

ANTHONY JAMES

نور Light

**ANTHONY
JAMES**
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OPERA GALLERY

Foreword

Opera Gallery Dubai is delighted to present *Light* the first solo show of Anthony James in the region. While collectors have been exposed to his artworks in various locations in the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, this will mark the first time that our entire gallery space is dedicated to James and his sculptures.

For this occasion, the artist and the gallery have worked together to propose a curated selection of standalone sculptures, mural pieces and furniture. There is no doubt that the combination of materials, the use of lights, and shapes based on sacred geometry contribute to a certain mystique surrounding James' works. It is not uncommon for passerby and collectors to gaze at Jame's sculptures for a prolonged amount of time, their minds wandering about the structure of the piece, or being hypnotised by the beauty in its simplicity.

Aptly titled "Light" given the resonance of the word in the region, we are delighted to invite guests to immerse themselves in James' artistic universe. "Light" translates into "Noor" in Arabic, a word that is commonly used as a name, which also encompasses countless of positive attributes and a divine association.

The timing of this show is serendipitous, since James travelled to Antartica earlier in January to unveil an artwork, making him the only living artist with sculptures on permanent display in all seven continents. This highlights how global the artist is, as well as the versatility of his sculptures that shine bright under different weather conditions. The opening of *Light* ties-in with the busiest time of "art season" in Dubai.

In addition to the gallery show, the artist has installed a couple of artworks in the Dubai International Financial Center, giving collectors the opportunity to experience his sculptures in different environments. Whether installed in the middle of concrete buildings or on a large patch of grass, James' artworks are to be enjoyed everywhere.

We invite guests and collectors to step into the light, and enjoy a whimsical experience of shapes, textures and colours.

GILLES DYAN
Founder & Chairman
Opera Gallery Group

SYLVAIN P. GAILLARD
Director
Opera Gallery Dubai

Eternal Concepts



40" Dodecahedron (Solar Black), 2023
Edition of 6 + 3 AP
Stainless steel, LED lights, double-sided glass
101.6 x 101.6 cm | 40 x 40 in



40" Round Rain Painting (Aluminium Panel), 2023
Unique piece
Paint on aluminium panel
76.2 x 76.2 cm | 30 x 30 in

Walking into *Light*, there is a sense of having entered into a forest of illusion and possibility. Within these gallery walls, hitherto solid forms of the outside world are pierced by the light of infinity; glass panes and bullet holes provide apertures into other, seemingly limitless dimensions. Whether it is a *Dodecahedron*, a *Bullet Panel*, or a *Rain*, Anthony James' work confronts us all with a sense of what lies not only beyond the immediate surface, but also past the realms of our own experience, after visual perception and mental comprehension have exhausted the limits of their own enquiries.

The impression is intentional. "My work is my best attempt at giving the impossible, the infinite, a physical, objective existence," states James (b. 1974), the British-American artist known for his monumental and experiential sculptures and installations. "I've tried to visually demonstrate the colossally vast and the infinitesimally small – the cosmos and the divinity inside oneself."

James' work is marked by such juxtapositions: light alongside darkness; the scientific alongside the spiritual; the object alongside the concept. Yet "juxtaposition" seems too harsh a word, implying an obvious clash or contradiction, while James' great success is in mesmerising the mind *away* from these boundaries between physical and metaphysical. Peering into one of James' works, we forget the reality of our corporal confines. In some cases, the works are so beguiling that it is not uncommon for visitors to find themselves tilting into the glass of a polyhedron, straining their necks to follow the light as it bends further into infinite darkness.

Through this achievement of making the viewer forget the surface, James also challenges the very nature of sculpture: transcending, piercing, distorting the material that forms the solid edges of each piece. His use of light, in particular, allows him to communicate the transience of the concepts that preoccupy him – the ungraspable nature of the universe; the fleetingness of time and the impermanence of the material world – while at the same time emanating a more primal sense of the mystical unknown; his light sculptures like orbs pulsating with some indefinite life within.



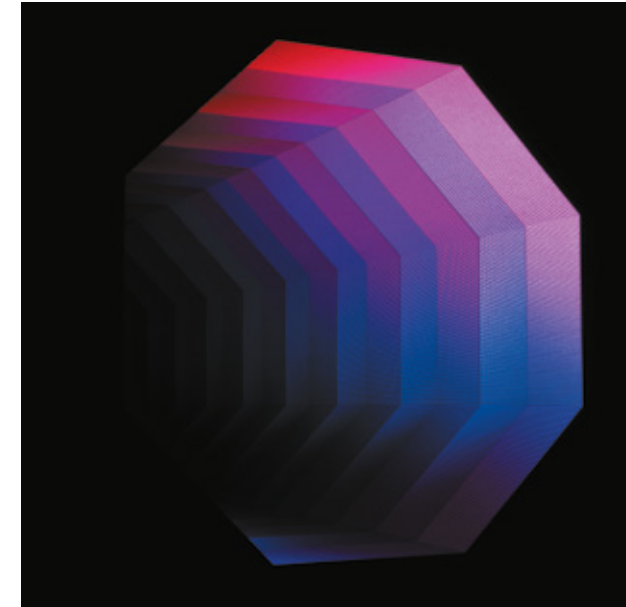
30" Bullet Panel, 2023
Unique piece
Polished stainless steel
Each: 76.2 x 76.2 cm / 30 x 30 in



In James' use of light as an intangible material, he echoes the pursuit of one of his great guides, Lucio Fontana, who, in his *Television manifesto of the spatial movement*, published in 1949, announced: "We want art to be freed from material." James references Fontana – whose own earlier works, prior to his *Cut Paintings*, were constructed of Neon – as an inspiration for his *Bullet Series* (2011-Present), a collection of works made of mirror polished steel ruptured by bullet holes. "I wanted to puncture the steel with an effortless gesture and flow in a similar attempt to how Lucio Fontana would slice his canvas with a knife or puncture paper with a pencil," states James. "Given the nature of steel, a knife and a pencil were not a possibility. I took an arsenal of assault rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers...you get the idea. The gesture became a meditation – almost a Zen practice."

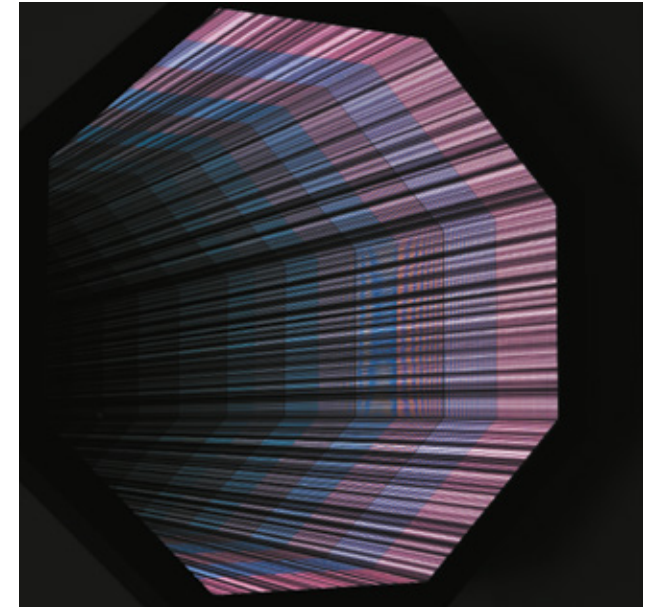
In his *Bullet Series*, James once again succeeds in compelling viewers to experience the pieces as both external objects, upon which to gaze at their own reflections, and window grills through which to glimpse an alternative, more internal reality: the combination of which invites a contemplation of the divinity within oneself. "The concept behind the series was to make a visual demonstration of the universe," says James, who sets the explosive chaos of the bullet holes against the stillness of the polished metal, echoing the pandemonium of the Big Bang occurring within the silent void of the universe.

Again, themes of eternity, infinity and immensity endure. Yet the *Bullet Series* is just one way in which James seeks to communicate these concepts. As the artist has stated, it is the ideas which preoccupy him; the physical vessel is secondary. "The materials are merely an extension of the gesture," he says. "I start with the gesture and have spent decades distilling these concepts down to the essential. So whether I'm using vanguard, illustrious materials and high technology or centuries old metal techniques – my interest



34" New Wall Portal (Solar Black), 2023
Edition of 6 + 3 AP
Stainless steel, LED lights, double-sided glass
86.4 x 86.4 x 20.3 cm | 34 x 34 x 8 in

View 1



View 2

is in communicating the most direct way I can." Once more, we can hear echoes of Fontana's *Spatial Manifesto* of 1947, in which the artistic gesture takes precedence above all else: "Art is eternal, but it cannot be immortal, it may live for a year or for millennia, but the time of its material destruction will always come: it will remain eternal as gesture, but it will die as material."

Moving even further into the realm of the immaterial, James' series of polyhedral light sculptures (2008-Present) – ranging from the simpler *Wall Portals* and *Cubes* to the immensely complex *Icosahedrons* and *Great Rhombicosidodecahedrons* (composed of 12 square faces, 8 regular hexagonal faces, and 6 regular octagonal faces) – use light and reflection to communicate this concept of an infinite spatial and temporal reality. On approaching these luminous, geometrical structures, viewers experience the sensation of teetering on the edge of a black-hole, or a great abyss – the interminable, repetitive corridors of light and dark contained within hinting at an unknown destination just beyond the viewer's sight-line, albeit one that is forever out of reach due to its very nature of being an illusion. The brow furrows, the eyes blink, the mind sputters and starts again. We know the vision before us will just keep on repeating itself *ad infinitum*, yet our curiosity needs to see (and to understand) where it all ends.

It is here that James' work crosses paths with – and then transcends – another crucial dialogue in the history of sculpture. In his four-part essay 'Notes on Sculpture,' which appeared in *Artforum* from 1966–69, sculptor and artist Robert Morris expanded the understanding of sculpture beyond what Donald Judd called the "specific object" to include perception, context, and the implication of the viewer. One of Morris's central pre-occupations was the threshold between the point at which a viewer was able to visualise a sculpture in its entirety from a



60" Great Rhombicosidodecahedron (Champagne), 2023.
Edition of 6 + 3 AP
Stainless steel, LED lights, double-sided glass
152.4 x 152.4 x 152.4 cm | 60 x 60 x 60 in

single viewpoint, and the moment at which the viewer needed to physically engage with the sculpture in order to understand its full form. Morris maintained that the simpler a sculpture was in terms of its shape, the easier it was for the viewer to have a sense of the entire sculpture without having to move around it: “In the simpler regular polyhedrons, such as cubes and pyramids,” writes Morris, “one need not move around the object for the sense of the whole, the gestalt, to occur. One sees and immediately “believes” that the pattern within one’s mind corresponds to the existential fact of the object.” In more complex polyhedrons, Morris continues, “there is a weakening of visualisation [of the whole sculpture] as the number of sides increases.”

