





Remi Rough

VOLUME

MOCA London

18 November 2018 - 20 January 2019

VOLUME

Remi Rough's dynamic wall installation titled *VOLUME* takes over the MOCA London space. A large red circle intersects the architectural space and shifts between abstracted forms and into a complete performative shape, as viewers move around in the gallery. At a specific vantage point visitors are able to see the painterly construction as envisioned by the artist. Rough works with two dimensions but seduces us with the third and pushes beyond into the infinite.

Remi Rough's abstract paintings have the energy of graffiti writing where his original inspiration and work started in 1980's. His visual language developed and exists in relation to key moments in the history of modernism. As your eyes moves across the wall mural *VOLUME*, the lines, the hinted grids, and the abstract shapes create a staccato of visualisation. As Rough builds up the painting he plays music that fills the space. Looking at the final work you can sense the textural changes in sound as you notice the layers of colours and paint. *VOLUME* activates the space - some parts of the mural draw you close to the details of the spray paint, and others intensify your experience through its deep red colour and forces you to step back to take it in as a whole.

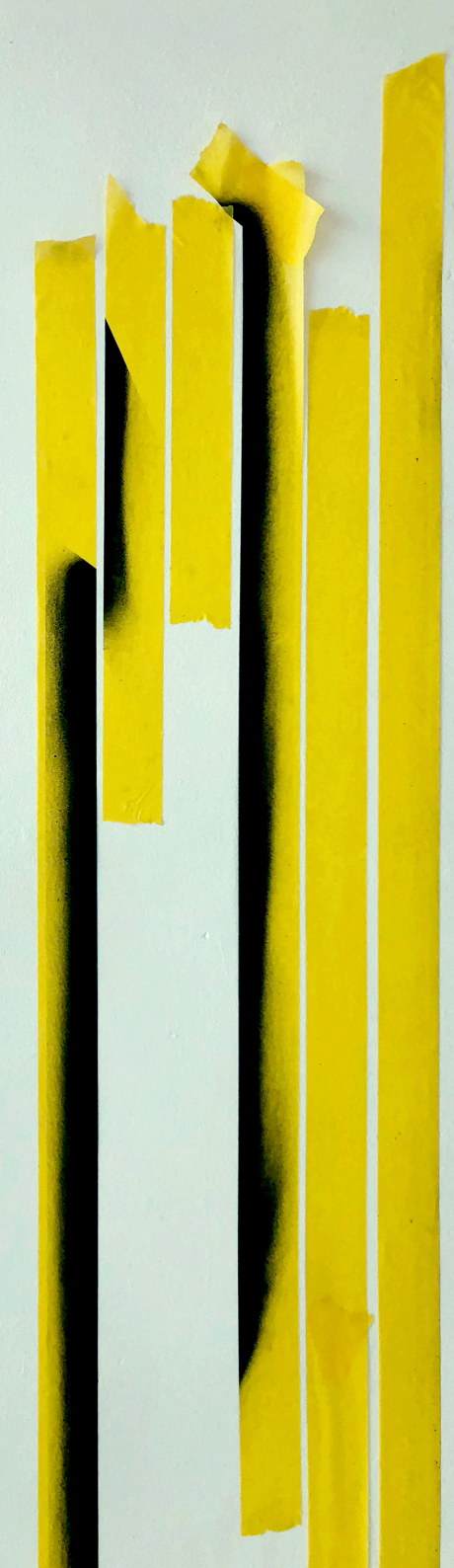
In Rough's work you can see the influences of urban art and artists as well as Carmen Herrera, Bridget Riley and many more. This has given him a unique language. Working on canvas, walls, wood panels or paper, the materials he uses are integral to his painting. He makes us aware of the form, texture and details of the unpainted surface. They become part of the painting itself. There are parts of *VOLUME* that act almost as an optical illusion as shades of colour are painted over alcoves and skirting boards, making corners look flat and flat surfaces become three dimensional forms.

Rough's work deals with the semantics of visualisation. He encapsulates the world around him and brings the history of abstract painting into his compositions. He masters the moment of "knowing when to stop" or when to add that one thin line of pink to complete the composition. The paintings are perfectly balanced but this momentum of perfection unbalances our visual experience both intellectually and emotionally as our gaze shifts through a cartography of reference points.

VOLUME is shaped around a circle. Covering three walls and cutting into a door opening. Visually the circle isn't complete but looking at it, it is hard to not see a perfect circle.

