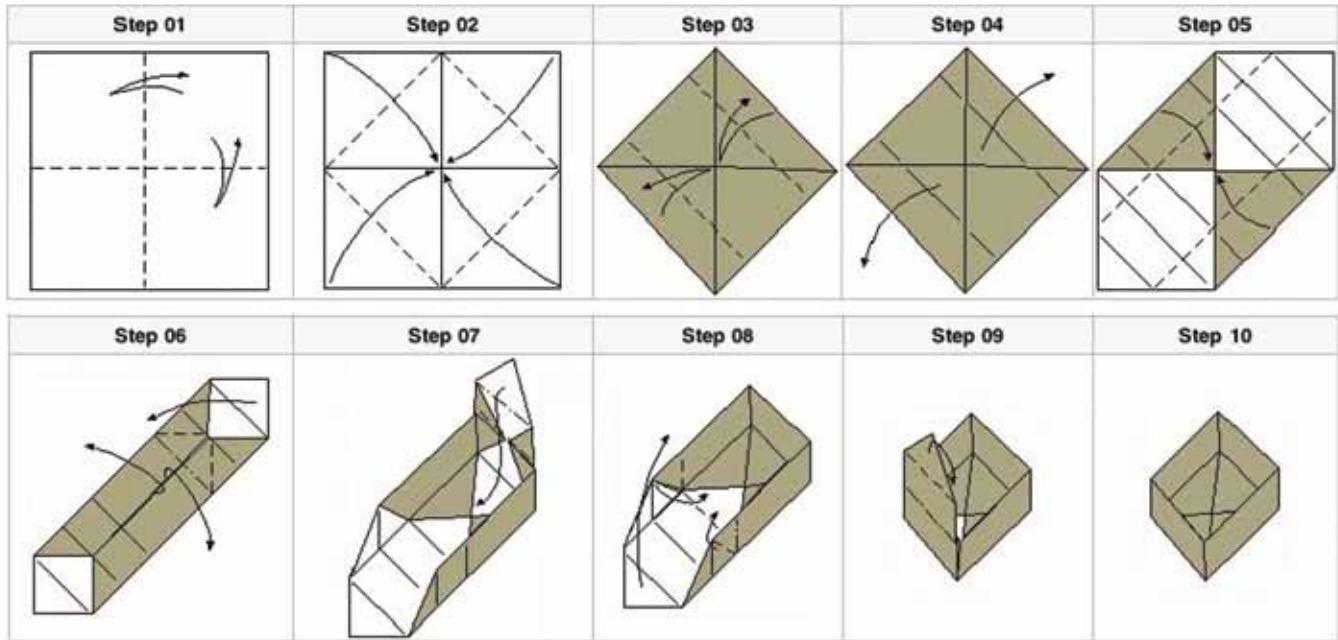




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A Project by Felix Lazo
Curated by María José Montalva



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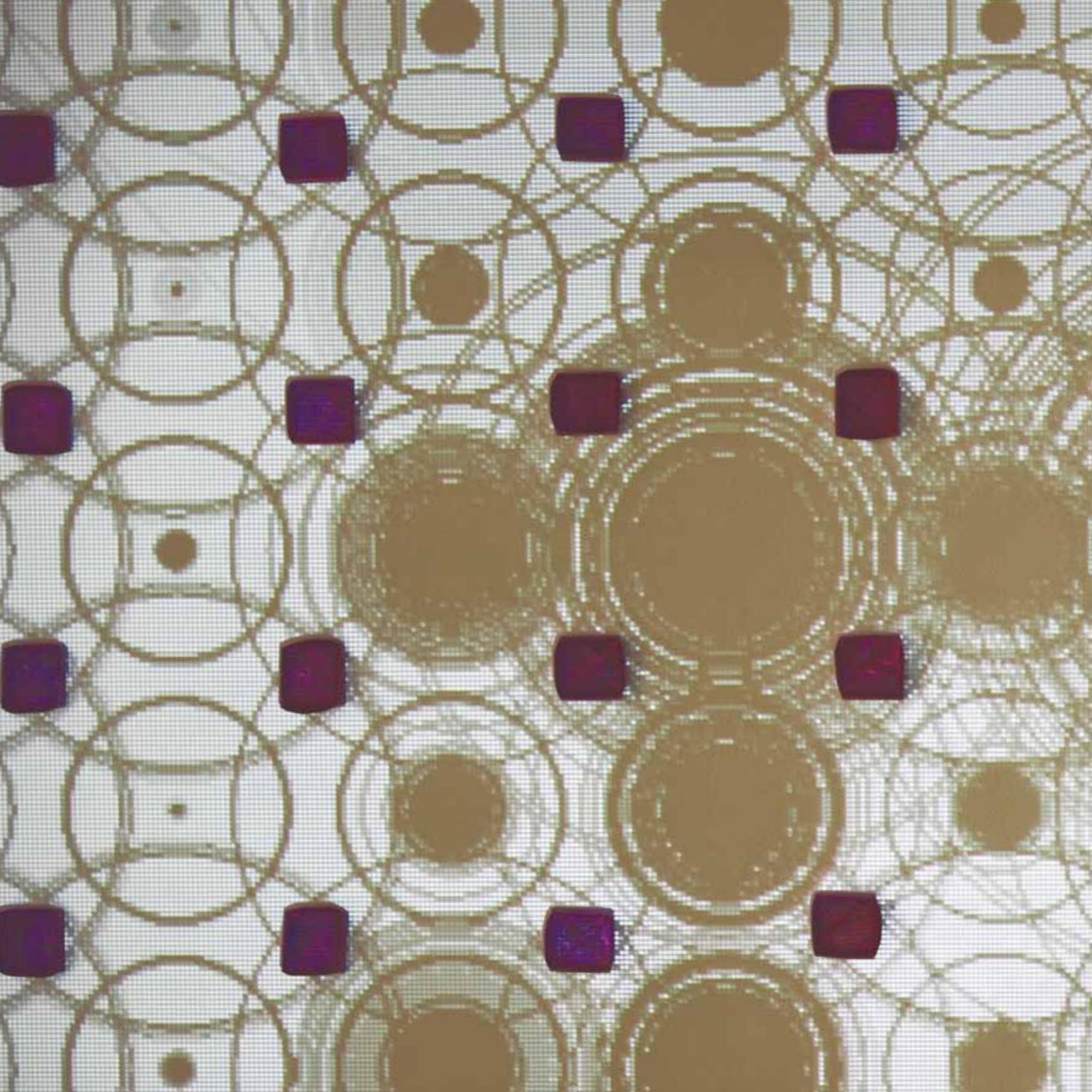
Interactive visual and sound installation by Felix Lazo
February 23 to March 17, 2012

