

april april

ROMANCE

**Aaronel deRoy Gruber
(1918 - 2011)**



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april april and Romance are pleased to present a selection of sculptures from the 1960s and 1970s by artist Aaronel deRoy Gruber (1918–2011). Through the course of her decades-long practice, deRoy Gruber developed a singular body of work defined by luminous geometric compositions in transparent Plexiglas acrylic. Whether polychromatic and vivid or monochromatic and restrained, they become vessels for light, shadow, movement, and illusion, at times bisected or constrained by hard-edge planes. This presentation recontextualizes an artist whose work has long existed in productive tension with dominant narratives of postwar sculpture.

This project is conceived in collaboration with the Irving and Aaronel deRoy Gruber Foundation and Executive Director, Brittany Reilly, featuring key works and archival material from the artist's estate.

Fair Details

May 14-17, 2026

Pier 36
299 South Street
New York, NY 10002

Thursday, May 14:	11AM – 8PM (By Invitation)
Friday, May 15:	11AM – 7PM
Saturday, May 16:	11AM – 7PM
Sunday, May 17:	11AM – 6PM

Independent 2026

Booth 214



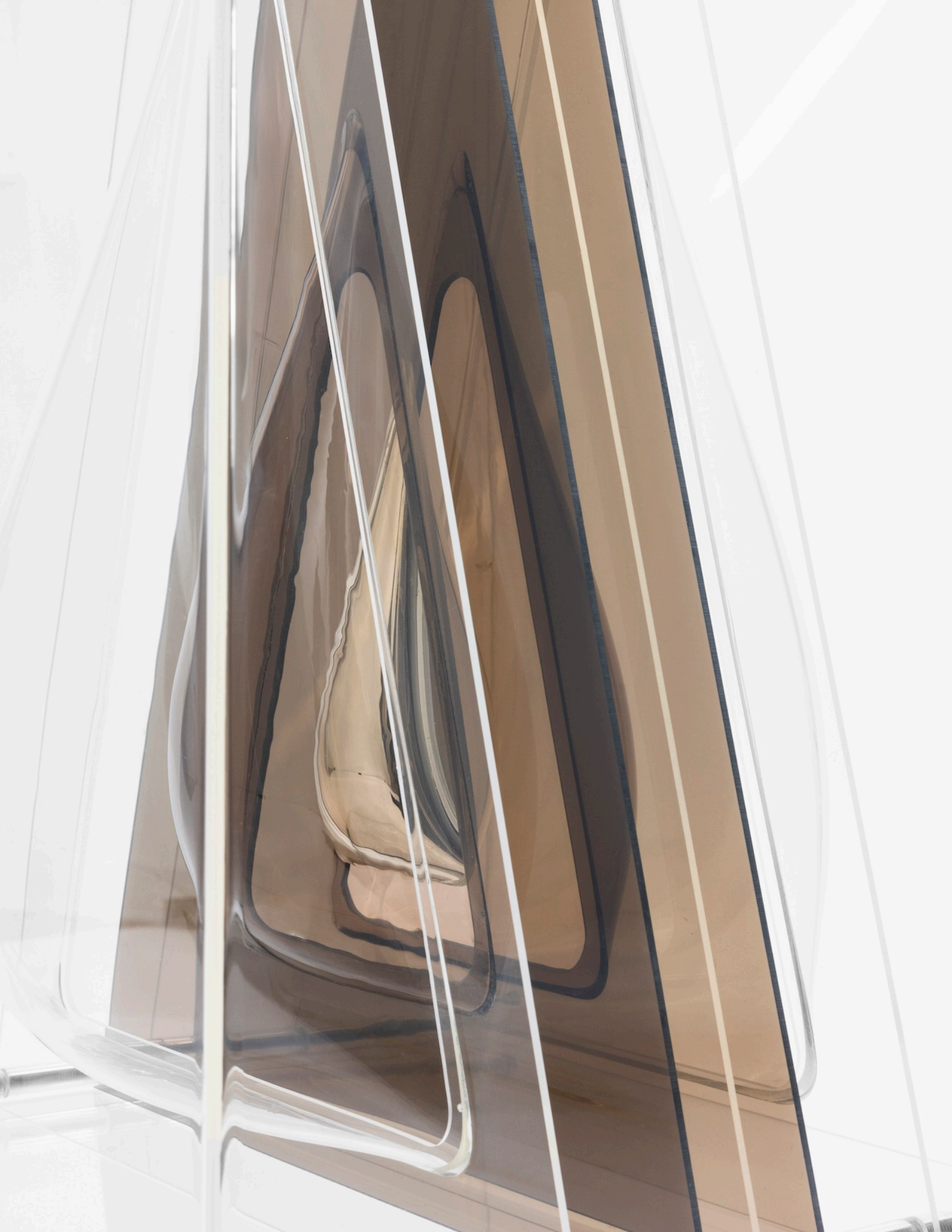
Aaronel deRoy Gruber

Maxi Extended Triad, 1973

Vacuum-formed translucent tinted, clear and mirror sheet acrylic, clear sheet acrylic, stainless steel rods, hardware