Roberto Ekholm





Outside In: Remi Rough's VOLUME

Like many artists whose work was initially shown on the outside, on a wall, or a street corner, Rough had to make the transition from outside the gallery to in. When we look at the work of Keith Haring or Jean Michel Basquiat, the most famous of those who started as 'writers' and became painters, we see very different ways of making, both on the street and in the gallery. Both those artists work was deeply rooted in the figure while Rough's work started with the word, with the writing of words on the street.

When Haring and Basquiat transitioned to canvas, their work remained within a figurative tradition whereas Rough's work on the street was based in abstraction. His use of text for imagery soon became pure abstraction linking him for to early constructivists than his New York older brothers in paint. Rough has said that his work is 'minimalist maximalism'. When we look at his very large scale works on the exterior of buildings this is more than obvious. A few recurring themes and strokes make up his compositions that are to a maximal impact on the life of the street. His works differ greatly from many artists who come from a tradition of using graffiti in that while they all aim at an unmediated dialogue with the passer by, Rough aims not just to leave a tag, or a boast, or to shout his name, he aims, and succeeds in offering them an aesthetic pause for thought.

His cannon of marks zip across a building's surface, offering colour and speed and they direct the eye to the building and more importantly its context on the street. Other passers by interact with the optics of his abstraction and it become almost a video backdrop to the urban environment. Similarly inside the gallery his marks and colour palette guide the viewer into a conversation about what volume is, what form can be and how a mark can direct a thought. Inside the gallery viewers have made the conscious decision to interact, they have entered the gallery, whereas on the street, they simply must deal with the whole of the environment, whether in contains art or simply advertising, crime or a safe place to walk through. The gallery is usually a safe space for contemplation and it offers Rough the time and space to explore his maximalism to great effect.

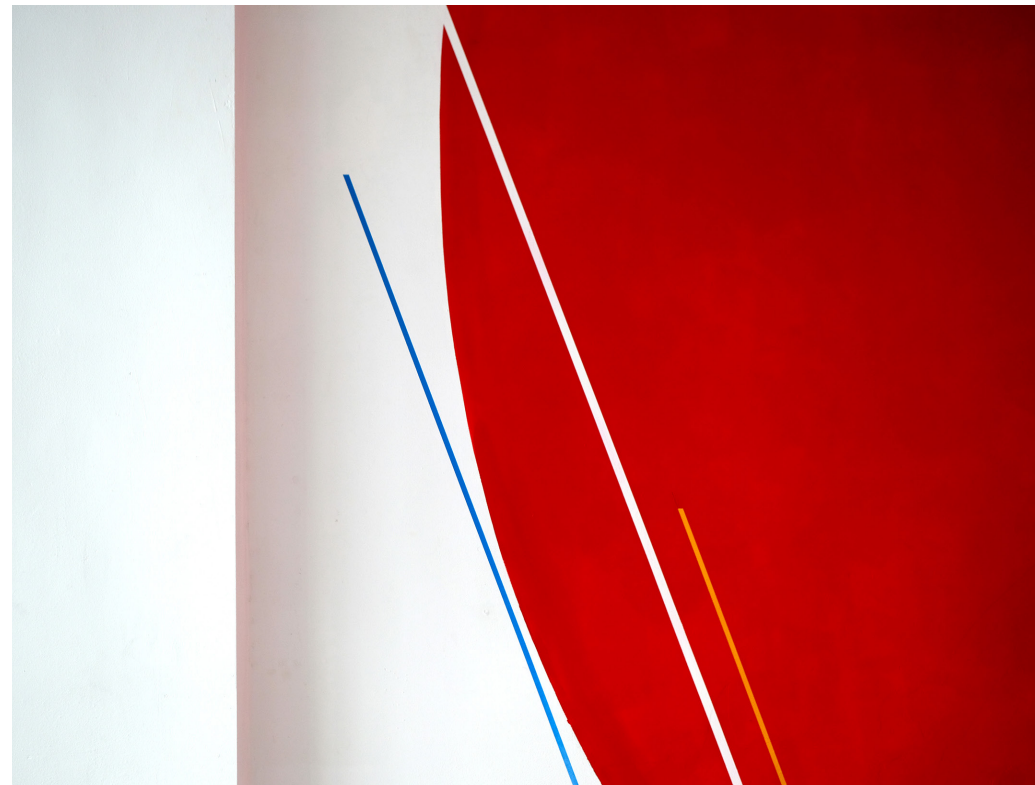
VOLUME does what it says in the title, it fills the MOCA space with bright colours that turn and twist the viewer's gaze and consumes the whole of the space in one exciting go. The viewer enters into it and as they navigate the space they see that the shape changes as it has to follow the odd columns and corners of the actual space. From only one vantage point does the whole coalesce into a 'perfect' design, but it is perhaps even better to see how blocks of colour and lines in space jolt into awareness as you move about the space. His work leaps off the wall and the viewer must catch it in their mind. Out of a few well chosen strokes of paint, he fills in the entire space.

