

Richard Anuskiewicz Line and Space

July 29, 2016 - January 14, 2017



Richard Anuszkiewicz Line and Space

In 1955, at the height of Abstract Expressionism, Richard Anuszkiewicz went to Yale, where he would earn his MFA, to study with Josef Albers, a geometric abstract painter and theorist. Albers stood on the opposite end of the spectrum from those Abstract Expressionists – Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning – who were improvisational in their approach. In contrast, he believed that composition should be rigorously disciplined. In addition to being an important educator, whose students included Robert Rauschenberg and Eva Hesse, Albers is widely known for the paintings and prints that make up his series, *Homage to the Square*. The images in this series consist of three or four square planes of solid color nested inside one another. Albers made these works to explore the ways a color affected the viewer's perception of those adjacent to it.

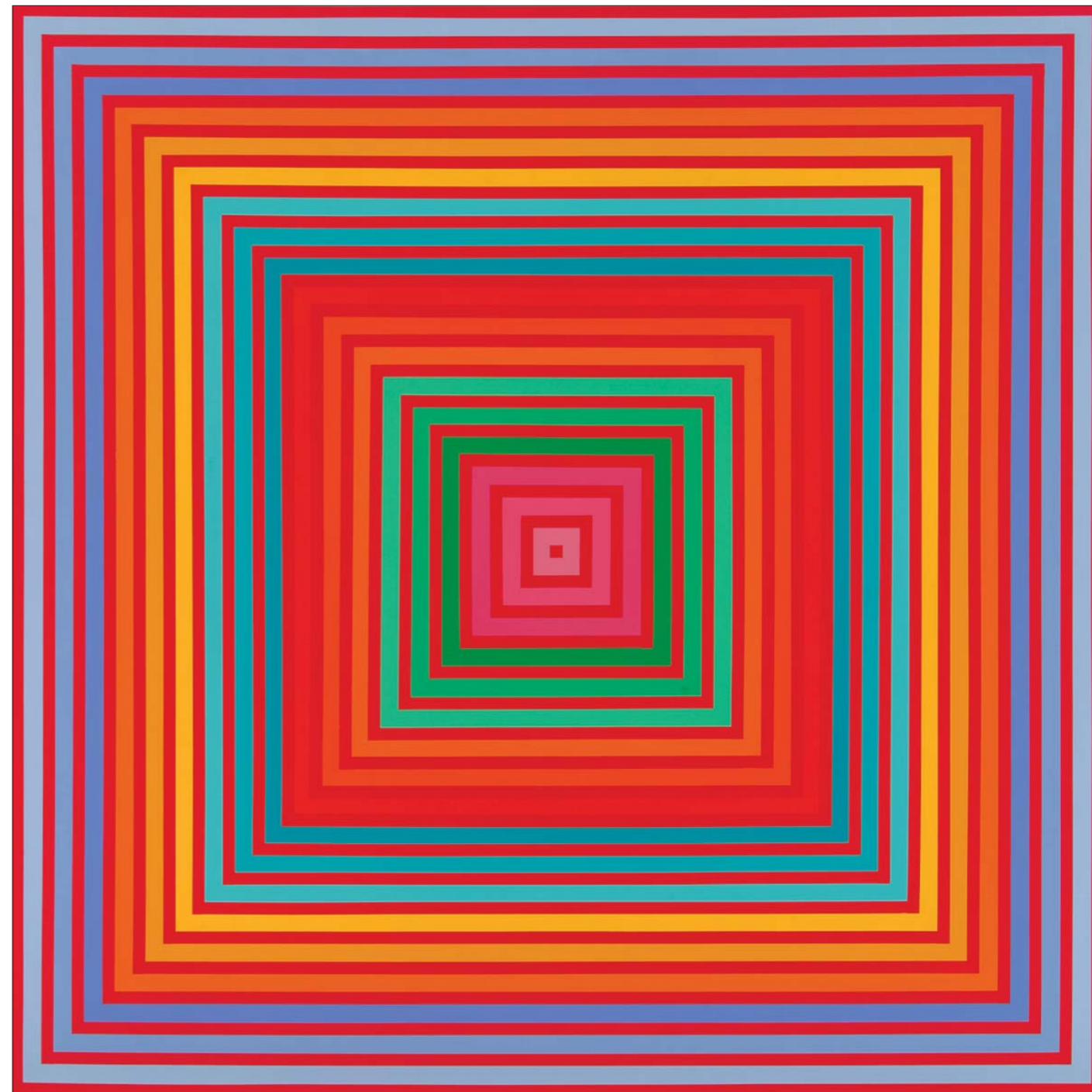
The title of Anuszkiewicz's master's thesis at Yale was *A Study in the Creation of Space with Line Drawing*. Fifteen years later, in 1970, the artist described his thesis in an interview:

It was on how to create space with line drawing, how line creates space. I did it historically, showing how the spatial idea differed in different periods. Then I talked about contemporary drawing and how the contemporary artist, just with pure line, creates space – what happens with just line and different ways of creating space. This study was very beneficial to my own work.

