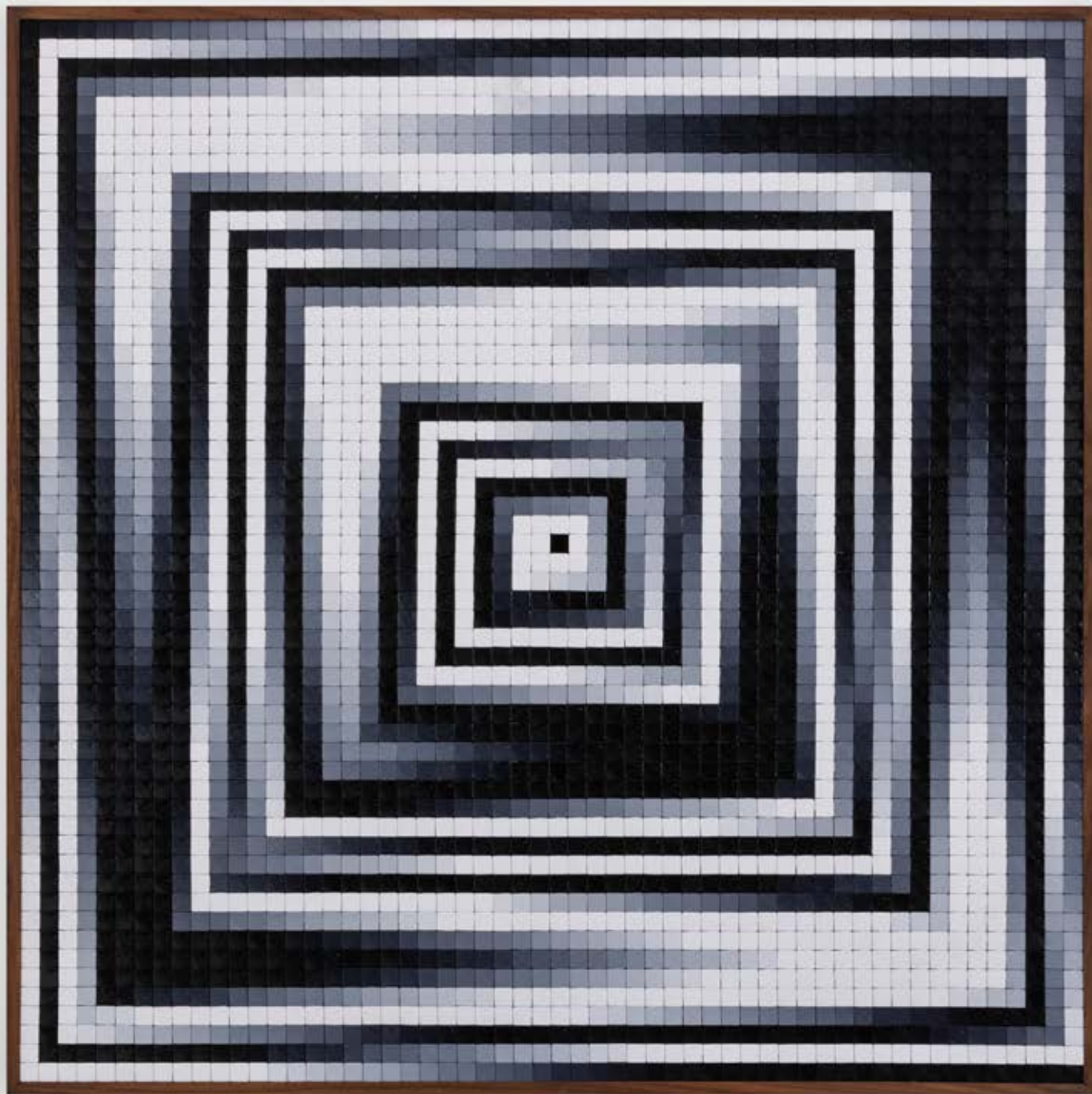






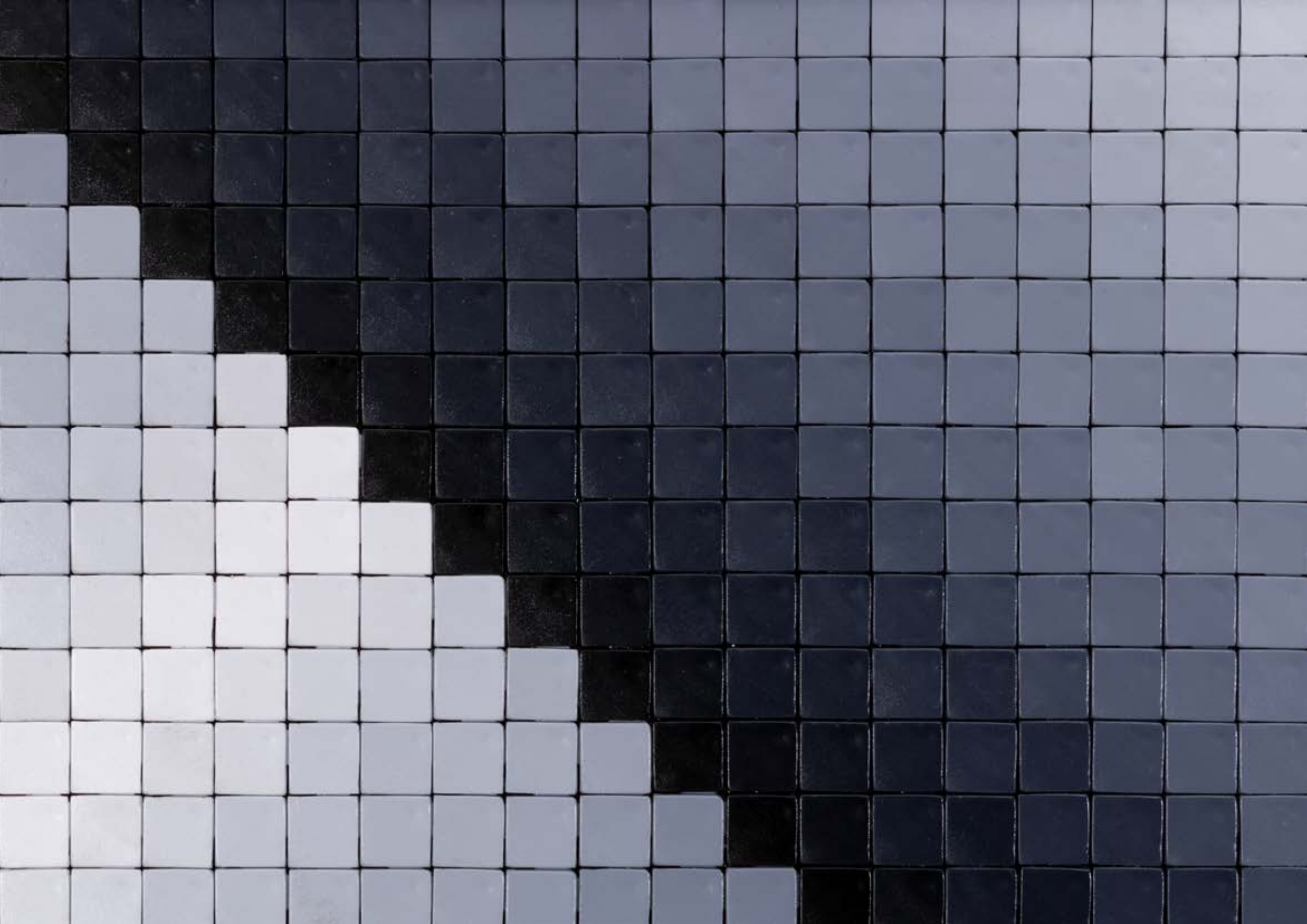
Circuito tonal VII, 2019
plastic puzzle pieces on wood
edition of 3 + exhibition copy
81 x 81 x 4 cm
31.9 x 31.9 x 1.6 in