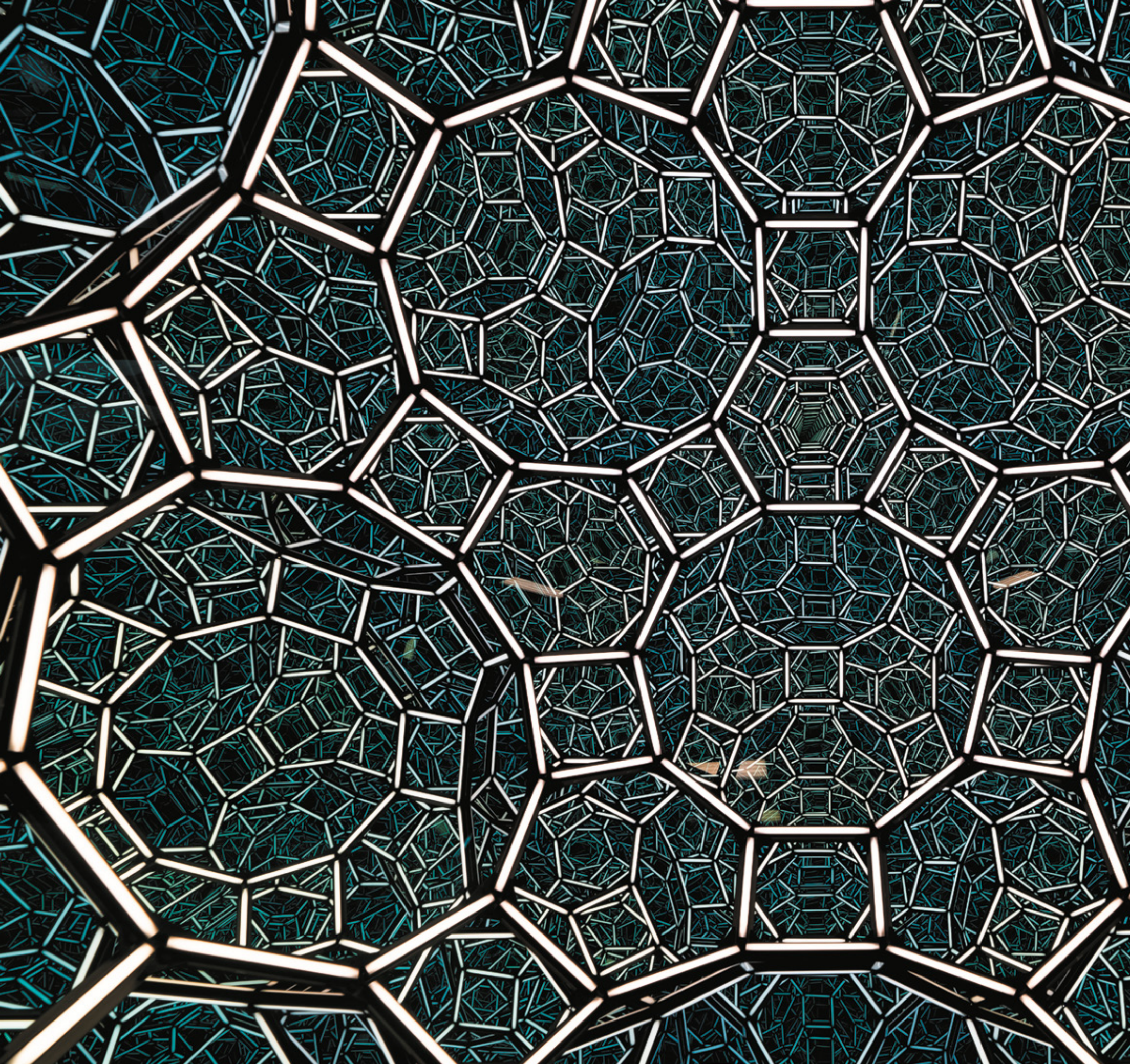
Ranging in shape and size from the simple to the complex, James’ multi-faceted light installations appear to both accept and confound this theory. Through their repetitive, mathematical precision, these sculptures can be instantly understood and visualised in their entirety from a single viewpoint. Yet there is something about their very repetition and predictability that confounds us: we move around them, looking at different versions of the same view, certain we will find a chink in the armour, a glitch in the matrix. Somehow, James’ sculptures resist satisfying that very human desire for the gestalt or “the sense of the whole”. Within the confounds of a strong, finite form, James has communicated the sensation of that which is never whole: the infinite.

Counterbalancing the cosmic, James has more recently turned his attention to earthly contemplations in his series of *Rain Paintings* (2018). A photorealistic series composed of paint on aluminium panel, these tranquil, meditative roundels focus the viewer’s mind with their intricate detail and calming evocations of water trickling down a vertical plane. The aesthetic pleasure and relief of these pieces can be intense, especially when viewed in succession to the mind-boggling webs and passageways of the *Portals / Archimedean Solids*. But to read these works as purely beautiful or mystical can be to miss the contradiction within them. James’ choice of materials belies a tension between the old and the new: the Belgian linen sprayed with toxic industrial paint; eternal nature simulated through a digital process. At every turn, we are encouraged to reflect upon our relationship with the universe.

And perhaps it is this groundedness that lies at the centre of James’ success; his ability to evoke the cosmos – alluding to mysticism, ethereality, spirituality and science – yet all the while keeping the viewer anchored through his use of weighty, industrial materials. We feel safe traversing the vertiginous heights of contemplation, because we are firmly rooted by the direct honesty of the physical objects. “I’m interested in revealing and sharing truth,” states James. “I am attempting to express science, spirituality, and philosophy in an object the purest and most honest way I know how.”

RECENT ARTWORKS

LAURA ARCHER



Portal Series

2008 — present

The sculptures, made of stainless steel, glass, and LED lights, have shown internationally great acclaim. "I'm interested in revealing and sharing truth. My intention is to bring an impossible concept like the idea of infinity, or the cosmos, into physical objective existence. I am attempting to express science, spirituality, and philosophy in an object the purest and most honest way I know how."

60" Great Rhombicosidodecahedron (Champagne)

2023

Stainless steel, LED lights, double-sided glass
Edition of 6 + 3 AP
152.4 x 152.4 x 152.4 cm | 60 x 60 x 60 in

PROVENANCE
Artist's studio

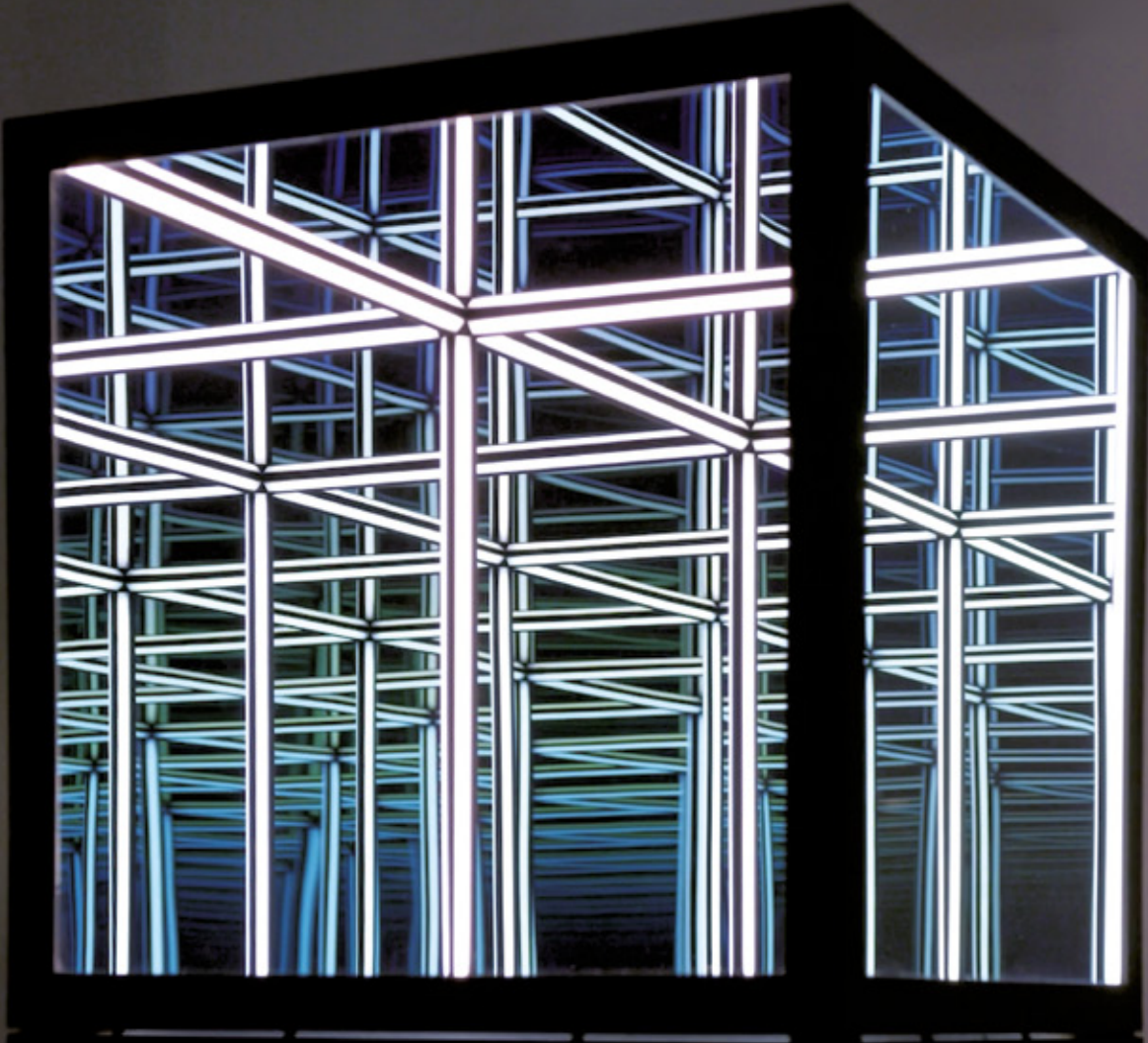


24" Cube (Solar Black)

2023

Stainless steel, LED lights, double-sided glass
Edition of 24
61 x 61 x 61 cm | 24 x 24 x 24 in

PROVENANCE
Artist's studio



90" Dali Cube (Solar Black)

2023

Stainless steel, LED lights, double-sided glass
Edition of 6 + 3 AP
228.6 x 228.6 cm | 90 x 90 in