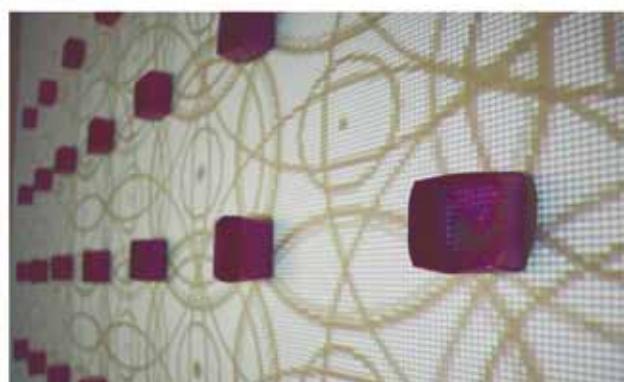
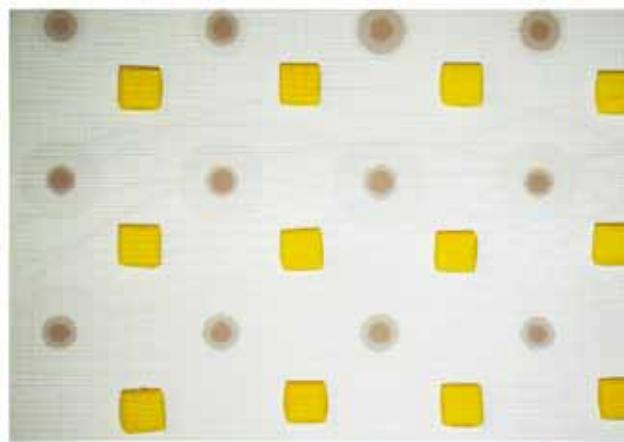
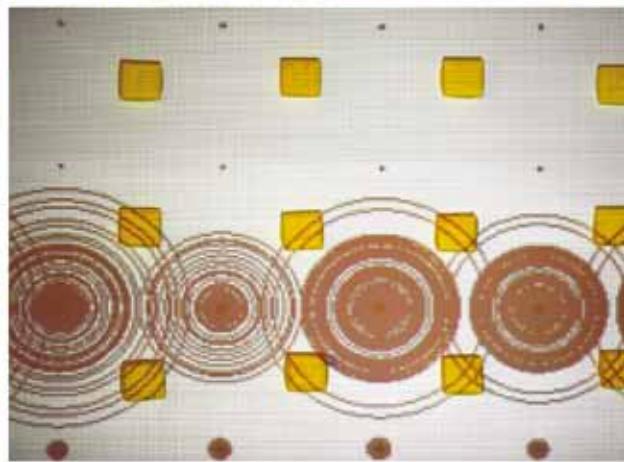
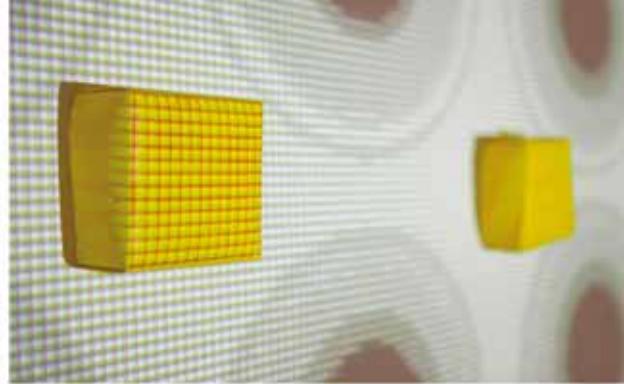
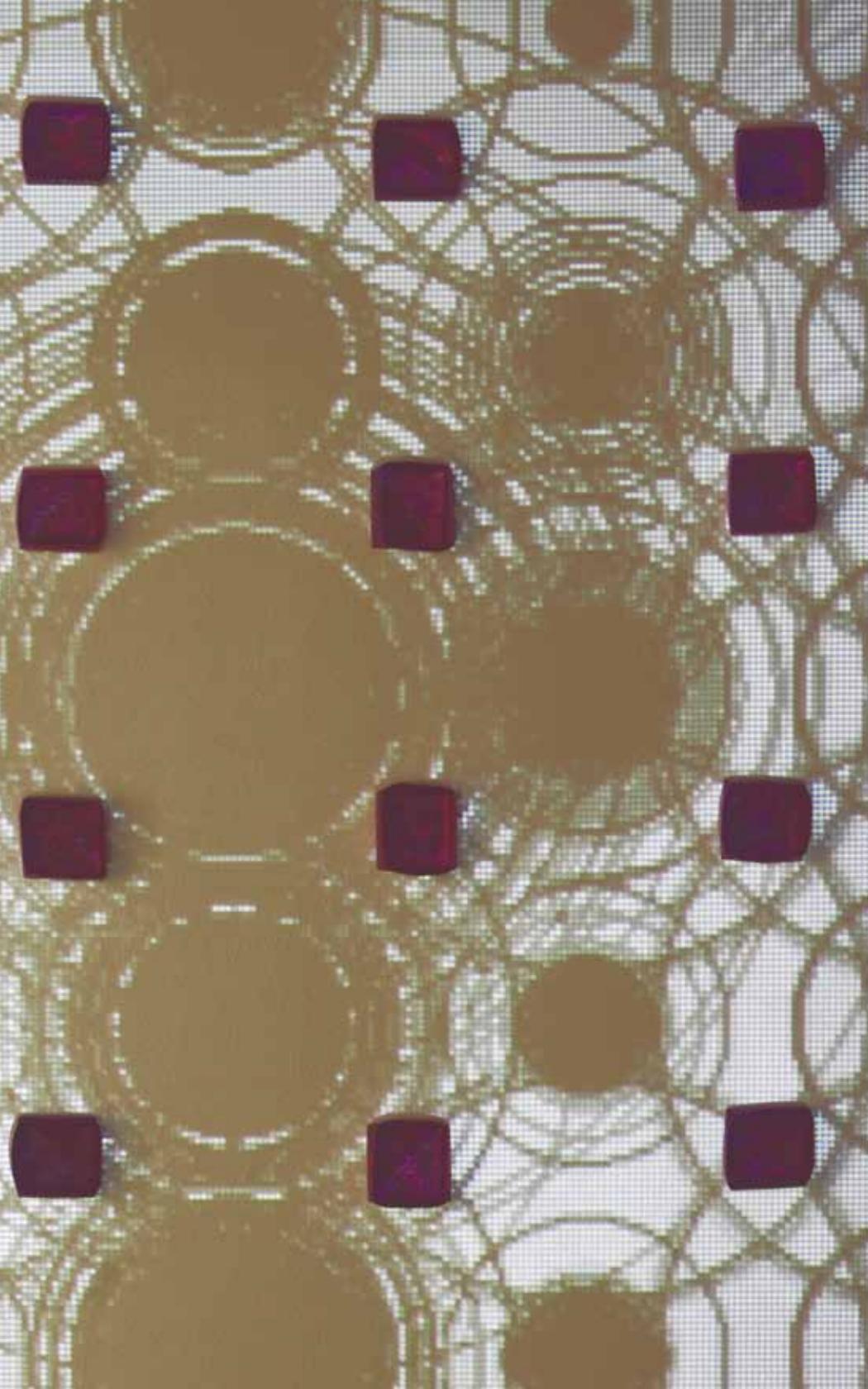
AC Institute