In his thesis, Anuszkiewicz laid the foundation for the paintings that would gain him attention in the early 1960s. He also began to differentiate his interest in line and space from Albers' lifelong inquiry into the square and the interaction of color.

In paintings, such as the four from his series, *Metamorphosis of Cadmium Red* (1979), the viewer sees one place where his exploration of the relationship between line and space has taken him. In each of the four paintings, the artist restricts himself to two colors, one of which is cadmium red. In each painting, he lays down evenly spaced, thin diagonal lines, in either green, yellow or blue, which radiate from all four sides of the cadmium red square in the painting's center until they touch its physical edge.

In contrast to Albers' interaction of flat planes of color, Anuszkiewicz uses the geometric framework of a square within a square as a space in which to juxtapose complimentary colors. The precisely spaced blue, yellow and green lines optically activate the space around them, while their diagonal trajectories suggest that we are looking at a receding space. By changing the color of the lines in each painting, Anuszkiewicz subtly affects our perception of the red square in the painting's center. Is the red square in the painting's



Richard Anuszkiewicz

center a solid plane or a portal made of dense, colored light? What – we are inclined to ask – is the relationship between matter and light? As with other paintings in this exhibition, Anuszkiewicz uses different combinations of intense color to attain a vibrant surface, in which there is a constant tension between two- and three-dimensionality. At the same time, it's as if the paintings are lit from within.

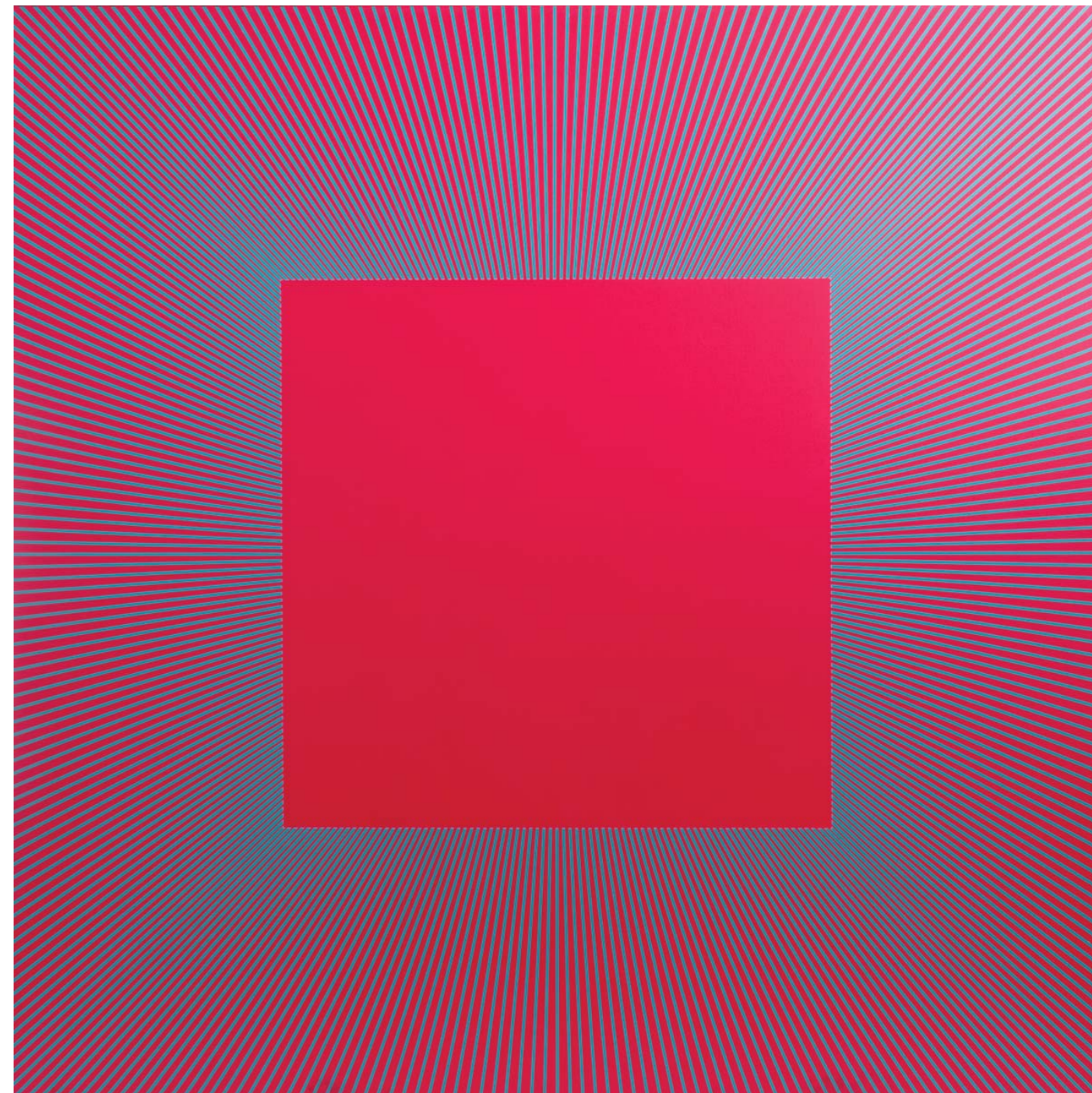
In *Evening Violet and Morning Yellow* (2015), Anuszkiewicz abuts two vertical rectangles, each with its own particular palette, within a single painting. In both of the rectangles, the bands and the ground they are set against are of equal width, so that they mirror each other structurally, but not in color. The contrast of light and dark colors transforms each rectangle into a recessive space. At the far end of this corridor is a dark vertical bar or slit, a solid form or an opening. By drawing our attention into a space where the eye is halted, Anuszkiewicz underscores our yearning for affirmation, the desire to transcend our material existence. Which corridor should we pick? Do they both lead to the same place? Anuszkiewicz's exact calibration of color is unrivaled. Combining a strict geometry with optical vibrancy and neon-like colors, he is able to simultaneously endow this painting with a visual power that feels suitable for either a sacred or secular space.