PROVENANCE
Artist's studio



Truncated Cube Bench (Solar Black)
2023

Stainless steel, glass, LED lights, leather
Edition of 6
48.3 x 203.2 x 40.6 cm | 19 x 80 x 16 in

PROVENANCE
Artist's studio

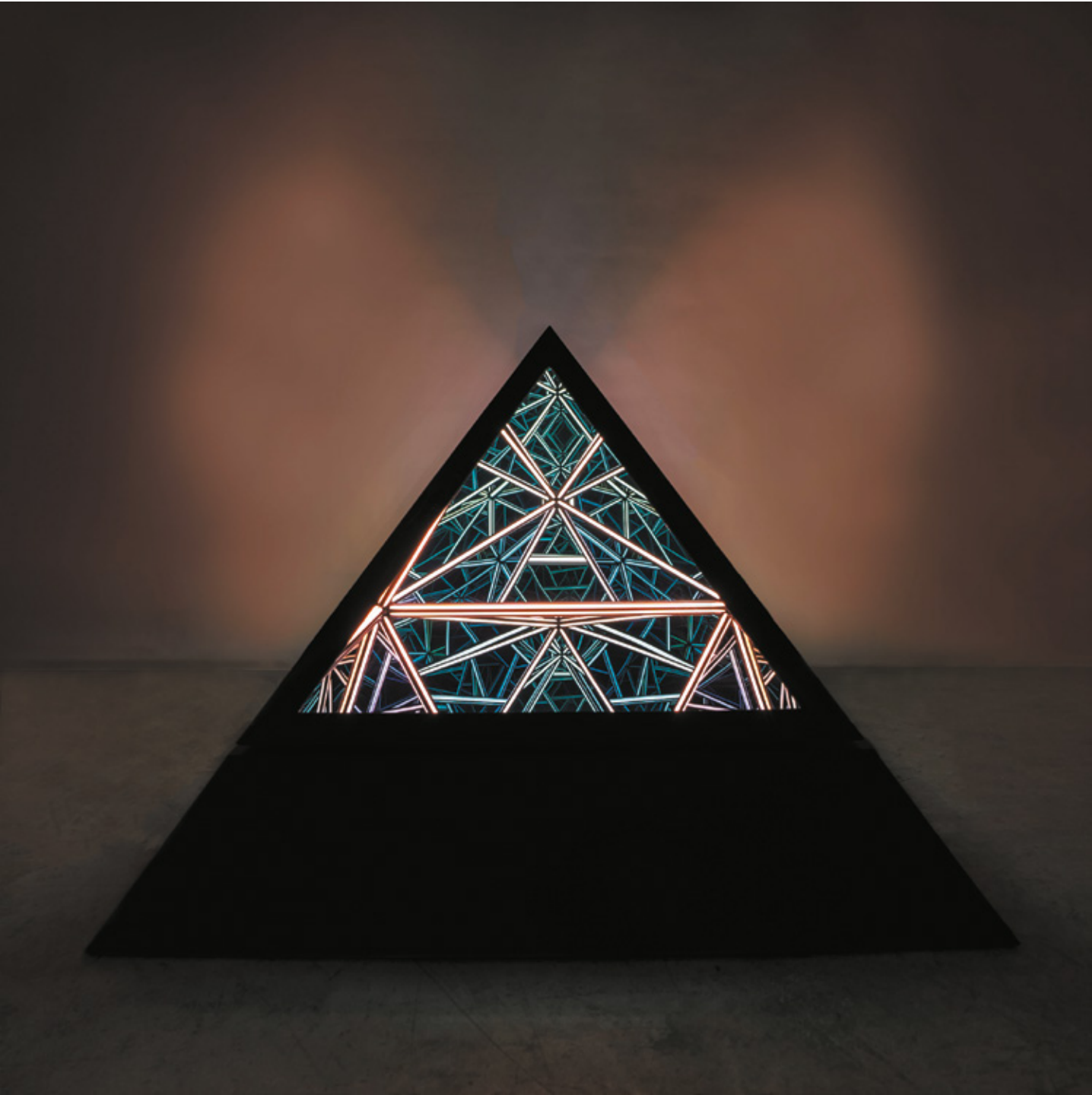


33" Pyramid (Solar Black)

2023

Stainless steel, LED lights, double-sided glass
Edition of 9 + 3 AP
83.8 x 83.8 cm | 33 x 33 in

PROVENANCE
Artist's studio



24" Tetrahedron (Jet Black)

2023

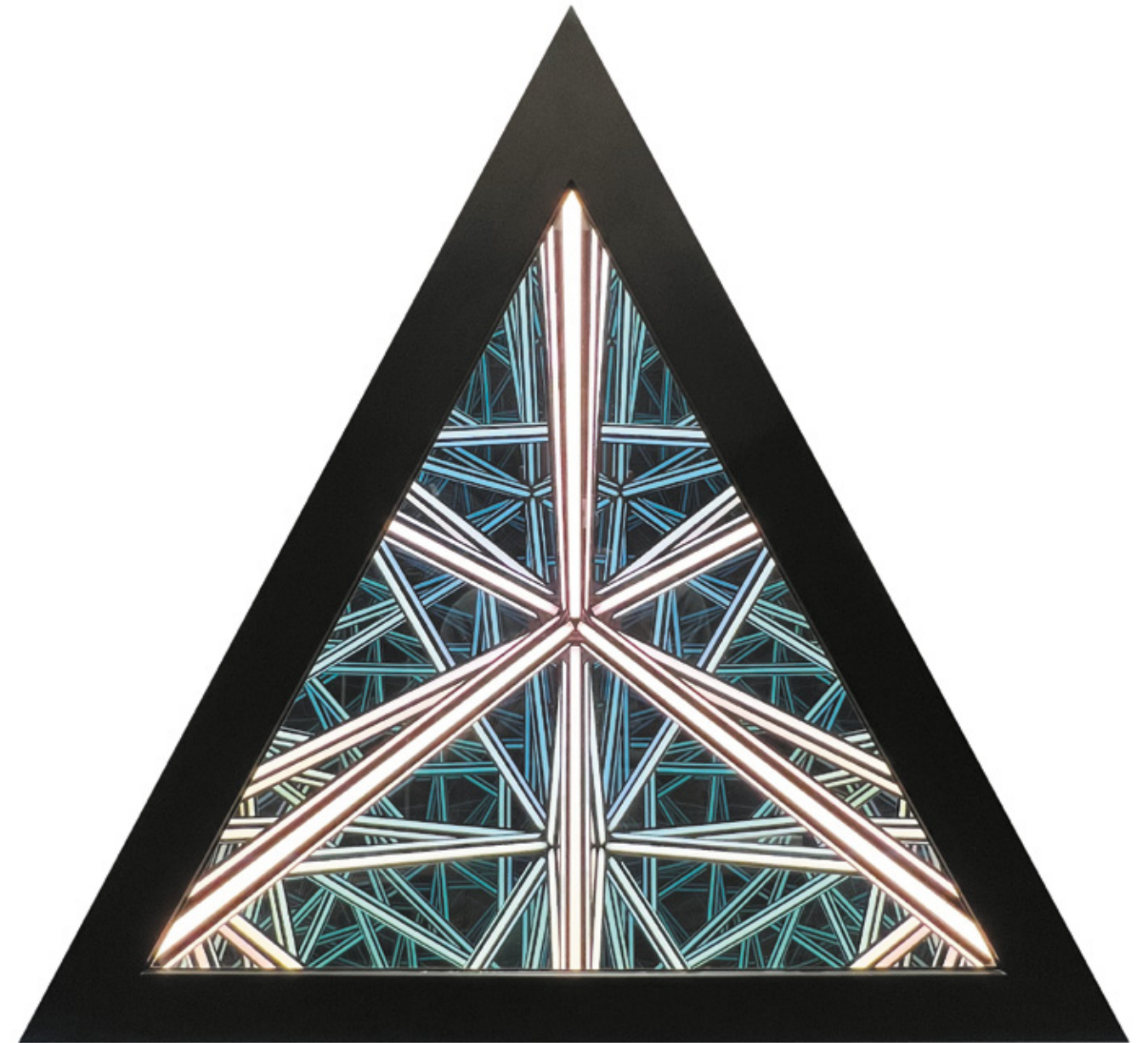
Stainless steel, LED lights, double-sided glass

Edition of 24

61 x 61 x 61 cm | 24 x 24 x 24 in

PROVENANCE

Artist's studio



24" Octahedron (Jet Black)

2023

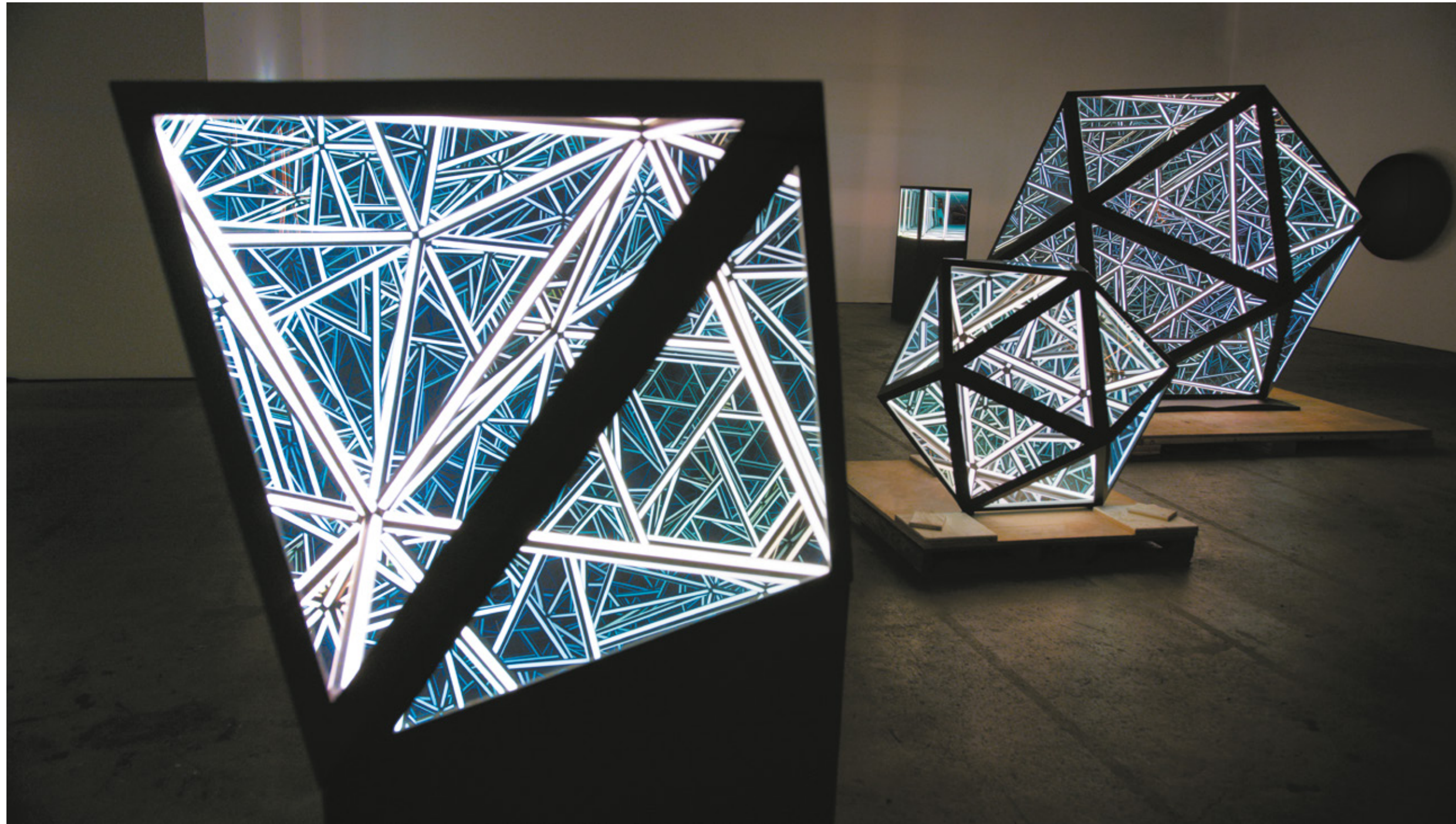
Stainless steel, LED lights, double-sided glass