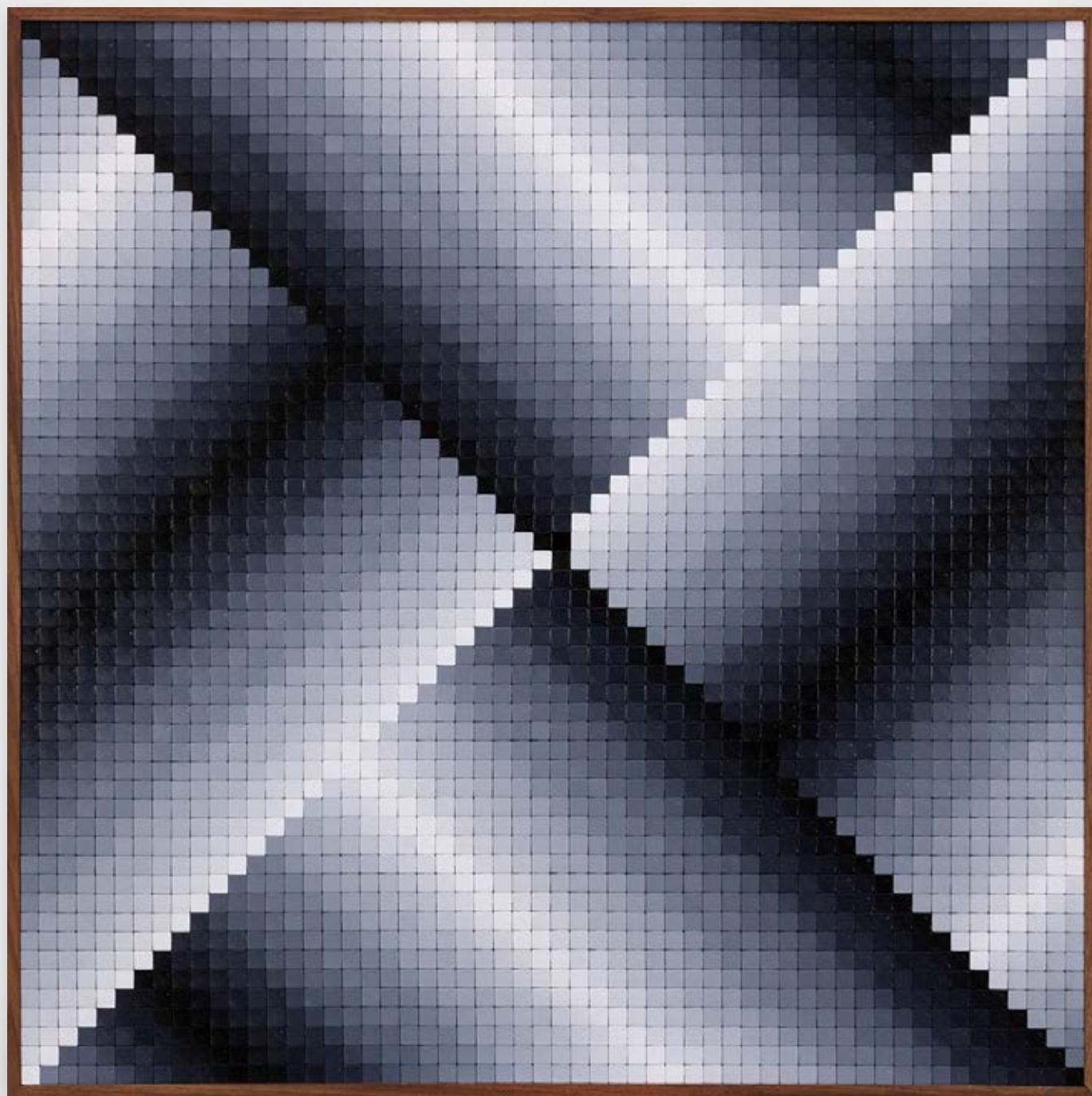




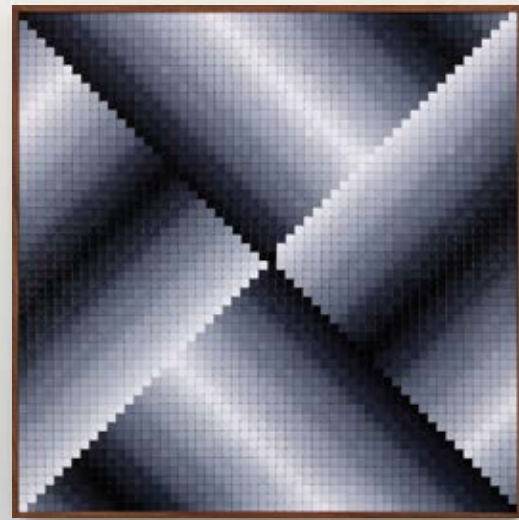
Circuito tonal VIII, 2019
plastic puzzle pieces on wood
edition of 3 + exhibition copy
81 x 81 x 4 cm
31.9 x 31.9 x 1.6 in







Circuito tonal em quatro fases, 2019
plastic puzzle pieces on wood
edition of 3 + exhibition copy
81 x 81 x 4 cm
31.9 x 31.9 x 1.6 in



josé patrício

b. 1960, Recife, Brazil, where he lives and works

José Patrício's work blurs the boundaries between installation and painting. His practice stems from the arrangement of everyday-use objects, such as dominoes, dice, buttons, and nails, to create patterns and images, either in a geometrical or organic manner, but always enigmatically familiar. Starting out his career in 1999 when he created an installation at the São Francisco Convent in João Pessoa, Patrício uses dominoes as a key element to several of his works. When viewed from afar, the patterns we see in his artworks assume an almost painterly tonality with an overall appearance that contrasts with the graphical nature of each individual domino.

Under the influence of important Brazilian artistic trends and movements, such as geometric abstraction and Concretism, Patrício emphasizes the subtle limit between order and chaos, suggesting that even the most rigid of mathematical formulas has an expressive potential dimension. To the critic and curator Paulo Sérgio Duarte, Patrício's accumulation procedure places us 'on a different level than the issues set forth by the progress of science and technique in artwork. As the terrain of combinatorial mathematics is incorporated as a starting point, we are faced with the combination of series, endless in their possibilities. The problem is no longer the reproduction of the same; it is now about producing endless others from the same.'