75 × 16 1/4 × 15 3/4 inches

\$95,000.00









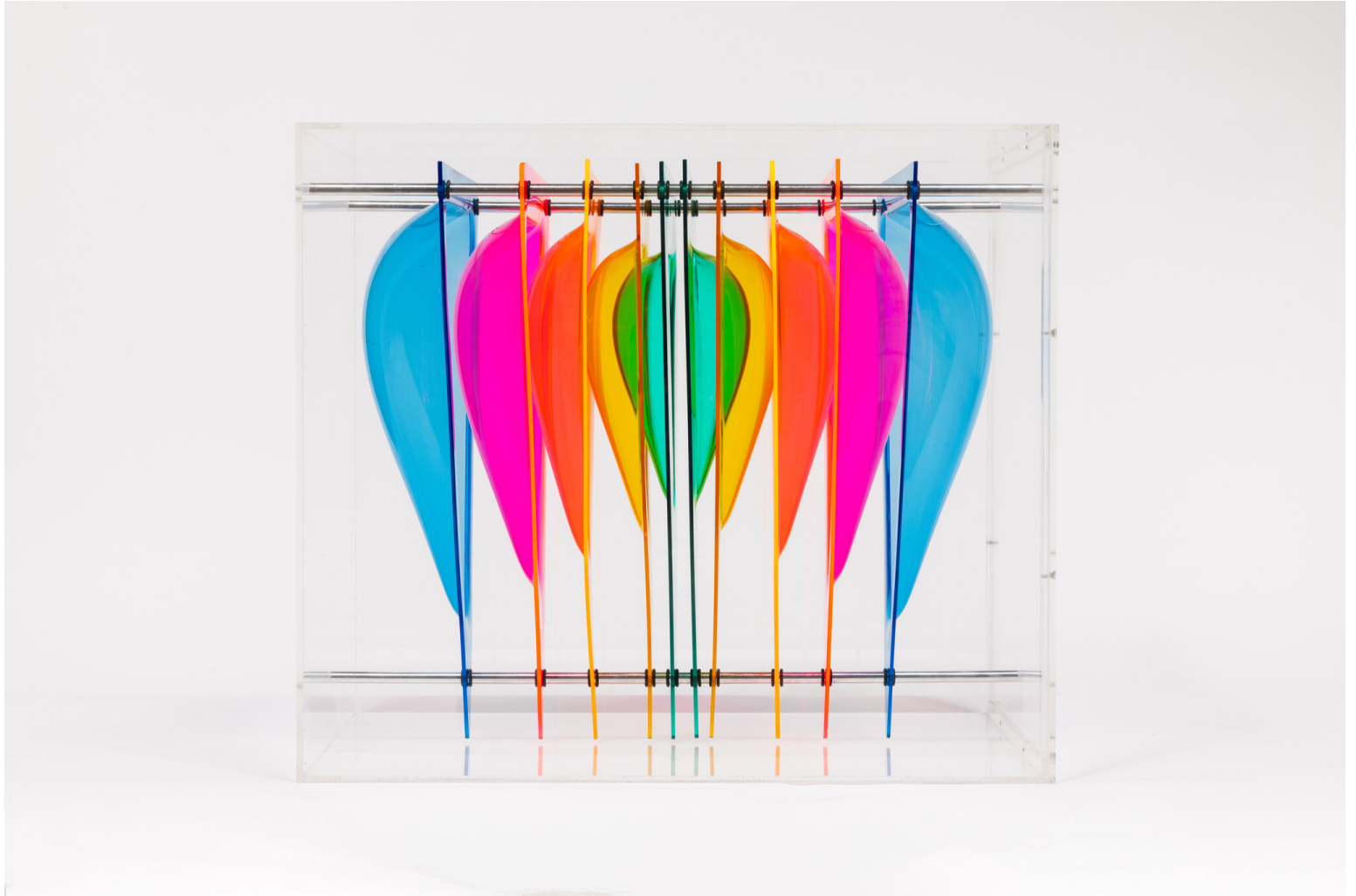
Aaronel deRoy Gruber

Permutation I, 1975

Vacuum-formed translucent tinted sheet acrylic; transparent white sheet acrylic; chrome-plated steel; fluorescent lights; 1 rpm motor; hardware
variable, kinetic: 20 × 15 × 15 inches