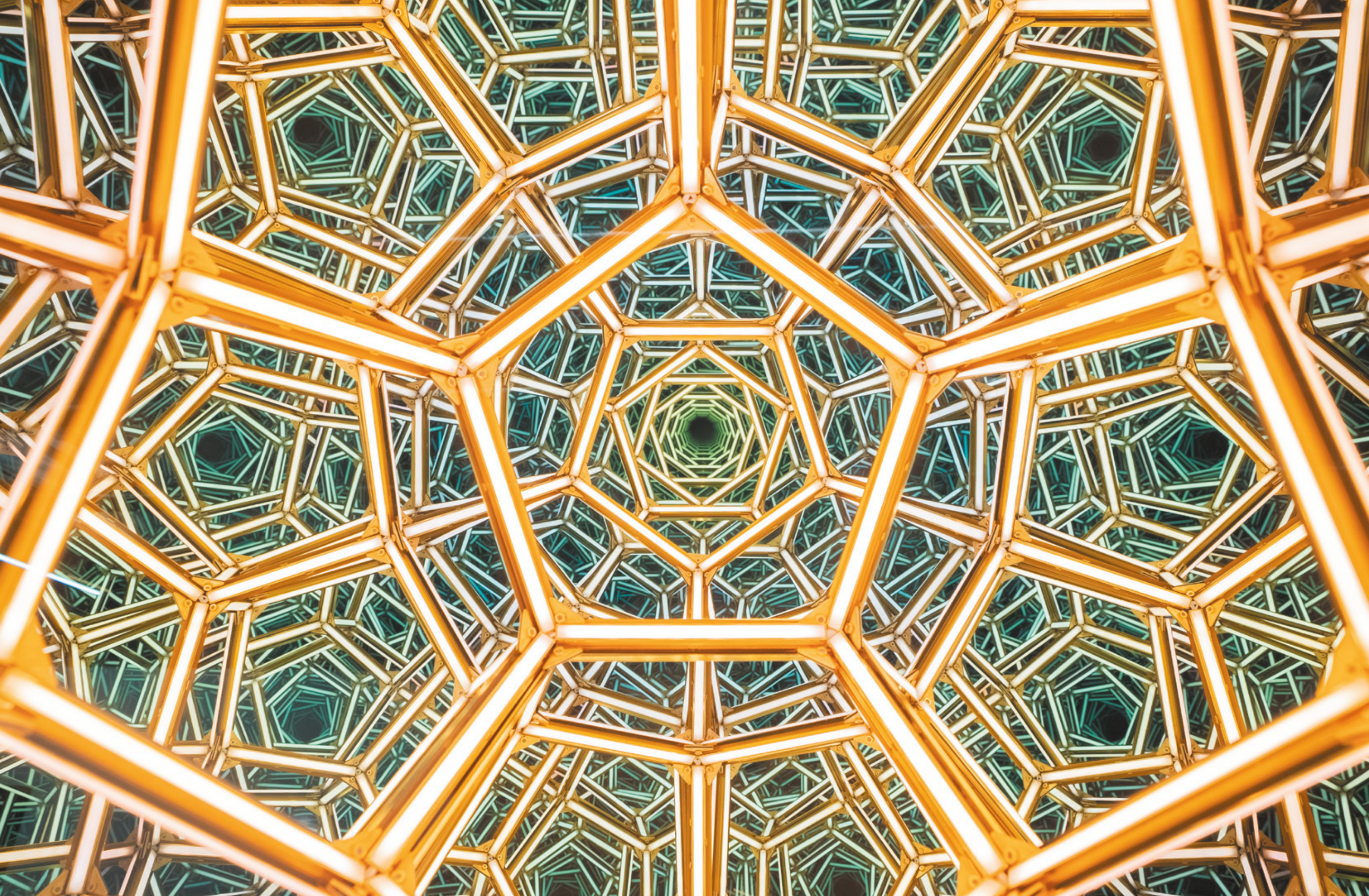
Edition of 24

61 x 73.7 x 86.4 cm | 24 x 29 x 34 in

PROVENANCE

Artist's studio



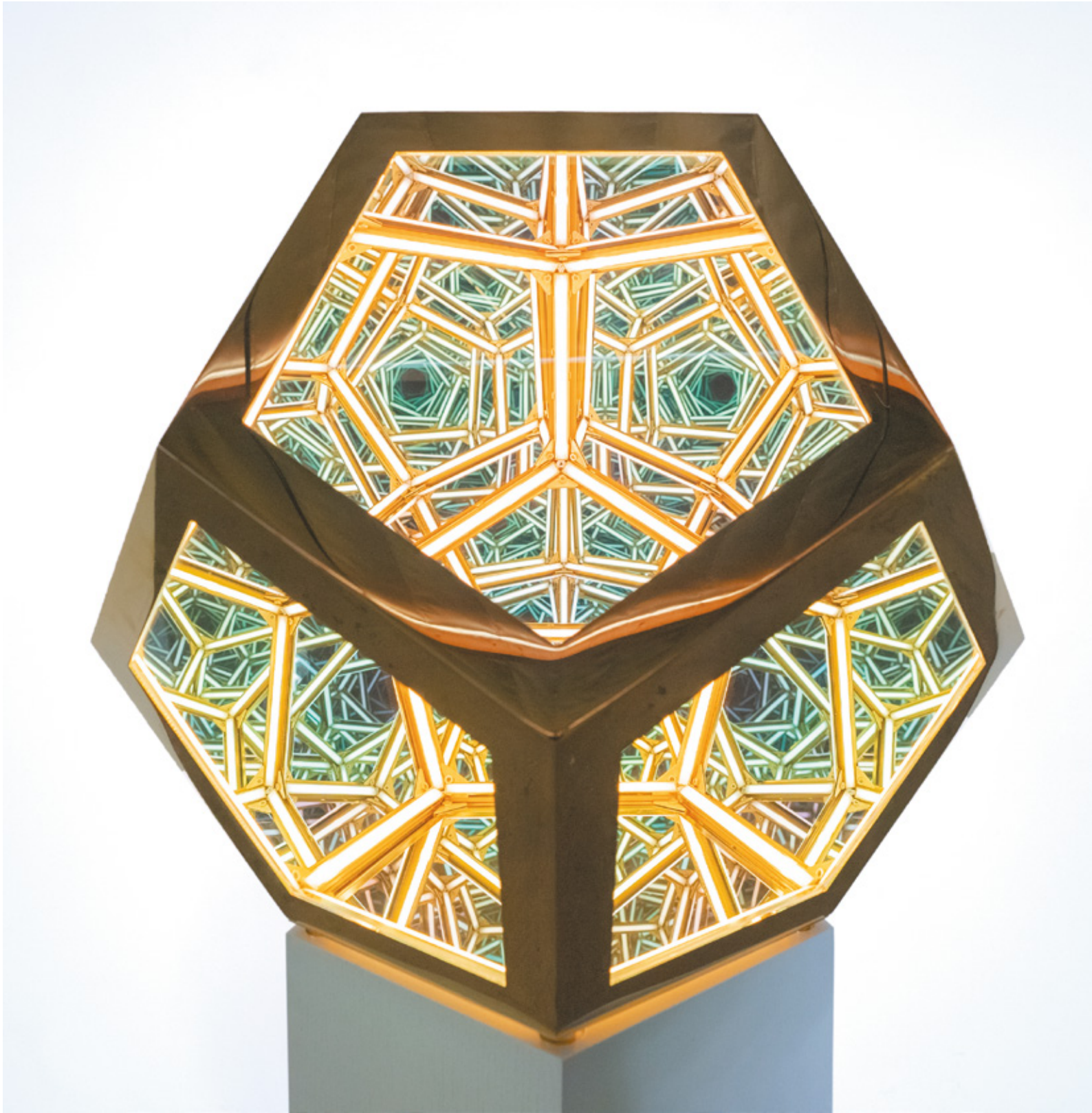


24" Dodecahedron (Gold)

2023

Steel, LED lights, double-sided glass
Edition of 24
61 x 61 x 61 cm | 24 x 24 x 24 in

PROVENANCE
Artist's studio



40" Dodecahedron (Solar Black)