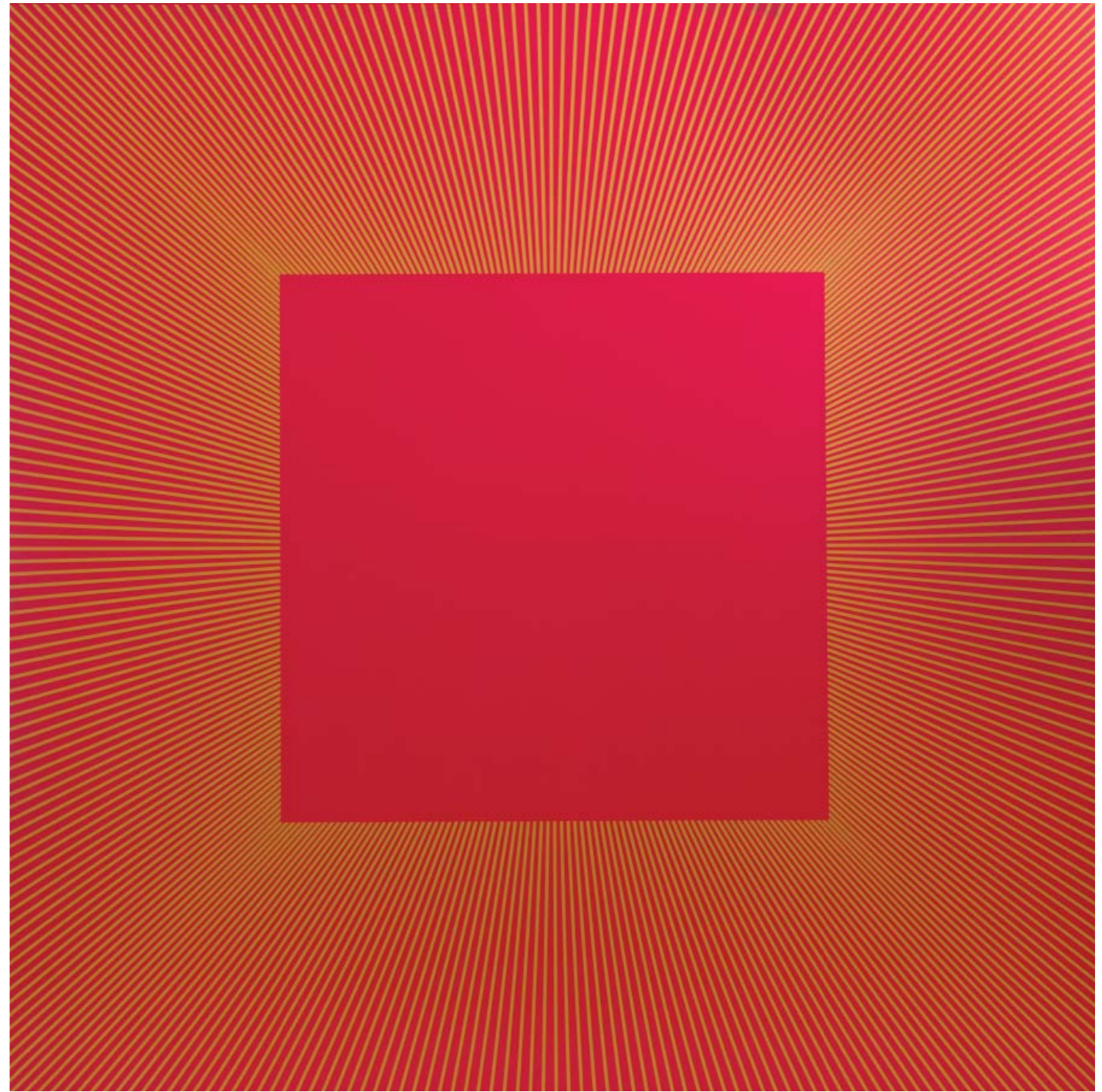
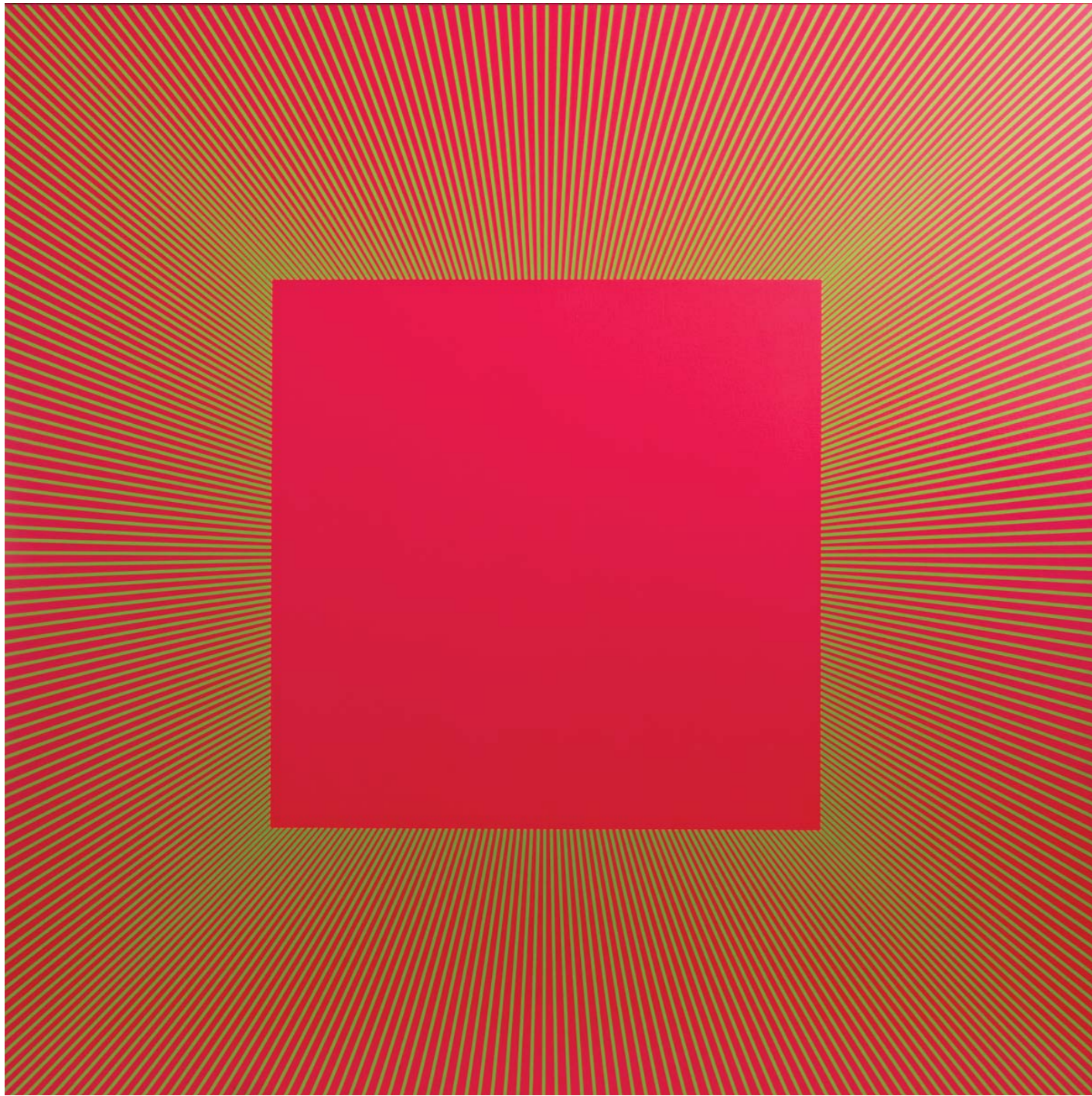
While Anuszkiewicz hasn't radically changed his work or thinking since he graduated from Yale more than sixty years ago, these paintings are proof that he has always kept moving. In the neon-colored square painting, *"Mardi Gras"* (2013), he keeps the concentric bands the same red throughout, but changes the color of the ground six times – from gray-blue to yellow to turquoise to red to green to rose pink - at the same interval from the outside edge to the center. This causes the interaction of the red bands and the ground to continuously change throughout this rigorously geometric painting. The pulsing dynamics of the painting's optical interactions evoke comparisons to the costumes, music, parades and all-night revelry we associate with New Orleans.