547 West 27th Street, Suite 610 New York, NY 10001

Since its inception in 2008 the AC Institute has sought to advance art through investigation, research and practice. It is a lab for experimentation and a forum for critical discussion. Emphasizing emerging, international, and under-represented artists, the Institute develops projects across disciplines, exhibiting work deploying a variety of strategies for critical, experiential, and performative interventions in the field of contemporary art. In addition to publishing critical writing that pushes conventional expectations of meaning and objectivity, the AC Institute realizes off-site projects taking place at the edge of the art marketplace. Committed to an integrated vision of creative practice, Art Currents creates autonomous spaces to pursue experimental work. The AC institute is non-profit 501(c)3 under the Direction of Holly Crawford.

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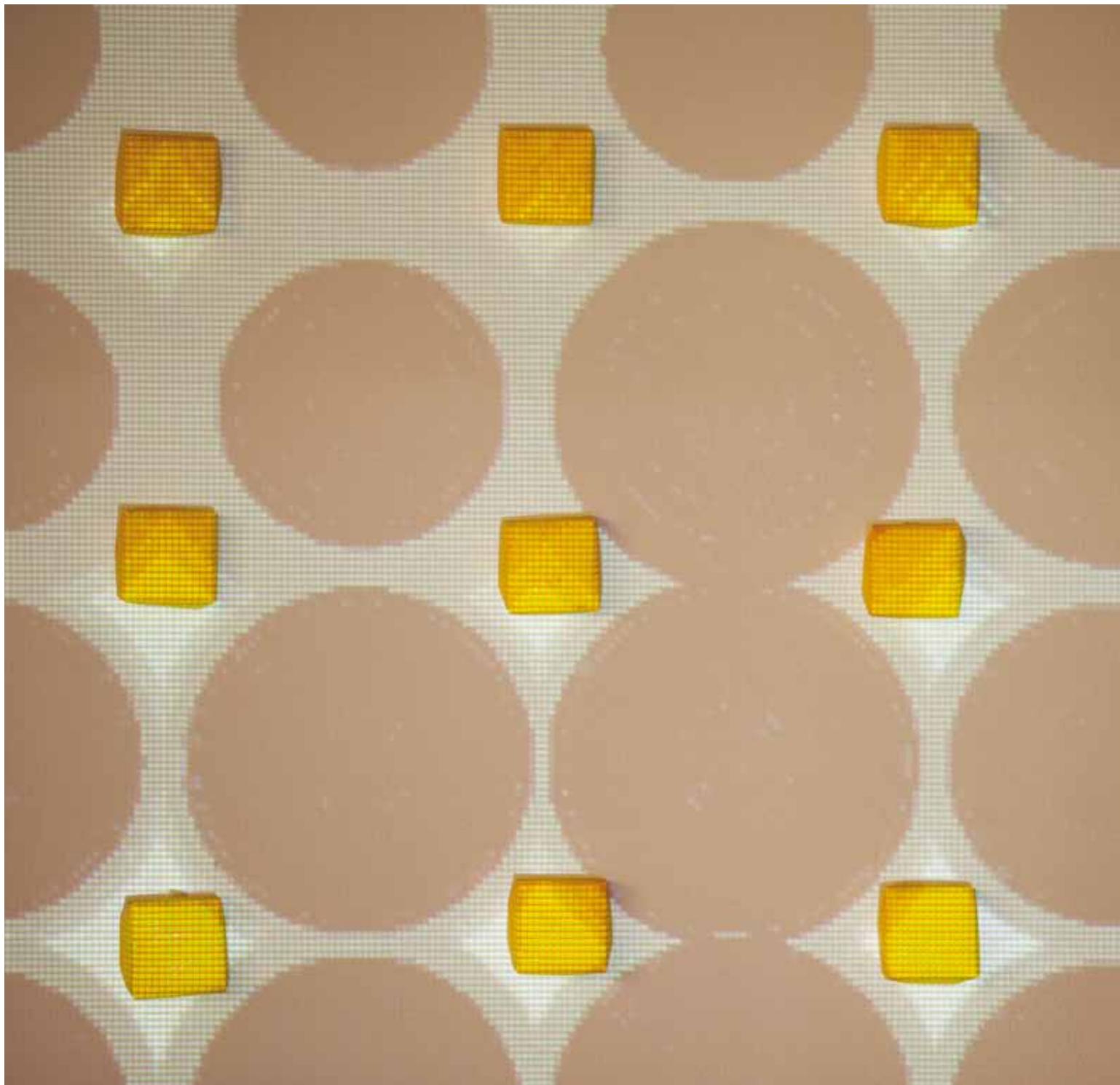
"Blind monks examining an elephant",
an ukiyo-e print by Hanabusa Itcho (1652–1724).