2023

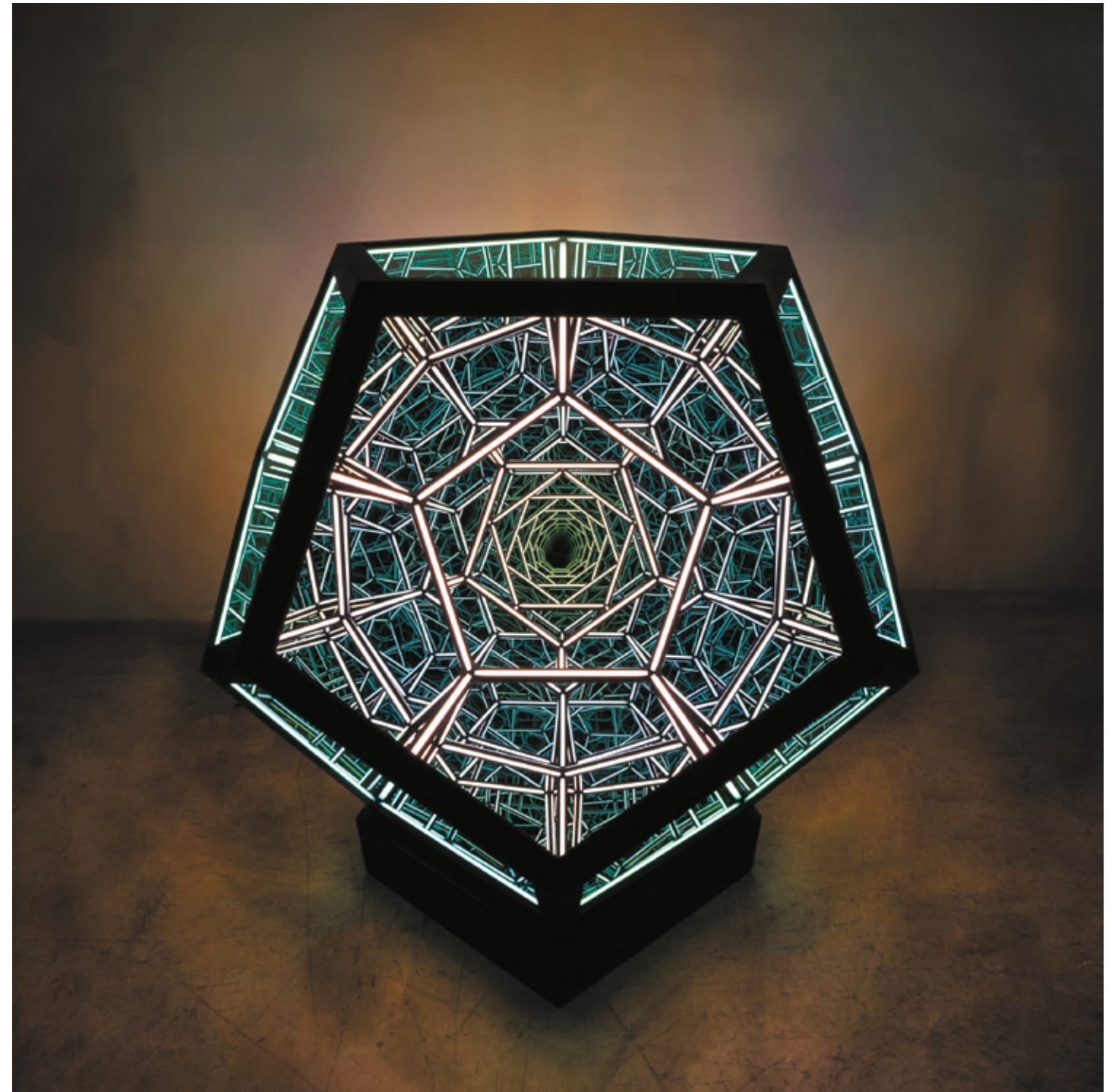
Stainless steel, LED lights, double-sided glass

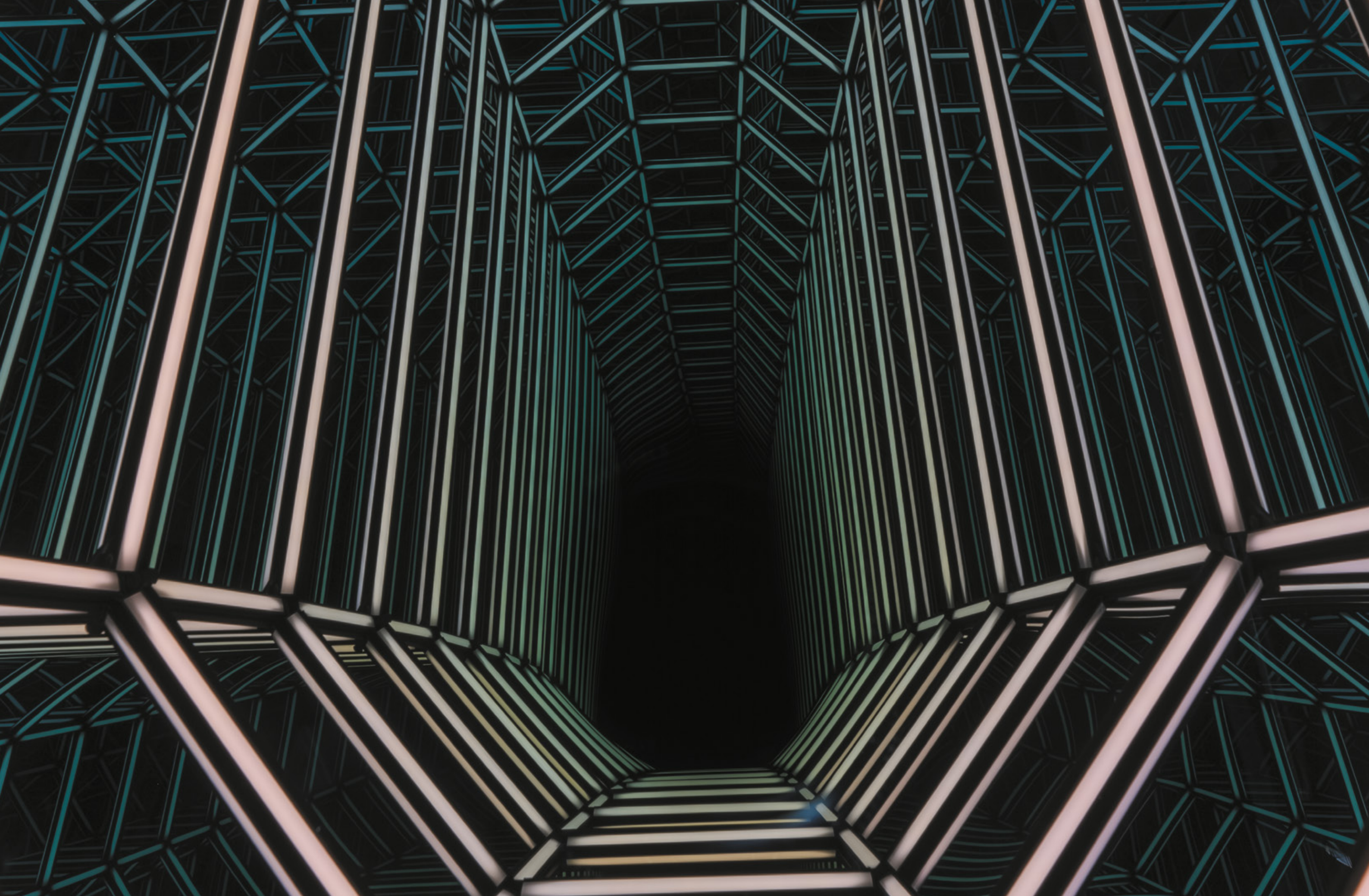
Edition of 6 + 3 AP

101.6 x 101.6 cm | 40 x 40 in

PROVENANCE

Artist's studio





60 x 30" Vertical Wall Portal (Solar Black)

2023

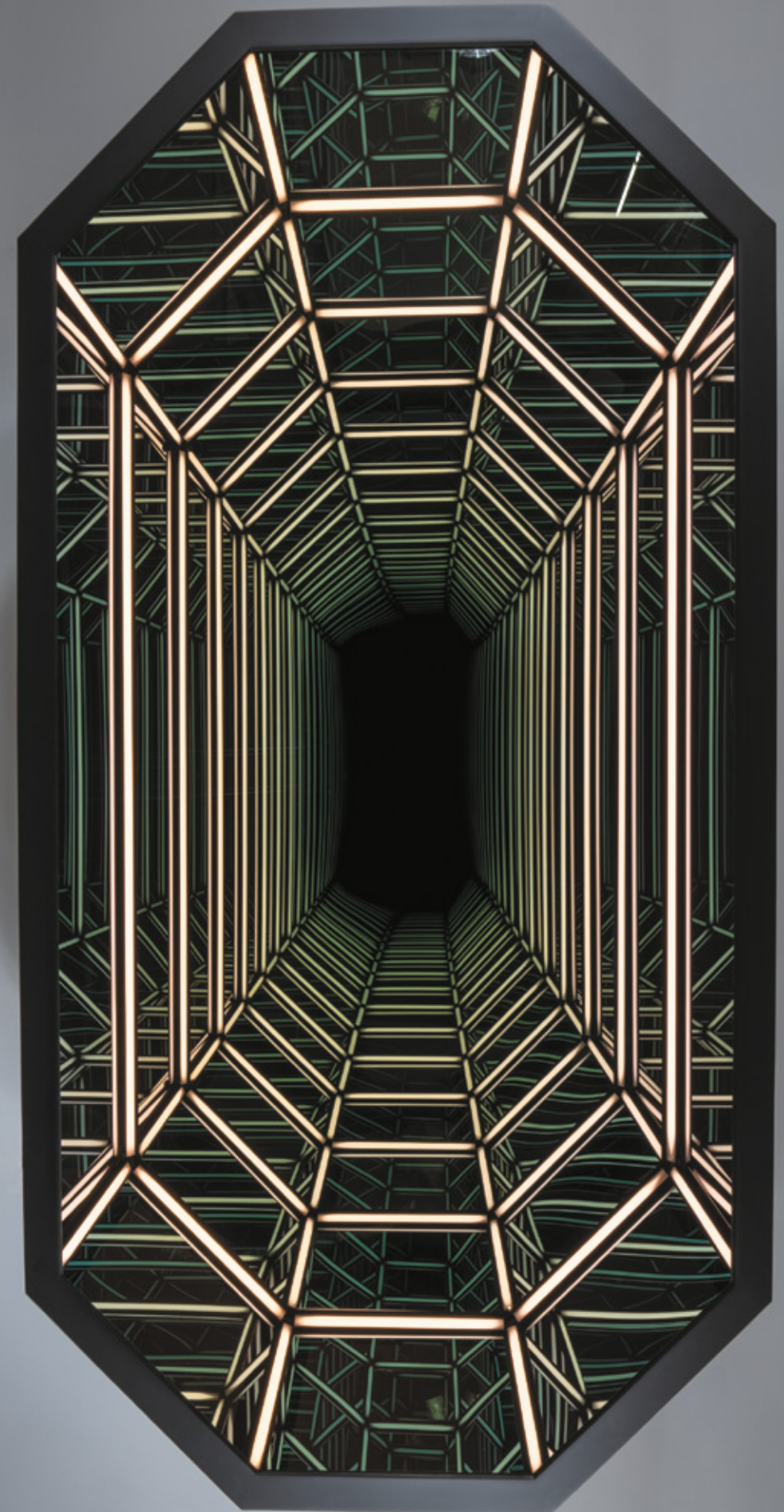
Stainless steel, LED lights, double-sided glass