\$40,000.00



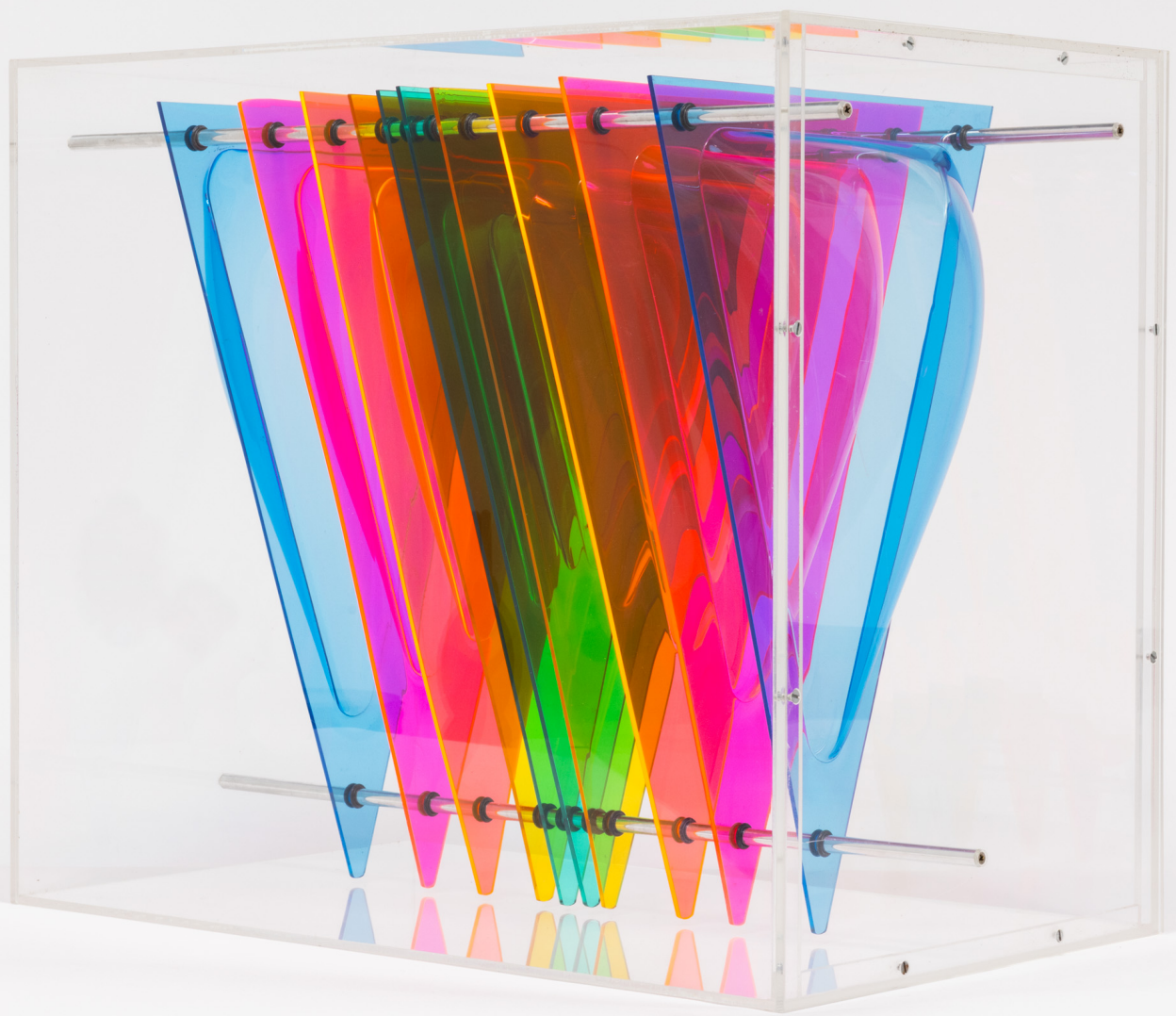


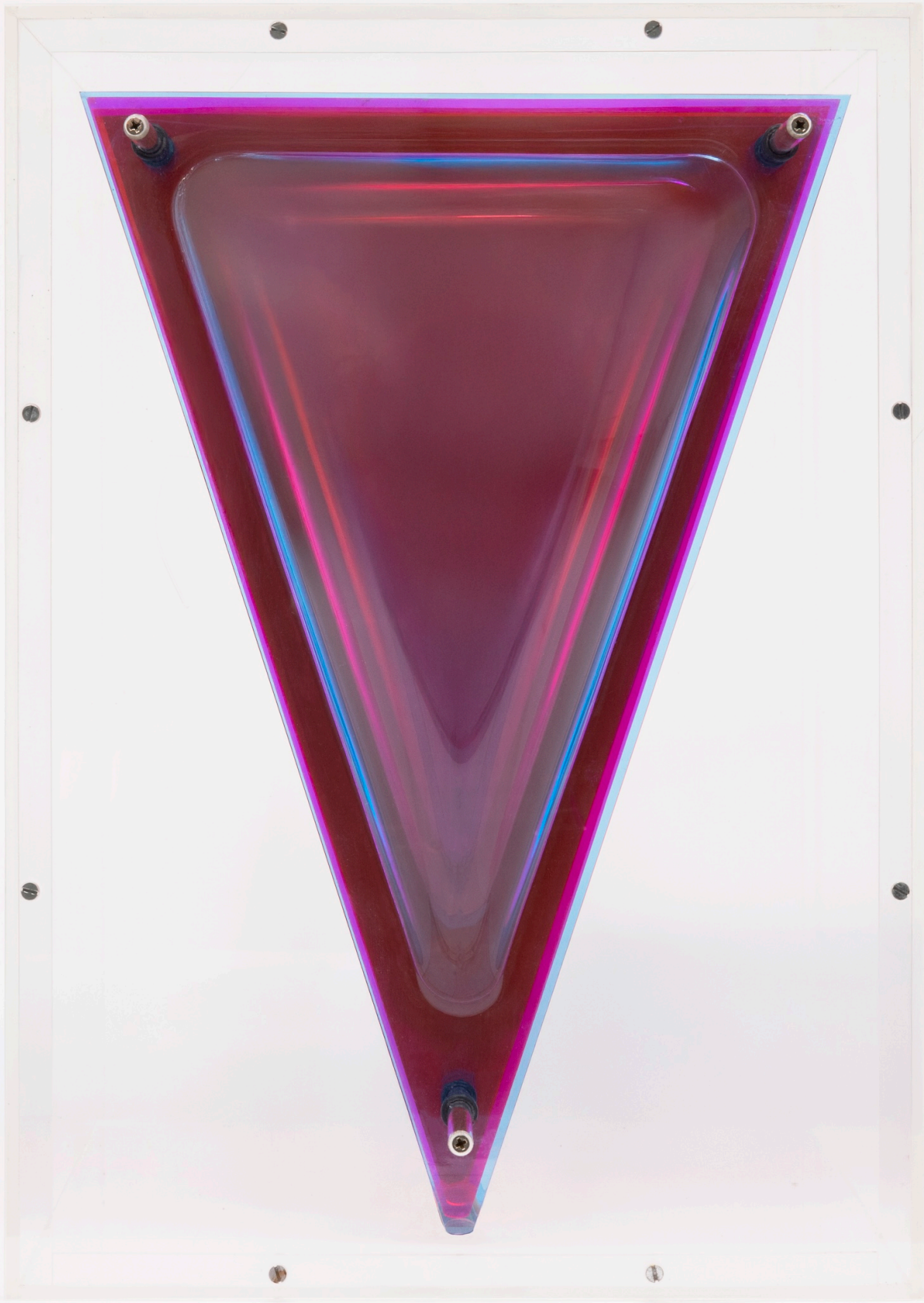