An important postwar American painter, Anuszkiewicz places himself squarely within the Western tradition of art that focuses on the relationships between color and light, their material and immaterial states.

John Yau

2016





On Cover: Metamorphosis of Cadmium Red - Blue Line, 1979, acrylic on canvas, 84 x 84 inches

499 PARK AVENUE / The Lobby Gallery

499 Park Avenue and 59th Street, New York, NY 10022

Gallery hours: Monday - Friday, 8 am - 6 pm

Acknowledgements

499 Park Avenue, through its exhibition program, actively contributes to the cultural community as an expression of ongoing commitment to excellence in the visual arts and architecture.

We would like to thank the artist, and the **Loretta Howard Gallery**, 525 W 26th St., New York, NY 10001 for the loan of the paintings in this exhibit.

Curators **Dorothy Solomon**, DSA Fine Arts; **Lenore Goldberg**, Hines

Essay **John Yau**

About John Yau

Poet, art critic, and curator **John Yau** has published over 50 books of poetry, fiction, and art criticism. Born in Massachusetts in 1950 to Chinese immigrants, Yau attended Bard College, earned an MFA from Brooklyn College in 1978, and lives in New York City.

His first book of poetry, *Crossing Canal Street*, was published in 1976. Since then, he has won acclaim for his poetry's attentiveness to visual culture and linguistic surface. Yau's many collections of poetry include *Corpse and Mirror* (1983), selected by John Ashbery for the National Poetry Series, *Edificio Sayonara* (1992), *Forbidden Entries* (1996), *Borrowed Love Poems* (2002), *Ing Grish* (2005), *Paradiso Diaspora* (2006), *Exhibits* (2010), and *Further Adventures in Monochrome* (2012).

Yau has published many works of art criticism and artists' books, and has written on artists such as Jasper Johns, Andy Warhol, Joe Coleman, James Castle, and Kay Walkingstick.

He has received many honors and awards for his poetry, has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Ingram-Merrill Foundation, and the Guggenheim Foundation, and was named a Chevalier in the Order of Arts and Letters by France. He has taught at many institutions, including Pratt, the Maryland Institute College of Art and School of Visual Arts, Brown University, Rutgers University and the University of California-Berkeley.

For more information about the work in this show, please contact **Dorothy Solomon**, dorothy@dsafinearts.com; (T) 518.537.7420



AMERICAN 499 Park Avenue is an investment of American Realty Advisors.
REALTY ADVISORS.