Ukiyo-e print illustration from Buddhist parable showing blind monks examining an elephant. Each man reaches a different conclusion based on which part of the elephant they examine.

Transforming our neuronal conditioning

Félix Lazo is an artist whose work involves explorations of the effects of the physical relationship of the body with the art-object and the space around it, through the reactions of the eye, ear and mind to color, sound and space. His art derives from interactive connection of the body, the gesture and the sound. Lazo's work is rooted in cybernetics and the secondary concept of Autopoiesis systems. Chilean biologist Humberto Maturana developed this latter concept. These systems are multi-media machines (software plus hardware) of interaction and feedback that generate a visual and audible output in direct relation to visual and aural stimuli from the surroundings, including the observer.

Félix Lazo was born in Santiago, Chile in 1957. His undergraduate studies at The University of Chile and from the Catholic University in Santiago focused on biology and music. Here is where he met Humberto Maturana, biologist and philosopher and Maturana's disciple and collaborator Francisco Varela, also a biologist. It is their work that interested Félix Lazo in cybernetics and human interaction. It was only later that he pursued art history in the Catholic University, and subsequently an MA in music education from Columbia University in New York. There he assisted at a conference by the American composer Philip Glass, and this inspired him to take a Computer Music Composition course with the Greek composer and visionary Iannis Xenakis at CCMIX in Paris, France. Philip Glass and Iannis Xenakis are pioneers in audio feedback and the use of tape loop, sound synthesis, and computer generated composition. In the late 70's, Lazo encountered the work of the Danish-American artist Thomas Wilfred who developed "Lumia" or the art of light. This work was based in the relationship between light, color and form and their changes through time.