selected solo exhibitions

- *Precisão e acaso*, Museu Mineiro, Belo Horizonte; Museu Nacional de Brasília (MUN), Brasília, Brazil (2018)
- *Explosão Fixa*, Instituto Ling, Porto Alegre, Brazil (2017)
- *José Patrício: O número*, Centro Cultural Banco do Nordeste Cariri (CCBNB-Cariri), Cariri, Brazil (2011); Caixa Cultural, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2010); Centro Cultural Banco do Nordeste (CCBNB-Fortaleza), Fortaleza, Brazil (2010)
- *Expansão múltipla*, Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo (2008), São Paulo, Brazil

selected group exhibitions

- *Ateliê de Gravura: da tradição à experimentação*, Fundação Iberê Camargo (FIC), Porto Alegre, Brazil (2019)
- *Géométries américaines, du Mexique à la Terre de Feu*, Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris, France (2018)
- *Spots, Dots, Pips, Tiles: An Exhibition about Dominoes*, Pérez Art Museum Miami (PAMM), Miami, USA (2017)
- *Art in Brazil (1950–2011)*, Palais des Beaux Arts, Brussels, Belgium (2011)
- 8^a Havana Biennial, Cuba (2003)
- 22^a Bienal de São Paulo, Brazil (1994)
- 3^a Bienal do Mercosul, Porto Alegre, Brazil (1994)

selected collections

- Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris, France
- Museu de Arte Moderna Aloisio Magalhães (MAMAM), Recife, Brazil
- Museu de Arte Moderna da Bahia (MAM-BA), Salvador, Brazil
- Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro (MAM Rio), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

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