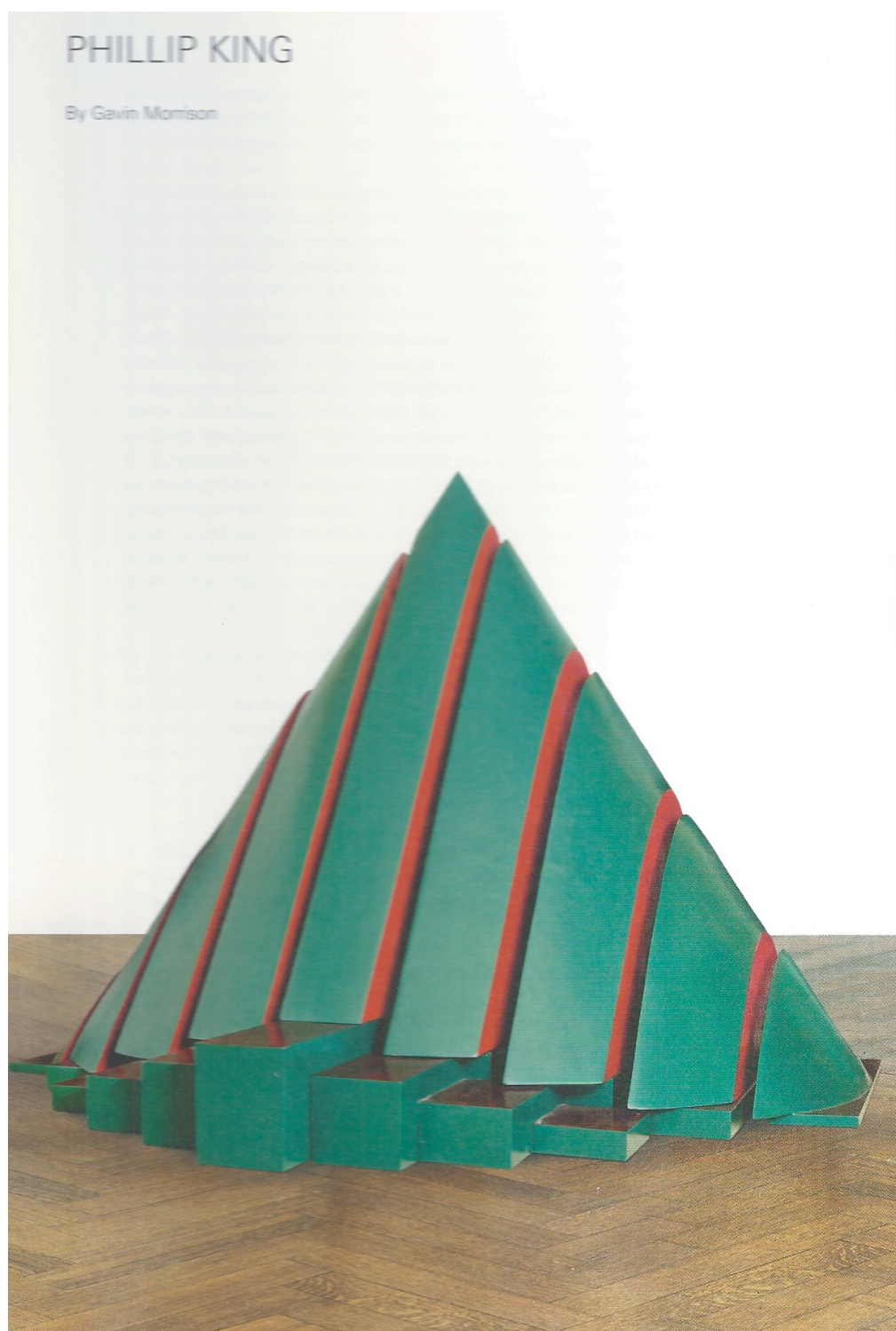