Edition of 6 + 3 AP

76.2 x 152.4 x 30.5 cm | 30 x 60 x 12 in

PROVENANCE

Artist's studio



24" Icosahedron (Bronze)

2023

Bronze, glass, LED lights
Edition of 9 + 3 AP
61 x 61 x 61 cm | 24 x 24 x 24 in

PROVENANCE
Artist's studio



34" Icosahedron (Solar Black)

2023

Stainless steel, LED lights, double-sided glass

Edition of 9 + 3 AP

86.4 x 86.4 cm | 34 x 34 in

PROVENANCE

Artist's studio



24" Dodecahedron (Jet Black)

2023

Stainless steel, LED lights, double-sided glass

Edition of 24

61 x 61 x 61 cm | 24 x 24 x 24 in

PROVENANCE

Artist's studio





40" Circular Wall Portal (Flower)

2023

Stainless steel, aluminium, glass, LED lights

Edition of 6

101.6 x 101.6 cm | 40 x 40 in

PROVENANCE

Artist's studio



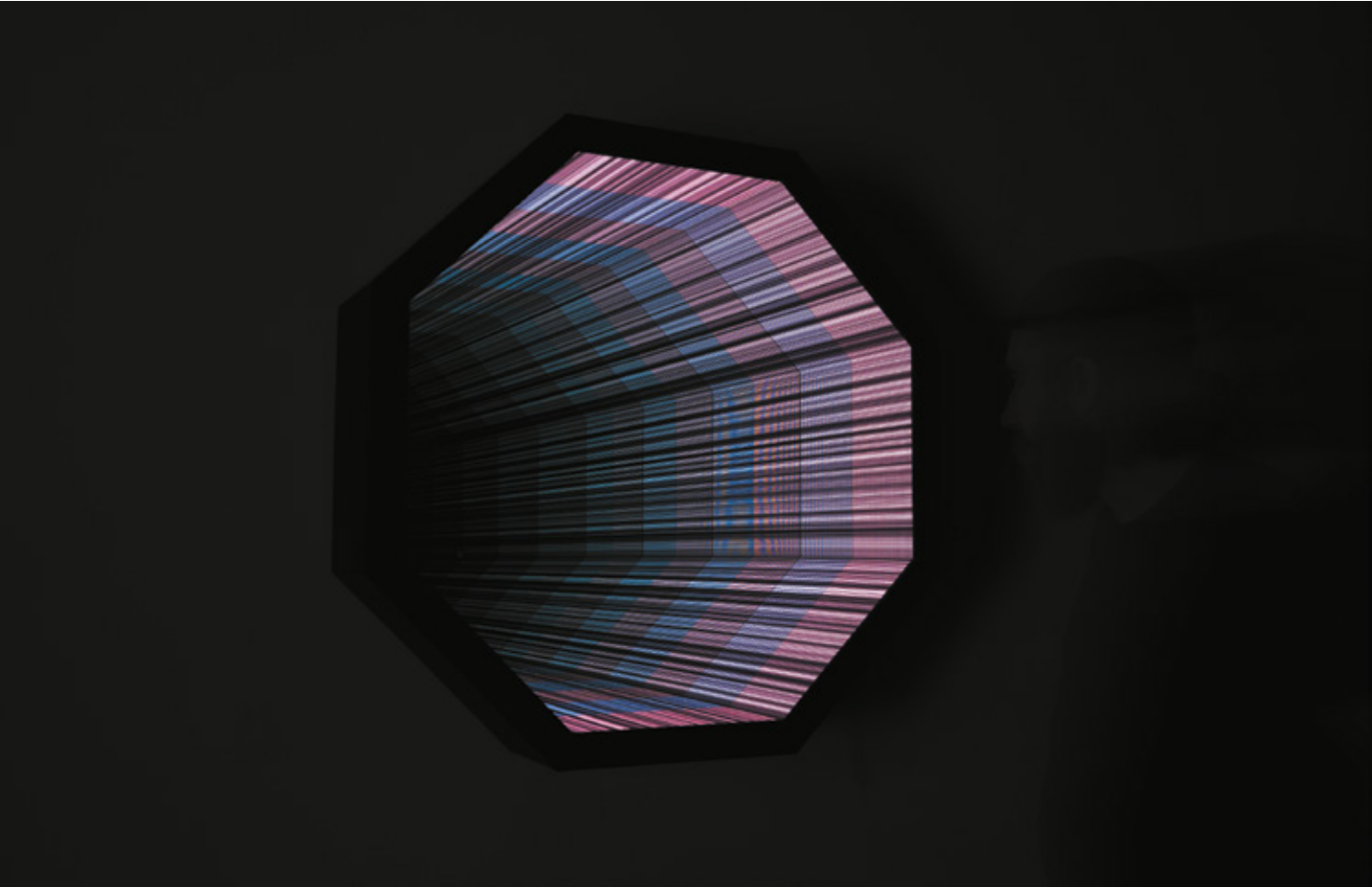
34" New Wall Portal (Solar Black)
2023

Stainless steel, LED lights, double-sided glass
Edition of 6 + 3 AP
86.4 x 86.4 x 20.3 cm | 34 x 34 x 8 in