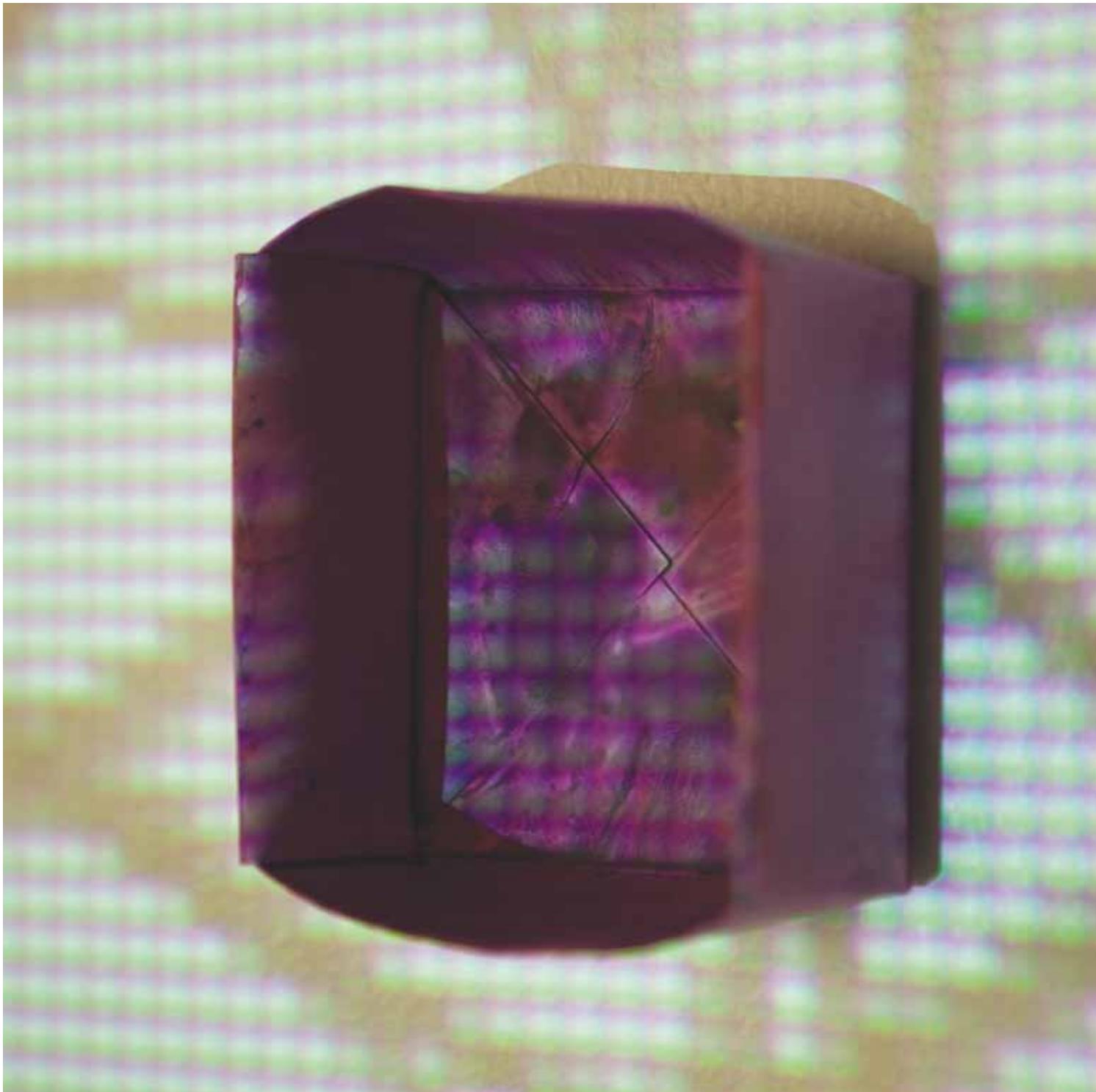


According to Wilfred: "Light is the artist's sole medium of expression. He must mold it by optical means, almost as sculptor models clay. He must add color, and finally motion to his creation. Motion, the time dimension, demands that he must be a choreographer in space."

It is with this intellectual background that Lazo came into cybernetic art, also called telematic art or technological art. This is a form of art that challenges the traditional relationship between active viewers and passive objects by creating interactive, behavioural contexts for remote aesthetic encounters.

The science of cybernetics, information transmission and feedback.

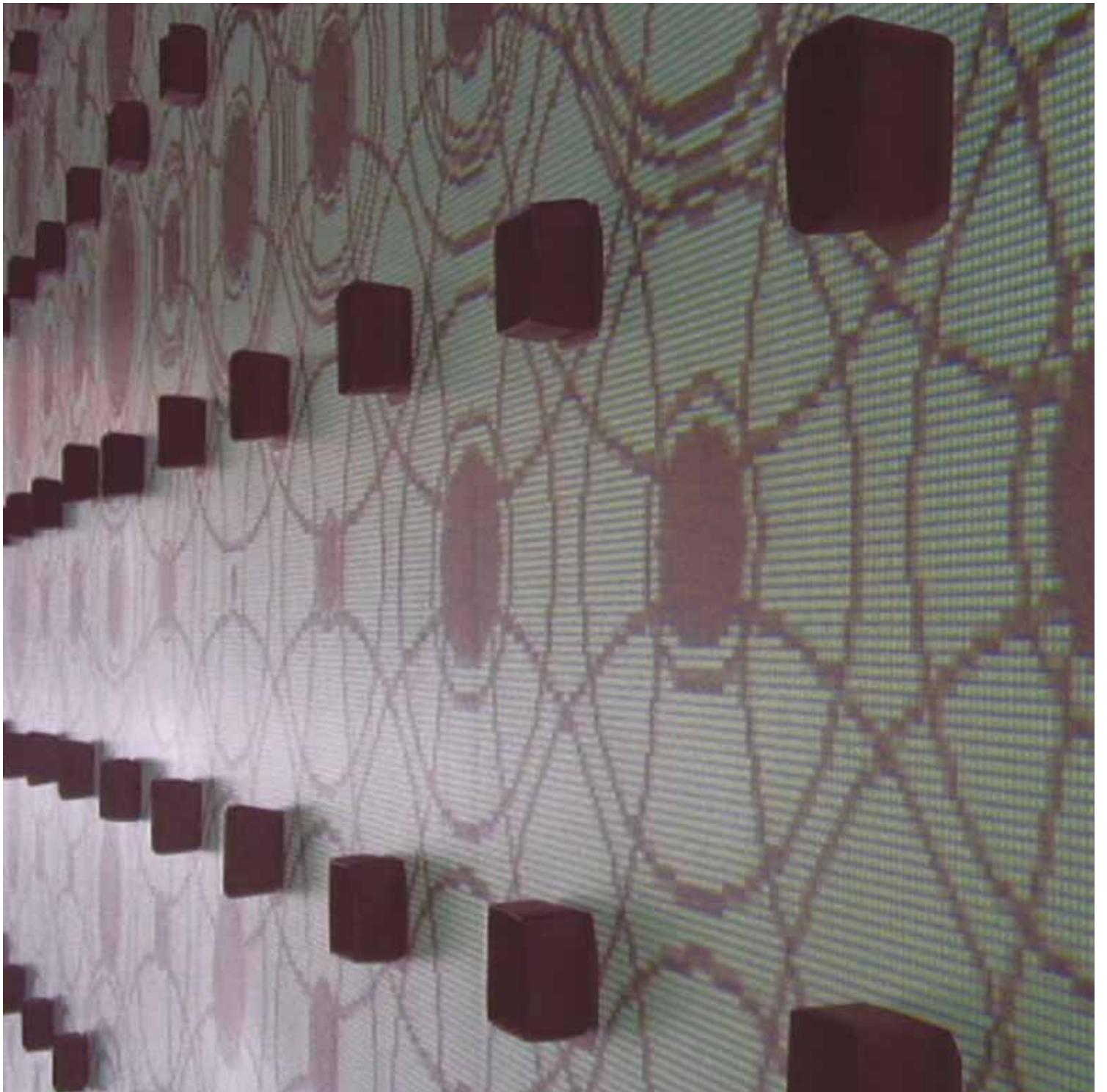
The famous American mathematician, Norbert Wiener, is considered to be the founder of the science of cybernetics. The term cybernetics is derived from the Greek word for "steerman". In English the corresponding term is "governor", meaning a system which regulates the state of affairs of some dynamic process. The transmission of information between the process and the governor, and the feedback between the governor and the process, are the crucial elements. Information theory developed at much the same time as cybernetics, only here, the focus was on accuracy of information transmission and feedback in communication systems such as the radio, the telephone or (later) television. It soon became clear that it could also be applied to information transmission within neural networks of human and animal brains. Wiener formalized these ideas into a general system meant to encompass both mechanical and biological processes. He saw cybernetics as a means of "regulating the flow of information through feedback loops between various interrelated components in order to predict and control the behavior of the whole system" (Shanken, 2001, p.2).