Michael Petry



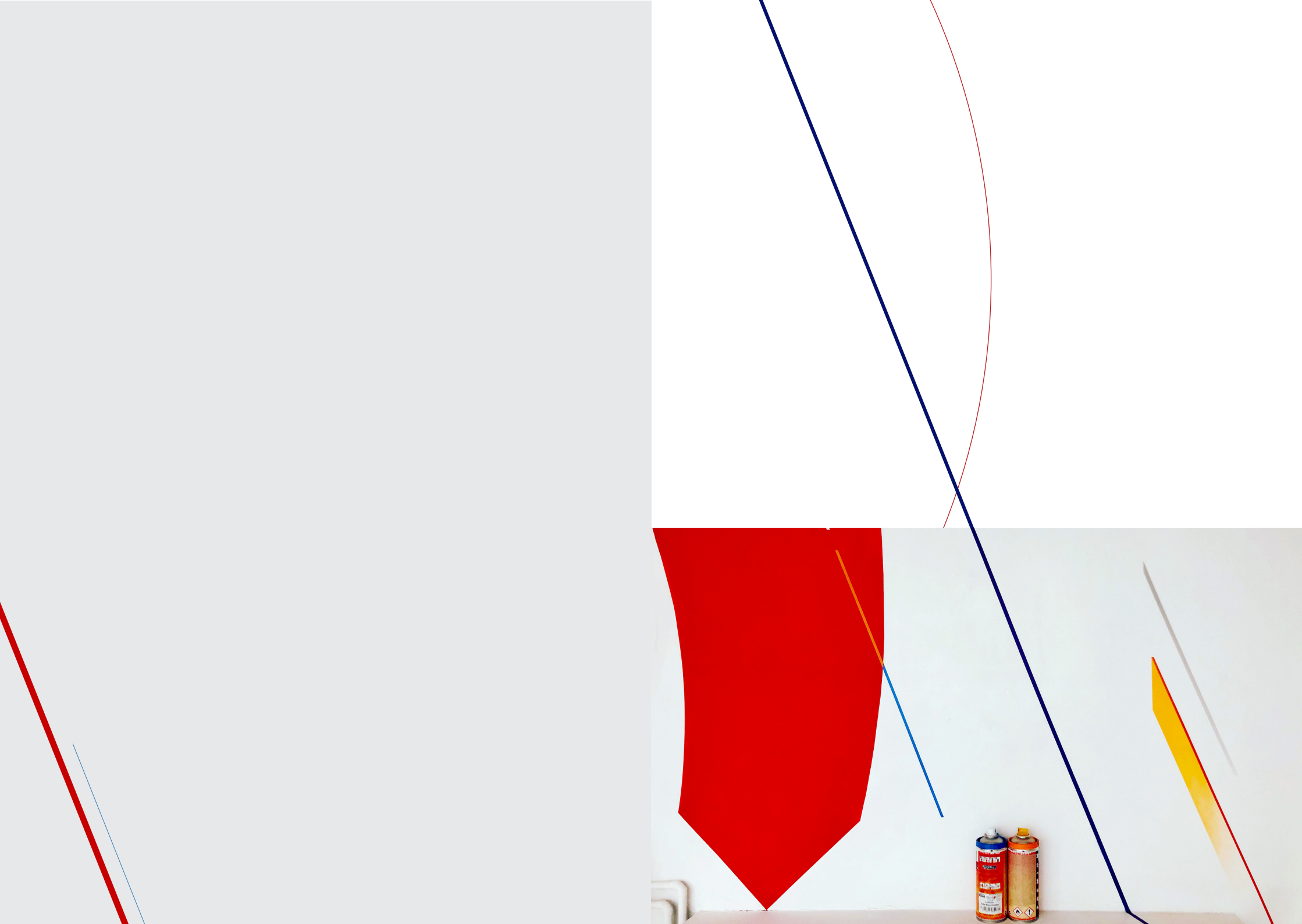
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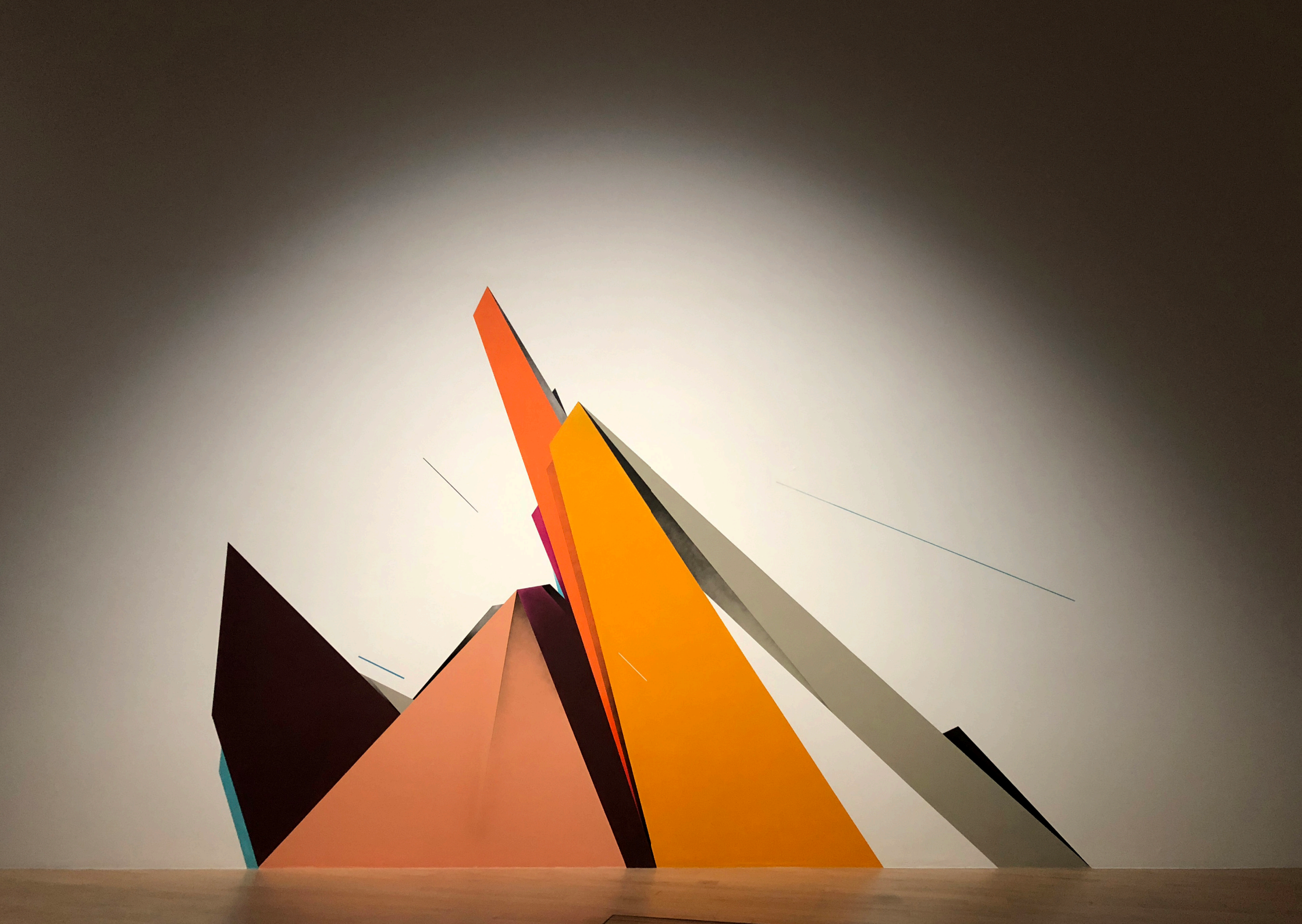




"You can play a shoestring if you're sincere"
John Coltrane







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19 November 2018 - 20 January 2019

Pages 14 and 15: Concise, mural installation at the Art Science Museum, Singapore for the 'Art from the streets' exhibition, curated by Magda Danysz.
All other pages: Install and details of VOLUME at MOCA London.

Catalogue designed by EKCO London and Remi Rough.
All photography by Michael Petry and Remi Rough.
Text by Roberto Ekholm and Michael Petry

Remi Rough is represented by Magda Danysz Gallery in Paris, and Speerstra Gallery in Switzerland, Wunderkammern Gallery in Italy and Zimmerling & Jungfleisch in Saarbrücken.

Remi Rough would like to thank Michael Petry, Roberto Ekholm, Melissa Jo Smith, Honor Harger and Adrian George at The Art Science Museum, Singapore, Magda Danysz, Tony Morgan and Michelle and Lili Morgan.

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ISBN: 978-1-912800-01-8
Published 2018

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