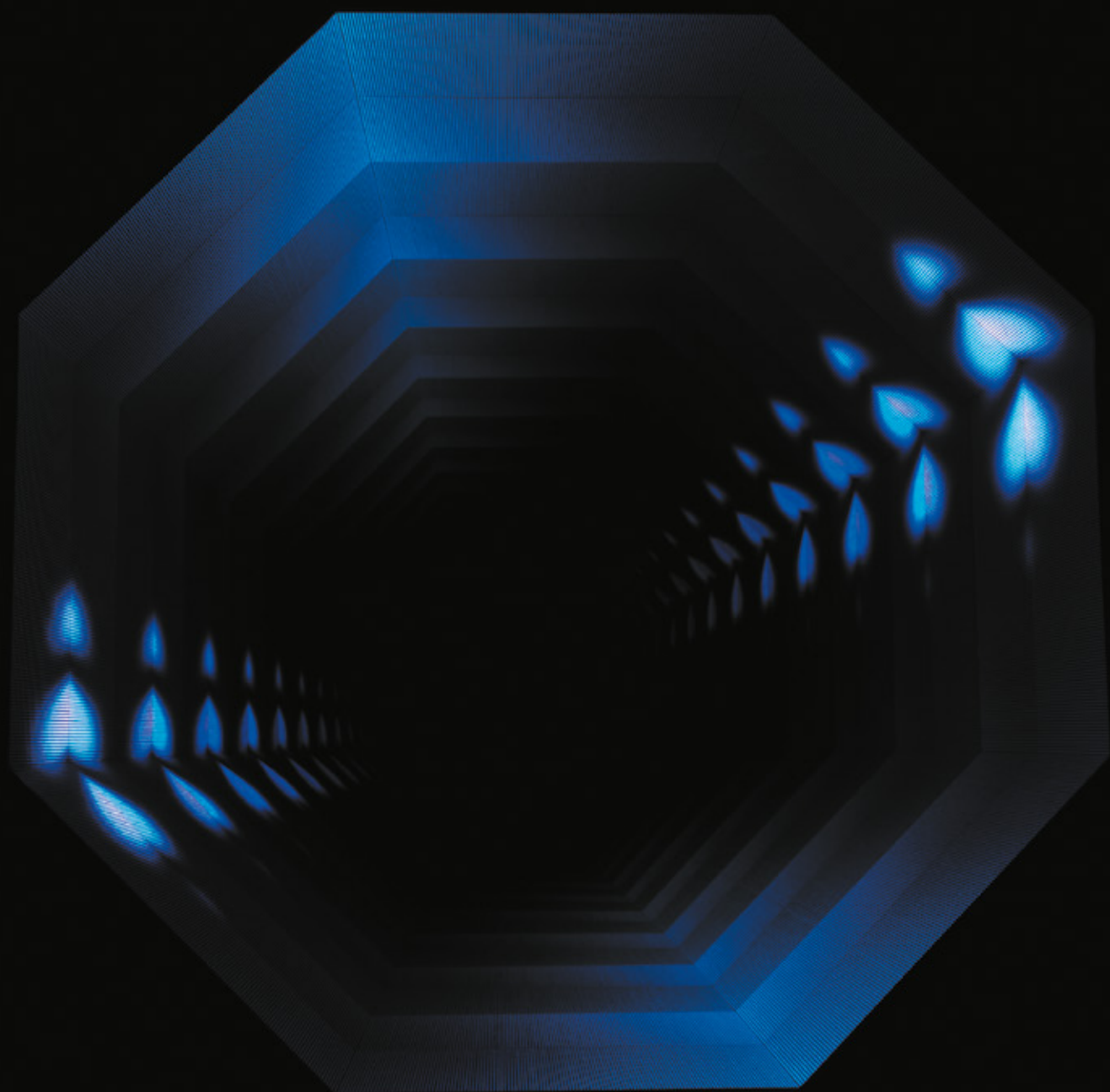
PROVENANCE
Artist's studio



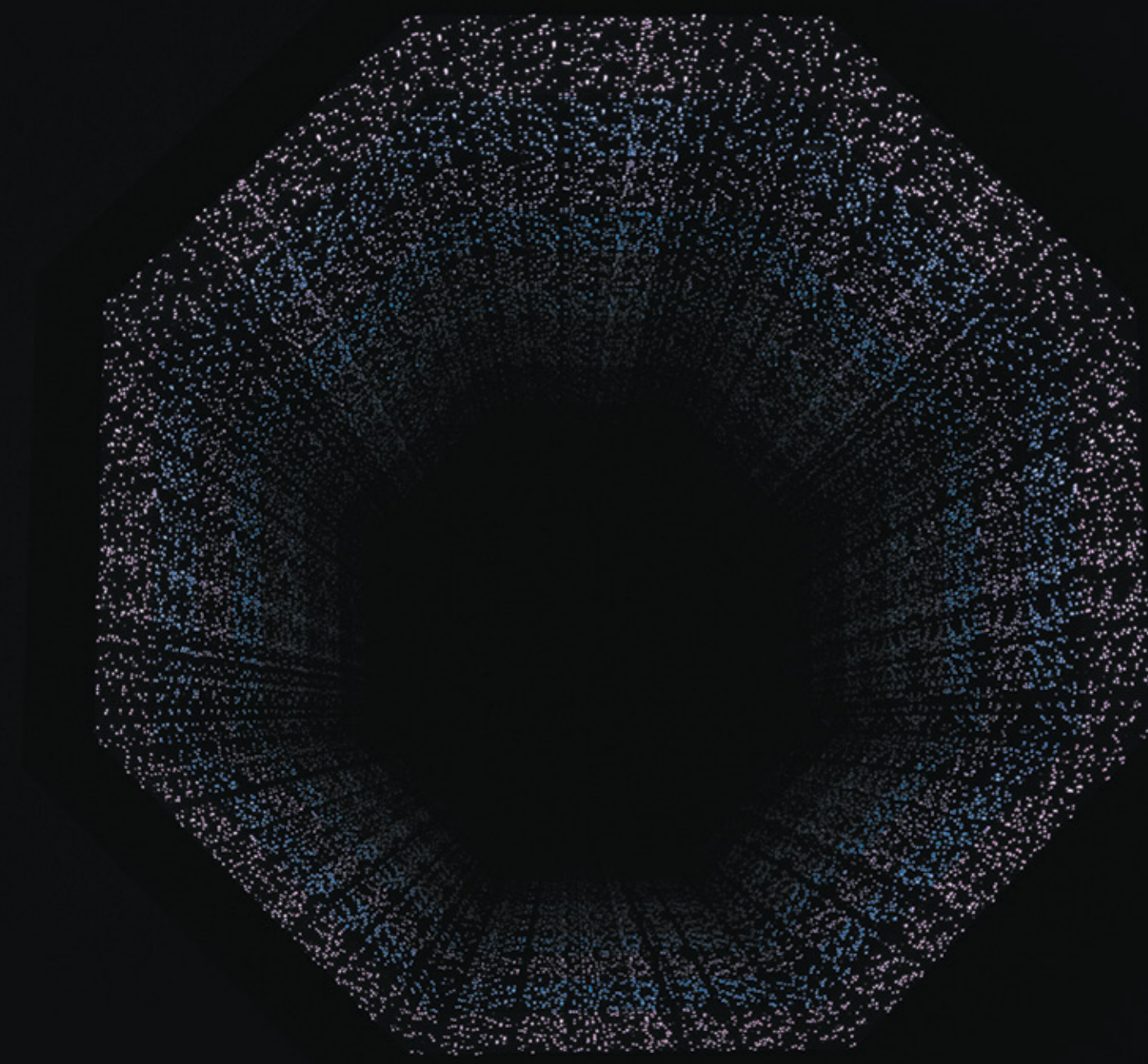
View 1



View 2



View 3



View 4



Rain Painting Series

2018

A photorealistic series made of contradictory materials: Paint on aluminium panel. "Purity is an illusion. The timeless, cleansing rain evoked by James' paintings is artificial. The viewer can encounter the work through a meditative fascination with its lucid intricacy – the eternal and universal behaviour of water. And the aesthetic pleasure of this is intense. But to read it as only beautiful or mystical is to miss the logic of contradiction that gives the work its conceptual strength, the spray of toxic industrial paint onto an object recognisable to any oldmaster artist's apprentice. Therefore, in a larger sense, this work presents an argument for combination and exchange over homogeneity and conformity. James' new mode of painting can be read as a critique of easy simulation, of virtuality, in relation to both traditional illusionism and the digital. By layering contrasting material processes to create a seeming unity, a surface of streaming water, these works insist on the real over the hyperreal and on the assembled, heterogeneous, contested nature of that reality."

60" Rain Painting (Aluminium Panel)

2023

Paint on Aluminium panel

Unique piece

Ø 152.4 cm / 60 in

PROVENANCE

Artist's studio



50" Round Rain Painting (Aluminium Panel)

2023

Paint on Aluminium panel

Unique piece

Ø 101.6 cm / 40 in

PROVENANCE

Artist's studio





40" Round Rain Painting (Aluminium Panel)