Art, Cybernetics and Autopoiesis Systems

In North America and Europe, cybernetics and its notion of feedback had entered the popular lexicon by the 1960's. The Hungarian-born artist Nicolas Schoffer began creating cybernetic sculptures in 1956, British artists, such as Roy Ascott, Bernard Cohen, R.B. Kitaj and Steve Willats, as well as art historian Diane Kirkpatrick, looked to cybernetics as "a scientific model for constructing a system of visual signs and relationships, which they attempted to achieve by utilizing diagrammatic and interactive elements to create works that functioned as information systems" (Shanken, 2001, p.2). In 1960, prior to any contact with the literature on cybernetics, Ascott had already created his Change Paintings in which viewers were able to interact with the composition, and by changing it, change their experience of it. Ascott's subsequent exposure to cybernetics and related works in 1961 set off a "visionary flash of insight" through its applications to art. Art was to move away from being an object viewed by a passive observer to become instead a process, "a cybernetic system comprised of a network of feedback loops" (ibid, pp. 3-4).

m:n:m:l is a visual and sonorous interactive installation. First, a physical or material part consists of 300 masu boxes made of yellow and purple synthetic paper in the origami tradition and placed in the traditional modernist grid on two opposing walls. Secondly, a digital part is projected over both walls so that it interacts with the origami objects. Interactive programs Lazo specifically created for the installation run the two visual systems. These abstract systems based on simple geometric forms, are modified by the interaction between the sound and the movement of people in the installation. An audible interactive system takes the sounds of the space and modifies them. The interactive systems have been designed in two programmed environments, SuperCollier for the audio and C++ (Open Frameworks) for the visual projection.