Aaronel deRoy Gruber

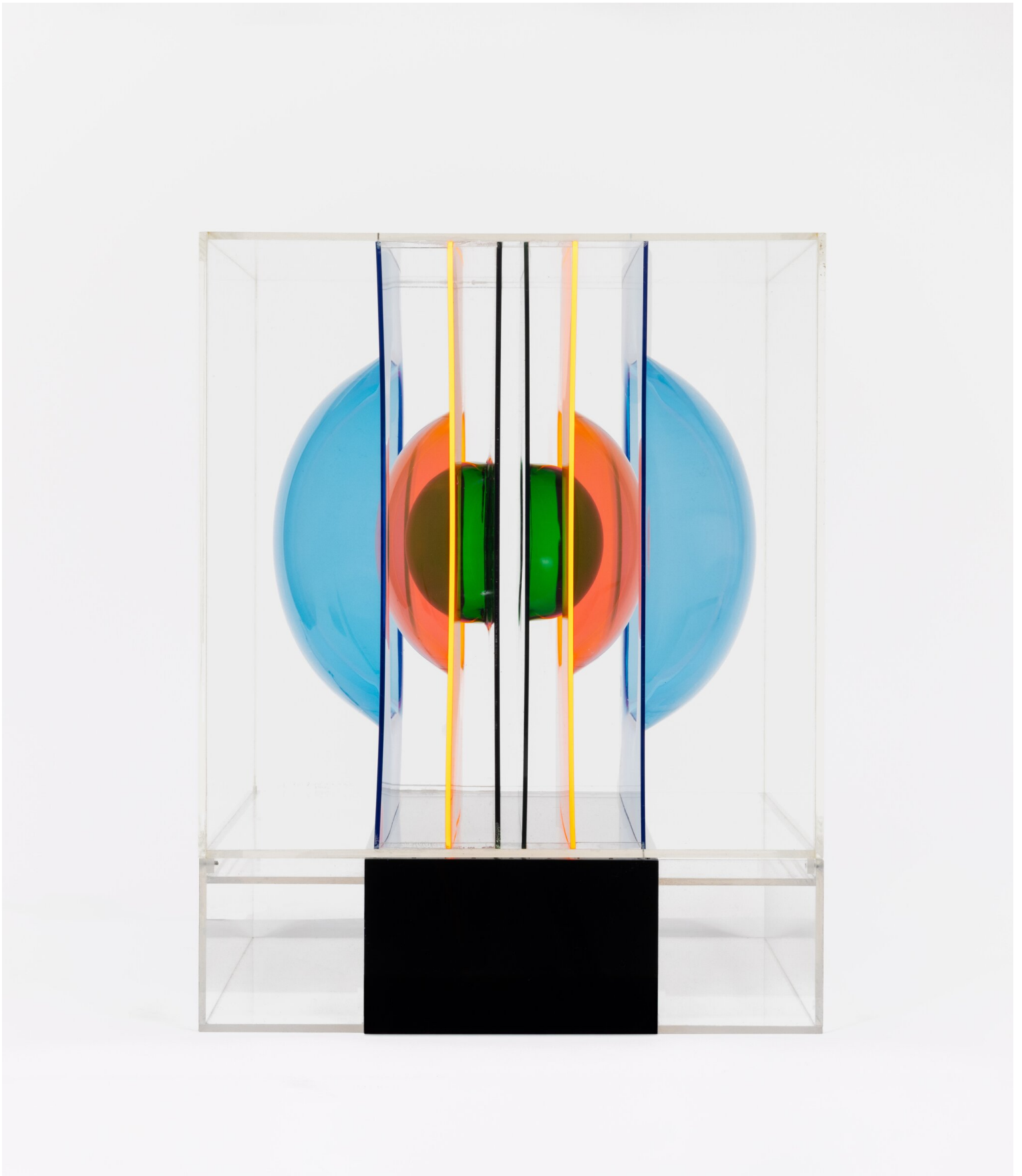
Triatic, Go Within, 1970

Vacuum-formed translucent tinted sheet acrylic; clear sheet acrylic; stainless steel rods; rubber gaskets; hardware
19 × 22 × 13 1/2 inches