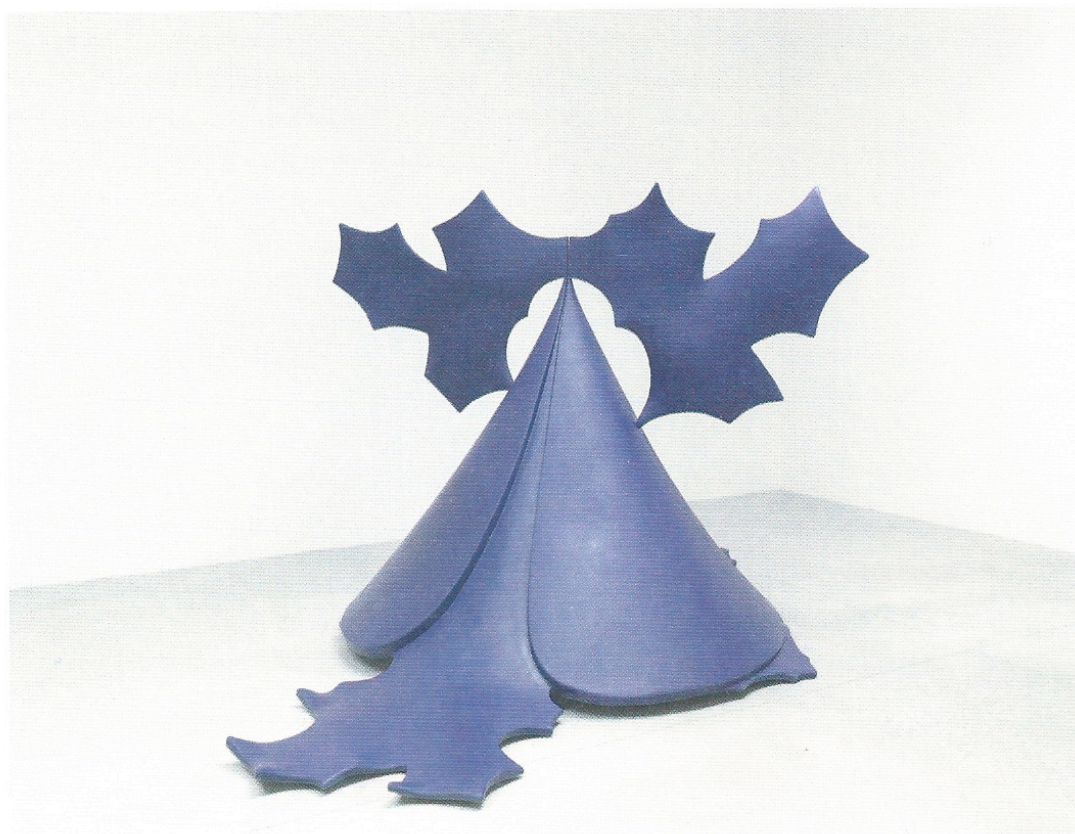