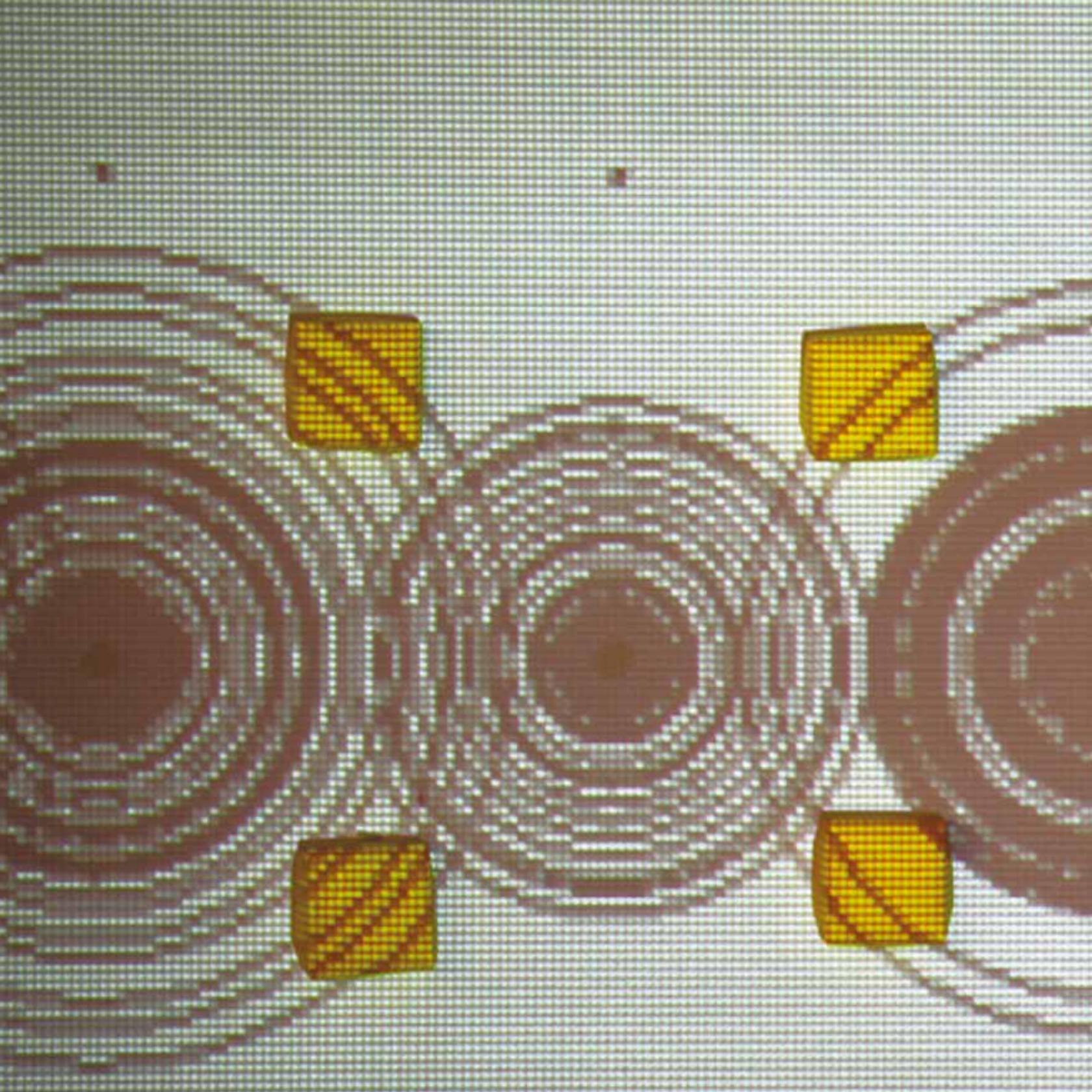


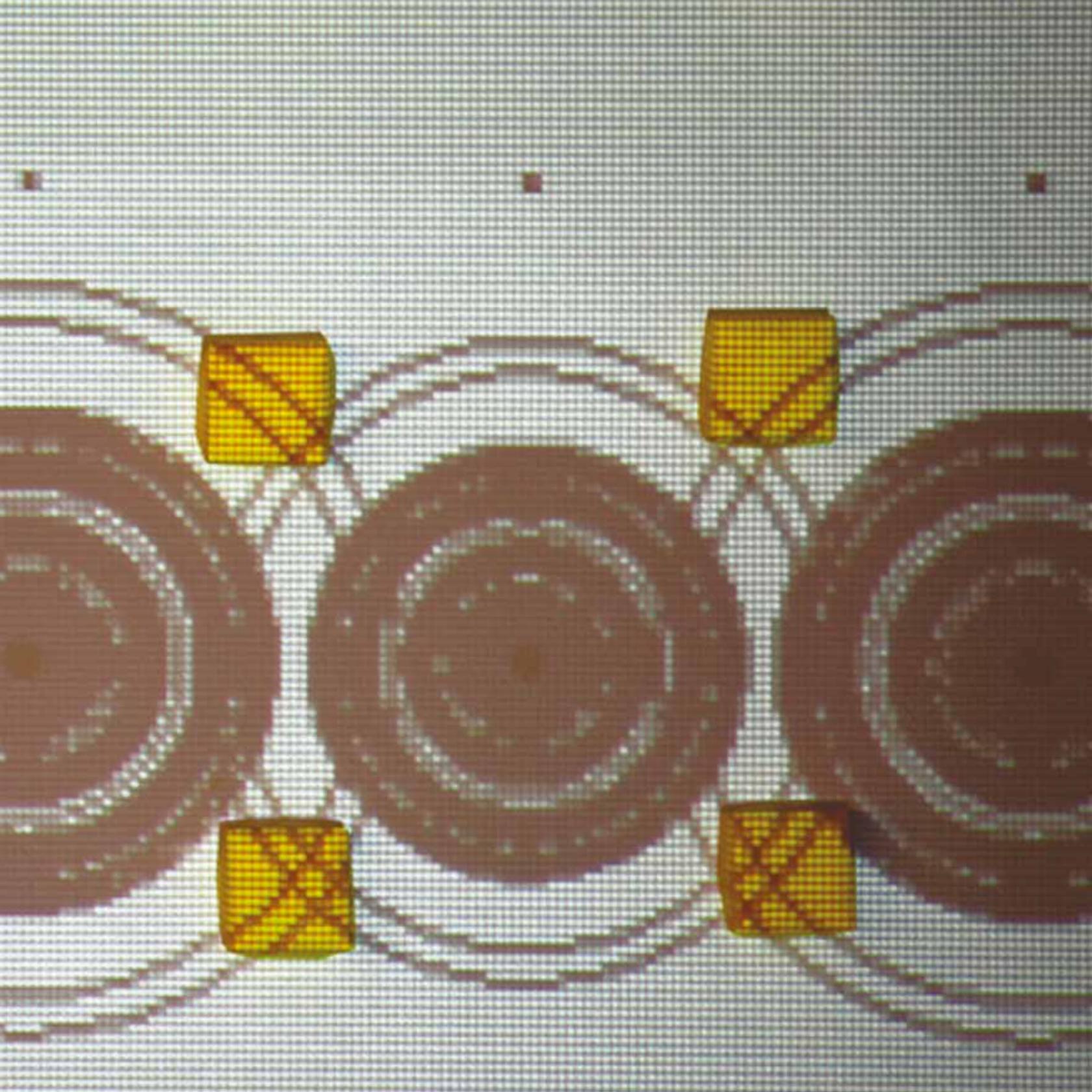
When I encountered Lazo's work **m:n:m::l** I recalled the experience I had with the work of Japanese artist Ryoji Ikeda at the Park Avenue Armory, New York city in May 2011. Ikeda, a musician, examines error structure and repetitive loops in software and computer programmed music, with audiovisual modules for real time sound visualization. The excitement comes as the participant (viewer) immerses him/herself in a constantly shifting environment in which the sense of the physical and mental self is in permanent questioning. In the specific work **m:n:m::l** Lazo composed an interactive and audiovisual installation in which the perception of space and sound is in constant flux. The interaction of the artist with the viewer and the work (object) depend on the exchange of information: what we see and hear is in a constant negotiation of significations based in our personal approach