2023

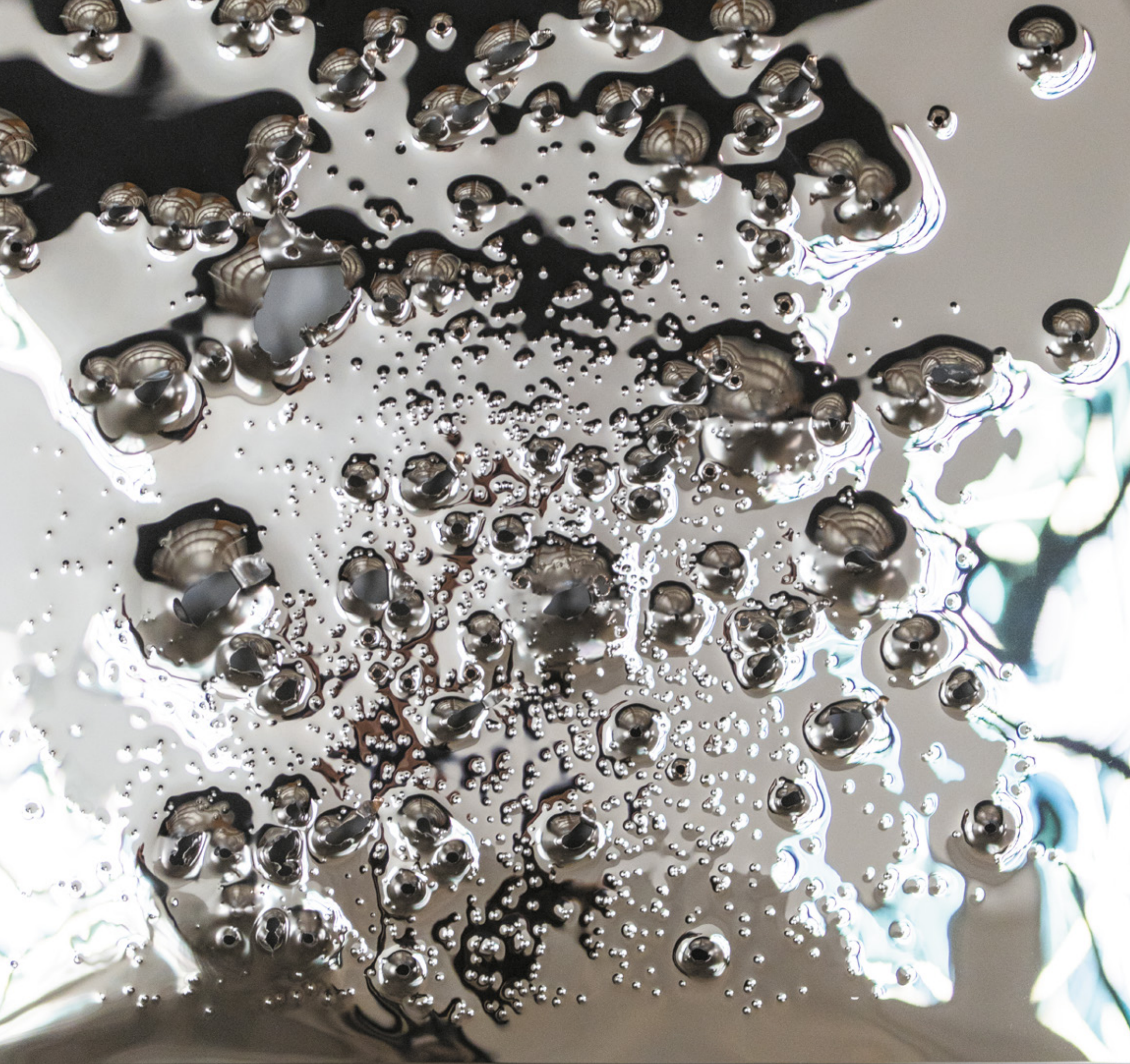
Paint on Aluminium panel

Unique piece

Ø 76.2 cm / 30 in

PROVENANCE

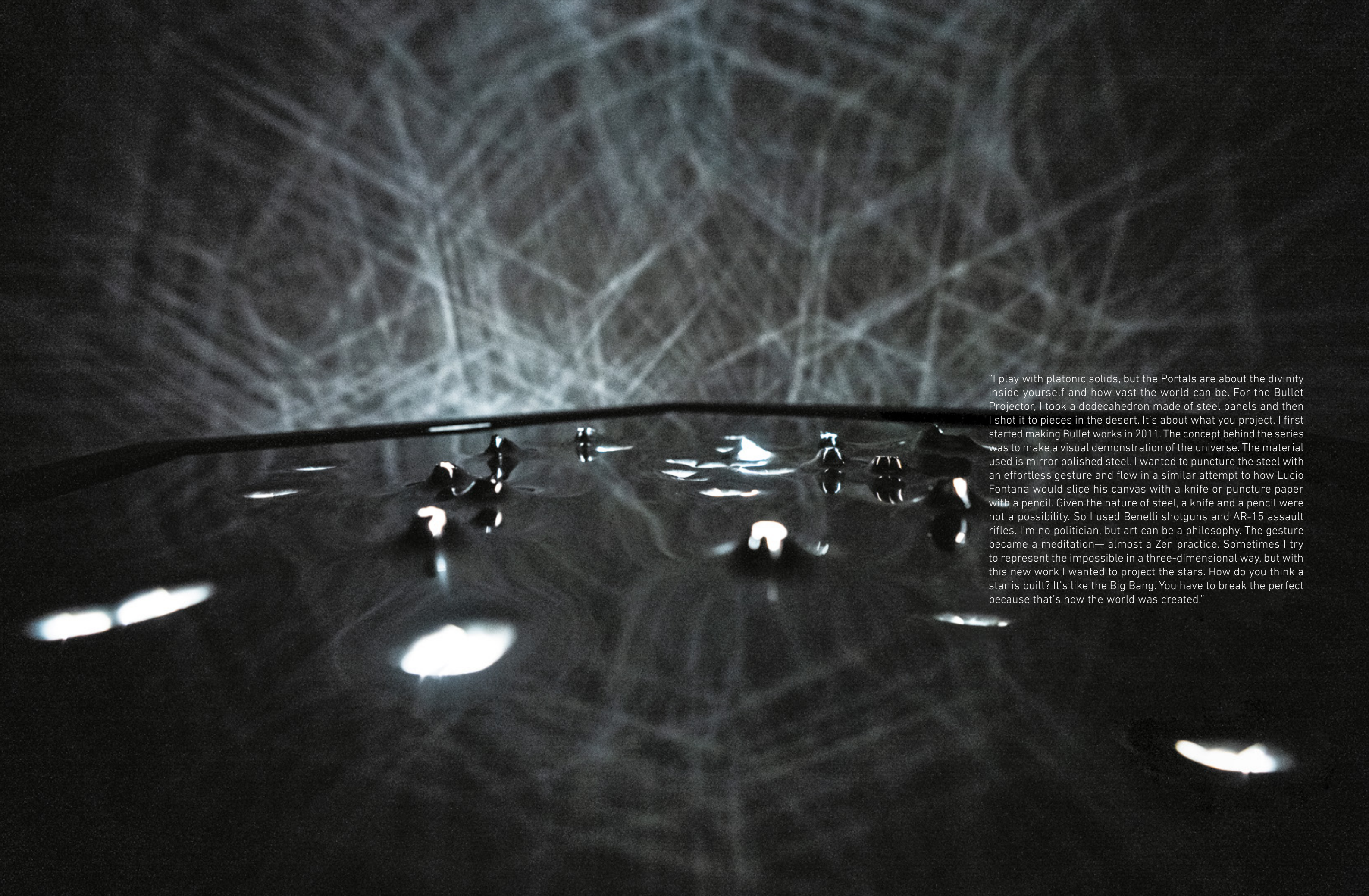
Artist's studio



Bullet Series

2011 - Present

"I first started making the Bullet Series in 2011. They are documented in my book, *Morphic Fields*, published by Hatje Cantz Verlag in 2014. The concept behind the series was to make a visual demonstration of the universe. The material used is mirror polished steel. I wanted to puncture the steel with an effortless gesture and flow in a similar attempt to how Lucio Fontana would slice his canvas with a knife or puncture paper with a pencil. Given the nature of steel, a knife and a pencil were not a possibility. I took an arsenal of assault rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers...you get the idea. The gesture became a meditation - almost a Zen practice. I am particularly fond of these works...and they're a lot of fun to make." Anthony James' Bullet Series builds upon his signature themes of life, death, birth, and rebirth. James' career has consistently gestured toward bringing impossible concepts — like the idea of infinity, or the cosmos...science, spirituality, and philosophy — into physical, objective existence often utilising vanguard high technology alongside industrial materials. With the Bullet Series, James once again invites viewers to experience the pieces as an external object upon which to gaze and an invitation to reflect inward upon the divinity within one's Self. The mirror polished steel nods toward California's finish fetish artists of the 1960's and '70's. Paradoxically, James punctures the fantasy with an assortment of arms creating dissonance — a pluralistic paradox reminiscent of the chaotic Big Bang. Simultaneously, the flawless polished steel belies its truth — there was no preordained plan... one thing is destroyed — another created.



"I play with platonic solids, but the Portals are about the divinity inside yourself and how vast the world can be. For the Bullet Projector, I took a dodecahedron made of steel panels and then I shot it to pieces in the desert. It's about what you project. I first started making Bullet works in 2011. The concept behind the series was to make a visual demonstration of the universe. The material used is mirror polished steel. I wanted to puncture the steel with an effortless gesture and flow in a similar attempt to how Lucio Fontana would slice his canvas with a knife or puncture paper with a pencil. Given the nature of steel, a knife and a pencil were not a possibility. So I used Benelli shotguns and AR-15 assault rifles. I'm no politician, but art can be a philosophy. The gesture became a meditation— almost a Zen practice. Sometimes I try to represent the impossible in a three-dimensional way, but with this new work I wanted to project the stars. How do you think a star is built? It's like the Big Bang. You have to break the perfect because that's how the world was created."


30" Bullet Panel

2023

Polished stainless steel
Unique piece
Each: 76.2 x 76.2 cm / 30 x 30 in

PROVENANCE
Artist's studio





“
My work is
my best attempt
at giving the impossible,
the infinite, a physical,
objective existence.
”

ANTHONY JAMES



Biography

Anthony James is a British-American artist based in Los Angeles, known for his monumental installations and sculptures. He was born in England in 1974 and studied in London at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design from 1994 to 1998. His work gestures towards minimalism, materiality, process, alchemy, language, mechanisation and experimentation with light and space.

The Birch series of sculptures were debuted in New York City in 2005. They consist of several variously sized, freestanding and wall-mounted, internally illuminated, steel and glass vitrines with birch tree trunks inside. The birch tree is associated with magical symbolism. Many anthropologists consider it to be a possible agent of the transformation of human consciousness. The birch tree is also “associated with birth and rebirth” and is “hermaphroditic and selfpropagating, with male and female flowers on the same tree”. The works have mirrored sides, which give the illusion of endless birch forests. These artworks also reference the containment and simulation of nature.

His Portal sculptures take up the concepts of the universal and transcendental. The historical cosmology of Plato is a primary inspiration for the sculptures. The effect is both esoteric and scientific, morphic and distinctly concrete. The historical references here span the empirical experimentation of cultures.

James’s objects show a formal certainty and perspicuity (exact symmetry, white light, accurate shape) that registers purity, autonomy and wholeness. Although his works illustrate ideals, themselves are very contingent and actual: they are made for today.

The sculptures operate between the iconic and the arbitrary, the concrete and the alchemic, the mythical and the experiential. James describes his work as, “evoking pictorial depictions of the cosmos, alluding to notions of mysticism, ethereality, spirituality and science, all the while anchored through the use of weighty, industrial materials”.

Icosahedrons – the geometric globes of twenty identical triangular facets – were a mathematical experiment in unity used by Plato to demonstrate an ideal compositional system of perfect symmetry in three dimensions. In a twentyfirst century gallery space, the glass, steel, and LED structures bring a rigid and gleaming tangibility to the abstraction of the numerical calculation of flawless coherence. James’s artworks are compelling approximations, facsimiles of understanding and belief thousands of years old that come down to us on our own terms of modern metals and technological light.

His first monograph, *Morphic fields*, was published by *Hatje Cantz* (2014). His work has recently been exhibited at Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art and is part of the Palm Springs Art Museum collection, USA (2019-2020). He was selected to be part of the Mayfair Sculpture Trail, with his 97 inches high Crystal piece displayed in Old Bond Street, London (2020). He also presented *Constellations*, W1 Curates x Anthony James, London (2021); Lightfield, Marble Arch Mound, London (2021).

Solo Exhibitions

| | |
|------|---|
| 2022 | Anthony James, <i>Divine Infinity</i> , Opera Gallery, New York, United States |
| 2021 | Westminster City Council x W1 Curates, Marble Arch Mound, London, United Kingdom |
| 2020 | <i>Transcendence</i> , Opera Gallery, London, United Kingdom |
| 2018 | <i>Portals</i> , Melissa Morgwan Fine Art, Palm Desert, United States <i>Rain Paintings</i> , There-There Gallery, Los Angeles, United States |
| 2017 | <i>Shields</i> , Fort Gansevoor, New York, United States <i>Portals</i> , There-There Gallery, Los Angeles, United States |
| 2015 | Anthony James, Maloney Fine Art, Los Angeles, United States |
| 2014 | <i>Morphic Fields</i> , Walter Storms Galerie, Munich, Germany |
| 2012 | <i>Consciousness and Portraits of Sacrifice</i> , Brand New Gallery, Milan, Italy |
| 2010 | <i>KO</i> , Patrick Painter Gallery, Santa Monica, United States |
| 2007 | Anthony James, Gavlak Gallery, West Palm Beach, United States Anthony James, Milk Gallery presented by Gavlak Gallery, New York, United States Anthony James, Visionaire Gallery, New York, United States |
| 2006 | Anthony James, Kantor/Feuer Window, New York, United States |
| 2005 | Anthony James, Holasek Wier Gallery, New York, United States |
| 1999 | Anthony James, Four, Four, Four Apex Art, New York, United States |

Group Exhibitions & Fairs

| | |
|------|--|
| 2020 | Palm Springs Art Museum collection, Palm Springs, United States |
| 2019 | <i>Crystals in Art: Ancient to Today</i> , Crystals Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, United States |
| 2018 | Art Aspen, Aspen, United States 2014 Art International Istanbul, Istanbul,Turkey |
| 2011 | The Armory Show, New York, United States <i>The Shortest Distance Between 2 Points is Often Intolerable</i> , Brand New Gallery, Milan, Italy Pieces of Heaven Auction, The Art of Elysium, Los Angeles, United States |
| 2010 | Art Basel, Basel, Switzerland The Armory Show, New York, United States Angel Art Auction, CAA, Los Angeles, United States |
| 2009 | Blue, Blue, Kim Light / LightBox, Los Angeles, United States |
| 2008 | <i>Getting Out Our Dreams</i> , Otero Plassart, Los Angeles, United States |
| 2007 | <i>Some Kind of Portrait</i> , Mark Selwyn, Los Angeles, United States The Armory Show, New York, United States Art Basel, Miami, United States |
| 2006 | <i>The Monty Hall Problem</i> , curated by Staler Bradley, Blum and Poe, Los Angeles, United States <i>Flaming June VI</i> , curated by Sarah Gavlak, Spanierman Modern, New York, United States <i>Color Theory and Practice</i> , Briggs Robinson Gallery, New York, United States <i>Twenty-Five Bold Moves</i> , curated by Simon Watson and Craig Hensala of Scenic, House of Campari, New York, United States |
| 2002 | <i>Superimposition</i> , curated by David Hunt, Caren Golden Fine Art, New York, United States |
| 2000 | The New Museum, Curated by Stefano Basilico, New York,United States |
| 1999 | <i>Room with a view</i> , Sixth @ Prince Gallery, New York, United States <i>Road Show</i> , DFN Gallery, New York, United States <i>Machine Gun Etiquette</i> , Spencer Brownstone Gallery, New York, United States <i>Foul Play</i> , Thread Waxing Space, New York, United States |



pp. 12-13
60" Great Rhombicosidodecahedron
(Champagne). 2023



pp. 14-15
24" Cube (Solar Black)
2023



pp. 16-17
90" Dali Cube (Solar Black)
2023



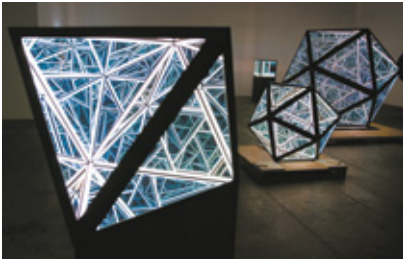
pp. 18-19
Truncated Cube Bench (Solar Black)
2023



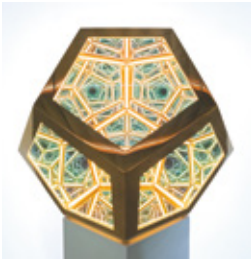
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33" Pyramid (Solar Black)
2023



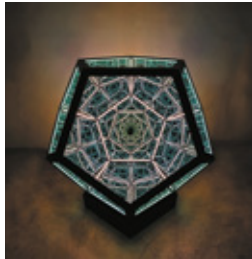
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