THOMAS DANE GALLERY

Gavin Morrison, 'Phillip King', *Ambit*, Issue 215, 2014



THOMAS DANE GALLERY



Genghis Khan (steel), 1963/2011
Painted steel
250 x 274 x 366 cm

Left: *Through*, 1965
Plastic
213 x 335 x 274 cm
Edition 1 of 3 + 1AP

THOMAS DANE GALLERY

In the 1960s Phillip King created a number of sculptures that were cone shaped. Not a series per se, but a distinct typology. Within works such as, *Rosebud* (1962), *Genghis Khan* (1963) and *Through* (1965) the cone was invariable sliced, adorned, sheathed or amended. They were often constructed in plastic – what at the time was referred to as a ‘new material’ – and coloured. The colours are not those of nature (even the pink on *Rosebud* is not the colour of skin but is nonetheless suggestive of flesh). But neither are the colours the saturated hues of pop Americana, rather the tones are somewhat muted, the timbre is a more louche sort of pop. For King “using plastic ... makes you concentrate on the nature of the surface of an object more than what is behind that surface i.e. the material. The surface of marble makes you conscious of the marble ... but the surface of resin leaves you with very little interest in finding out the nature of the resin” This attention to surface as surface understands it as an effect, a conspiring of colour and materiality. And in concert with the form, these sculptures are redolent in reference but stoically retain an ambiguity. Returning to *Rosebud*, its surface is incised with an arabesque that is suggestive of the blossoming of its title but it also eludes to a typographical mark, a literal bracketing of the surface. The surface is set apart, and through this cut we can see an interior, surface gives way to structure, and materiality is made conspicuous.