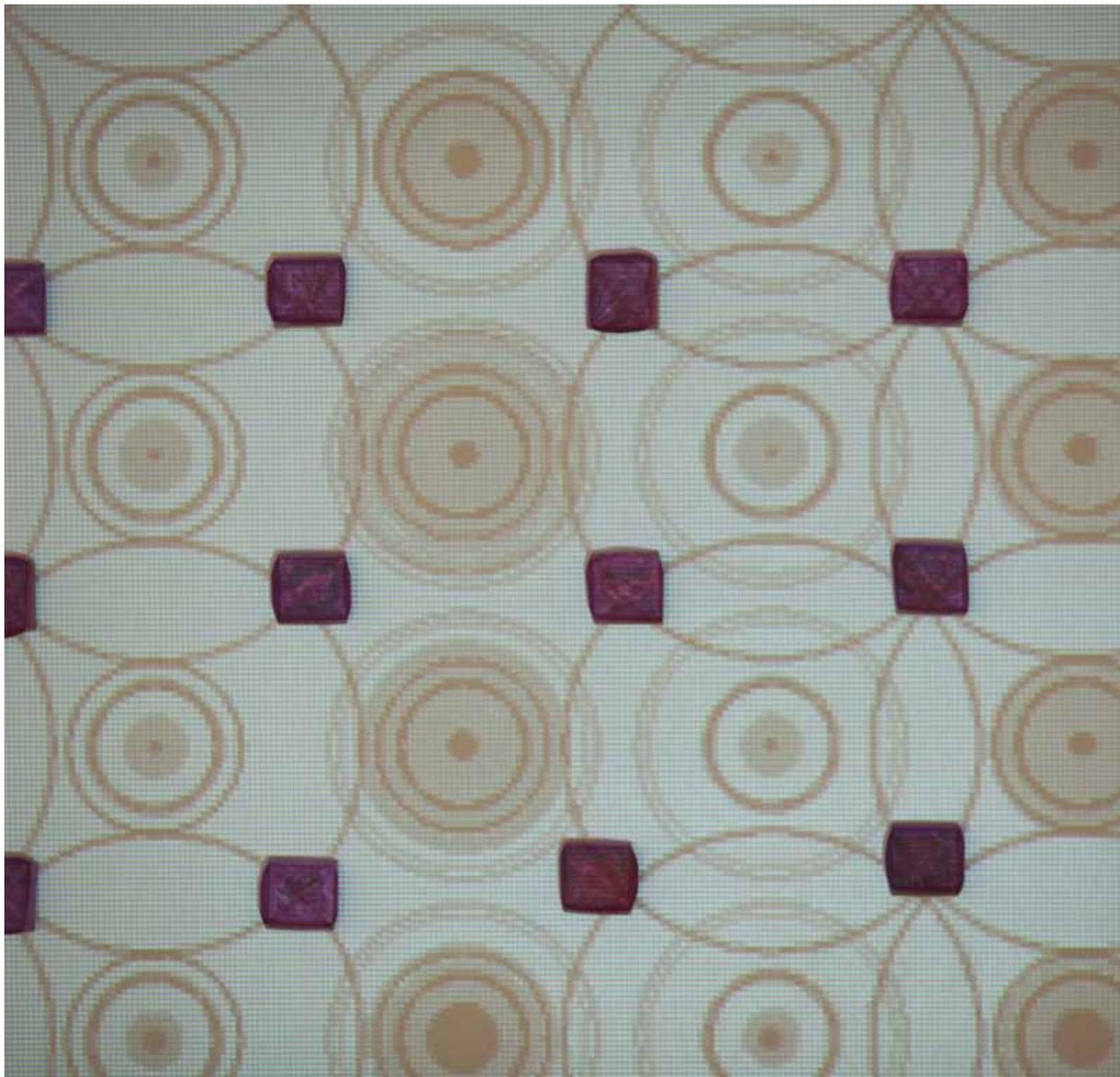
María José Montalva
Art Historian and Independent Curator.

1. <http://www.iotacenter.org/program/preservation>
2. Ascott, Roy (2003). Telematic Embrace: Visionary Theories of Art, Technology, and Consciousness. (Ed.) Edward A. Shanken. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press
3. <http://artistphere.com>
4. Félix Lazo's statement 2010.

Detail of **m:n:m::l** at CCU Gallery (south wall), Santiago, Chile 2010.







Félix Lazo

Born in Chile in 1957. He has an extraordinary educational background. Lazo studied Biology at the University of Chile while also studying Music and taking courses in Art and Art History with a special interest in Latin American Art at the Catholic University of Chile. In 1981 he received his Bachelor's Degree in Music from the Catholic University and the following year he enrolled in courses in Art Studies at the School of Fine Arts.

In 1985 Lazo was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship, which enabled him to earn a Master of Arts in Music Education and also a Master of Education at Teacher's College of Columbia University. From 2002 to 2003 Lazo studied Computer Music Composition at the Center of Musical Composition (CCMIX) in Paris at the studio of the famous French composer and music theorist Iannis Xenakis (1922 - 2001). Currently, Lazo is working with Feedback Interactive Systems, in the edge of the visual and auditive phenomena. He also creates paper objects painted with colored pencils and code prints looking for a way beyond the image.

Maria J. Montalva

Art historian and independent curator Maria J. Montalva has worked as a Curatorial Assistant at the Museum of Modern Art (2001-2005) and as Chief Curator of the Corp Artes Foundation, Santiago, Chile in its office in New York City (2005-2009). She holds a Ph.D in Art History and Theory from the University of Essex, U.K., an M.A. in Museum and Gallery Management, City University, London. At the University of Essex Gallery, she curated the exhibition "Alchemy and the Work of Arturo Duclos" (1998) accompanied by a catalogue. Her recent projects include the exhibition "Overview of Contemporary Art in Chile" which she curated for CorpArtes Foundation, Santiago, Chile (2008). Moreover, she organized the Cantalao International Competition in Memory of Pablo Neruda a joint commission by the Ministry of International Affairs, CorpArtes Foundation, and the Pablo Neruda Foundation (2007-2008).

Acknowledgments

AC Institute
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