Yet as modern materially and in colour as this work was at the time, there is evidently elemental and classical precedents inherent; an implication of a Euclidean solid. The cone is for King that most primary of shapes, it is the form “that will successfully allow you to stand something up with the least effort”. And with that, for King, it is the formal point for where sculpture begins. This early work sought to explore those conditions of sculpture, the interplay between form, material and gravity. King was working in a context where painting was “wresting with the existential conditions of what it means to paint. Us young sculptors also wanted to discover the conditions of sculpture”. The work is in a contemporary visual language but with a classical inflection. The conditions for this approach seem inherent within King as he was born in Tunis, Tunisia (in 1934), and recalls as a childhood of playing amongst ruins; of Islamic architecture; and of watching flamingos on the Lake of Tunis. This upbringing combined with an exposure to the dynamism of London in the 1960s undoubtedly provided a most vital basis. King continued to draw on this context throughout his career, but varied his materials in such a way as to provide a form of creative instability within his process. A wish to avoid a rhetorical approach which may arise for the artist who is overly familiar with their material, “my interest in different materials has sometimes reduced the role of surface as a separate entity, and increased the role of the material in my inner sculptural debate.”

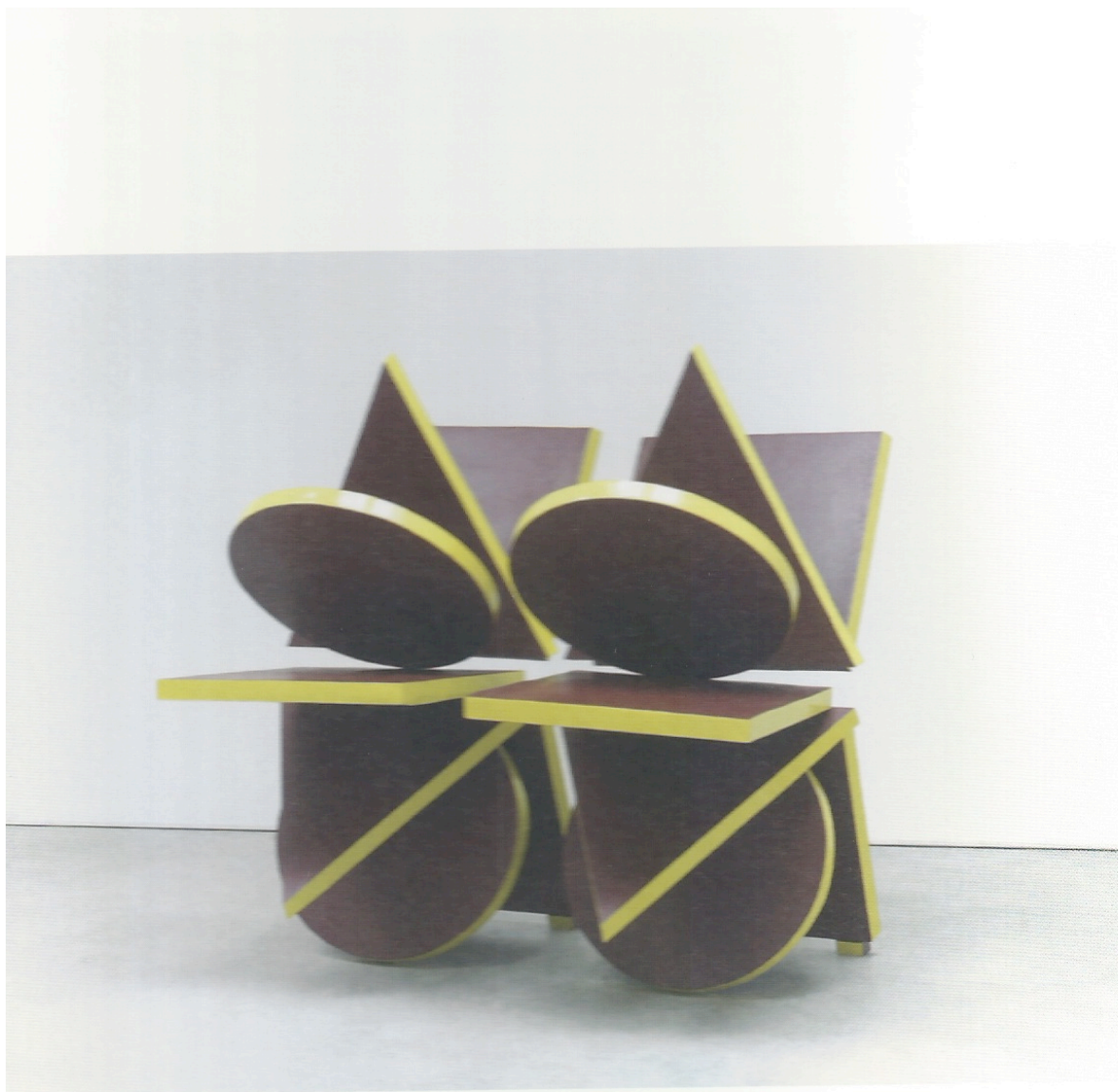
King’s current work continues to utilize and develop the lexicon he has evolved since the early 1960s. Often this new work appears on the point of instability, a careful balance of form which is countered by its confidence in colour. Approaches from the past take on new directions, such as where planar surfaces have different surface and edge colours, an idea fundamental to *Point X* from 1965 and also used, but in a rather more lyrical way, in *Bottom Pink*, 2010. Forms remain open, penetrated and sliced, and the work is gloriously playful, “changing colour changes values in the form and the work can be seen in a different light rather like a person tries different hats to bring out different aspects of their personality”.

THOMAS DANE GALLERY



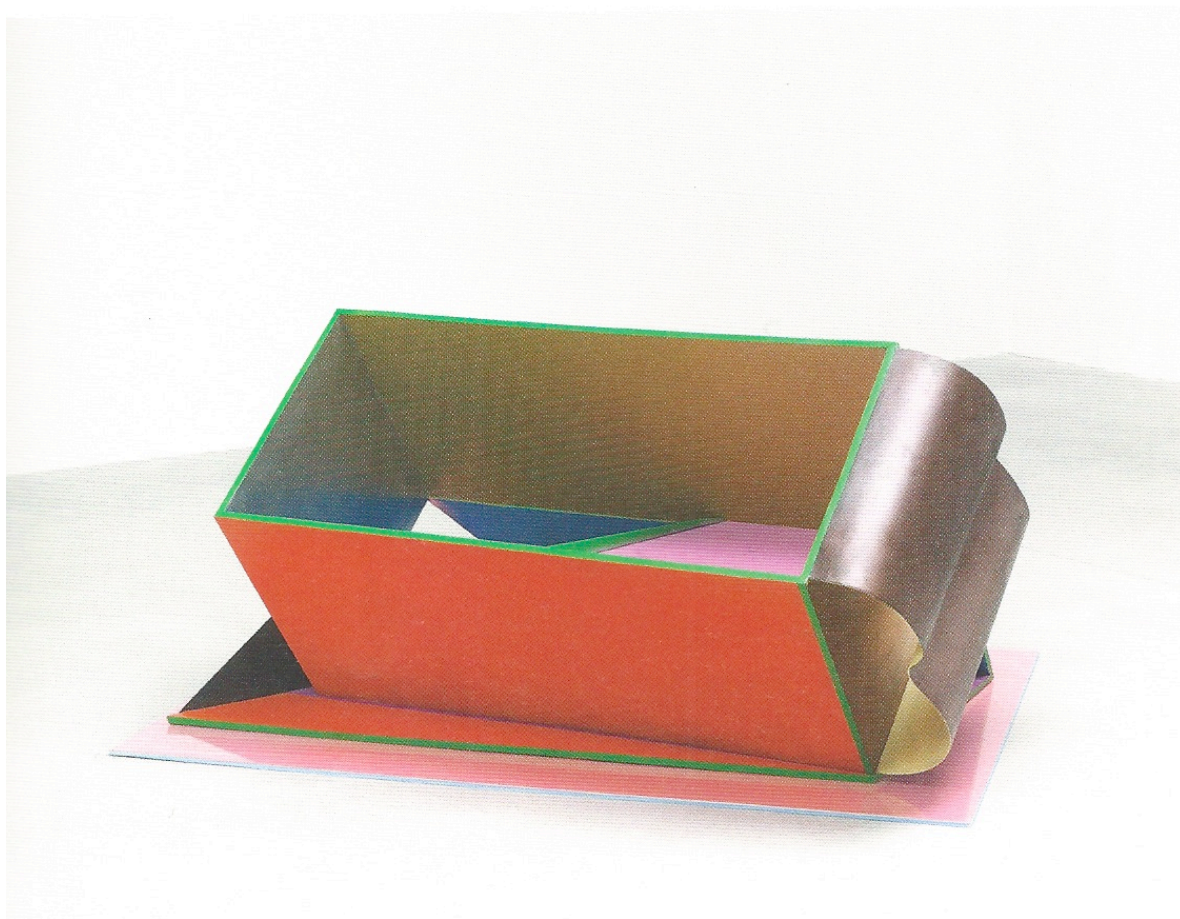
Rosebud, 1962
Plastic
152.5 x 183 x 183 cm

THOMAS DANE GALLERY



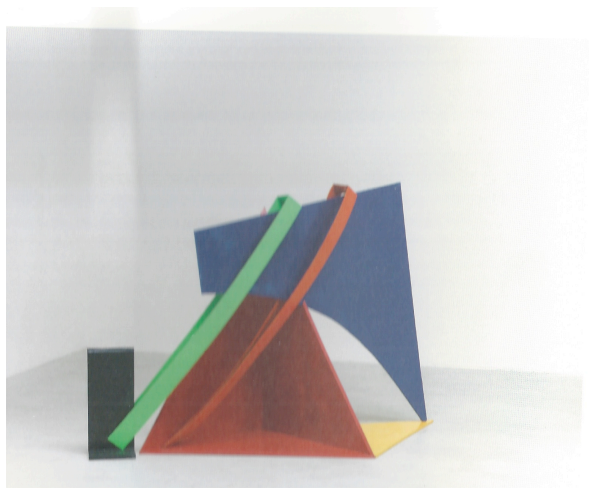
Point X, 1965
Plastic
183 x 188 x 152.5 cm

THOMAS DANE GALLERY

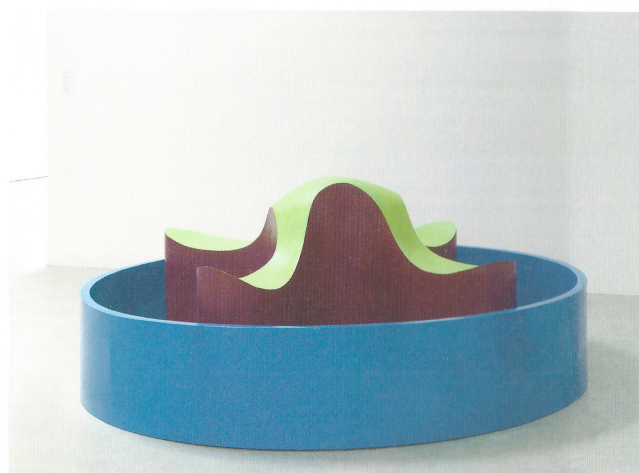


Bottom Pink, 2010
Painted foam pvc, painted wood, perspex
76 x 142 x 86 cm

THOMAS DANE GALLERY

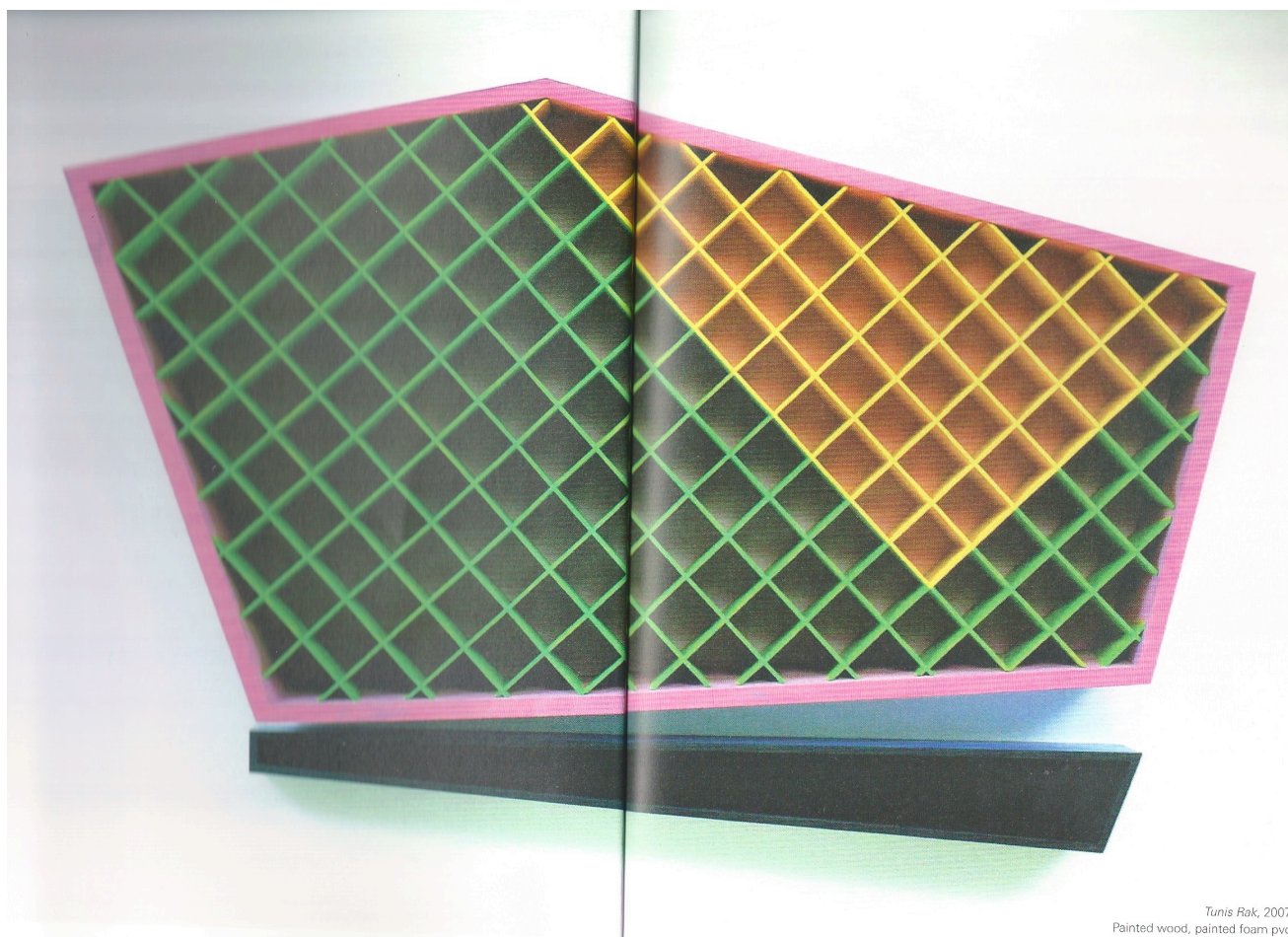


Blue Slicer, 2007
Painted foam pvc, painted steel, painted wood
140 x 215 x 85 cm



Emergence, 2007-2008
Painted foam pvc
94 x 220 x 220 cm

THOMAS DANE GALLERY



Tunis Rak, 2007
Painted wood, painted foam pvc-
107 x 210 x 22