\$45,000.00







Aaronel deRoy Gruber

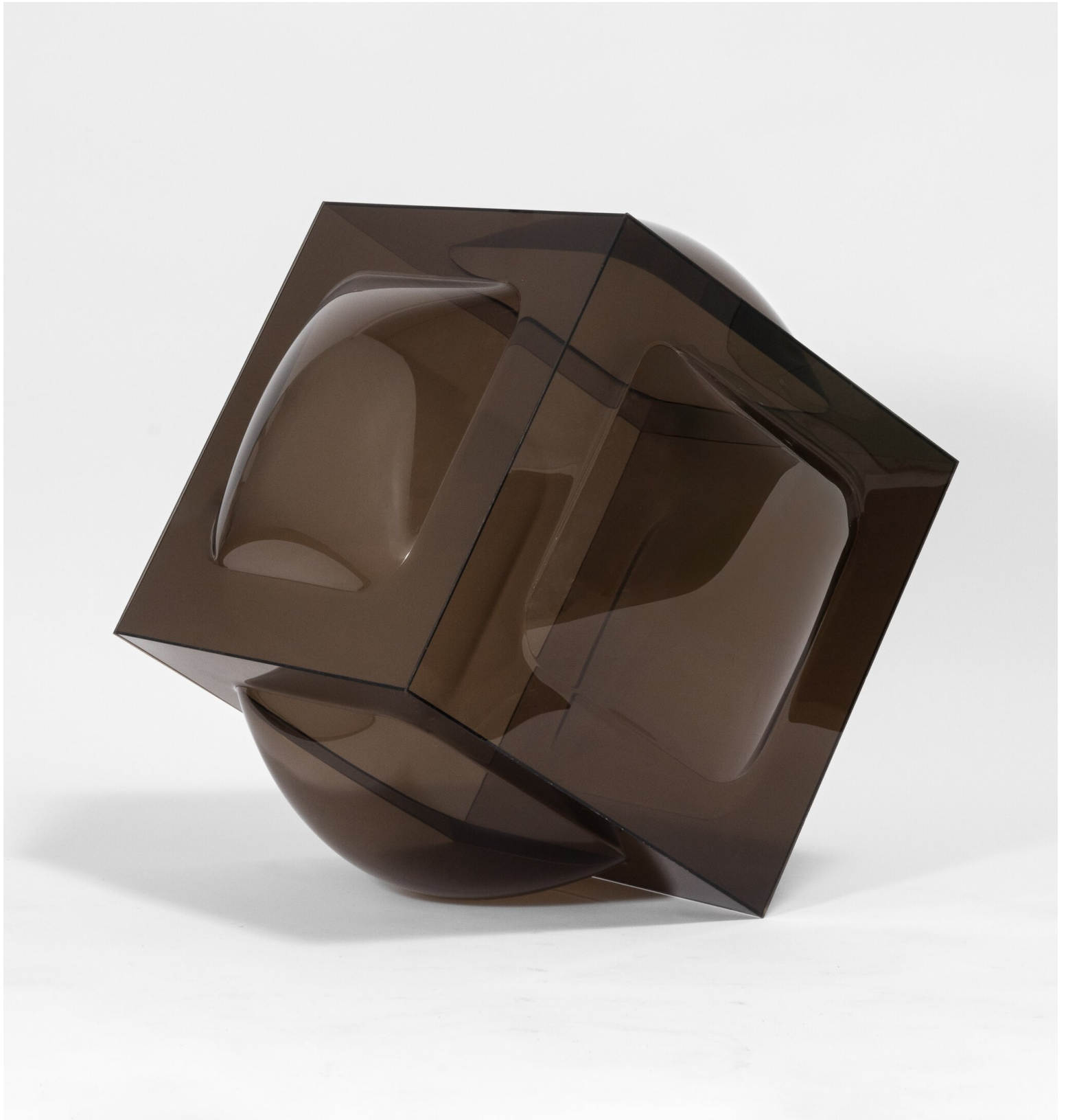
Moment in Time, 1968

Vacuum-formed translucent tinted sheet acrylic; clear and black sheet acrylic; fluorescent lights; hardware
18 1/2 × 14 3/8 × 14 3/8 inches

\$35,000.00





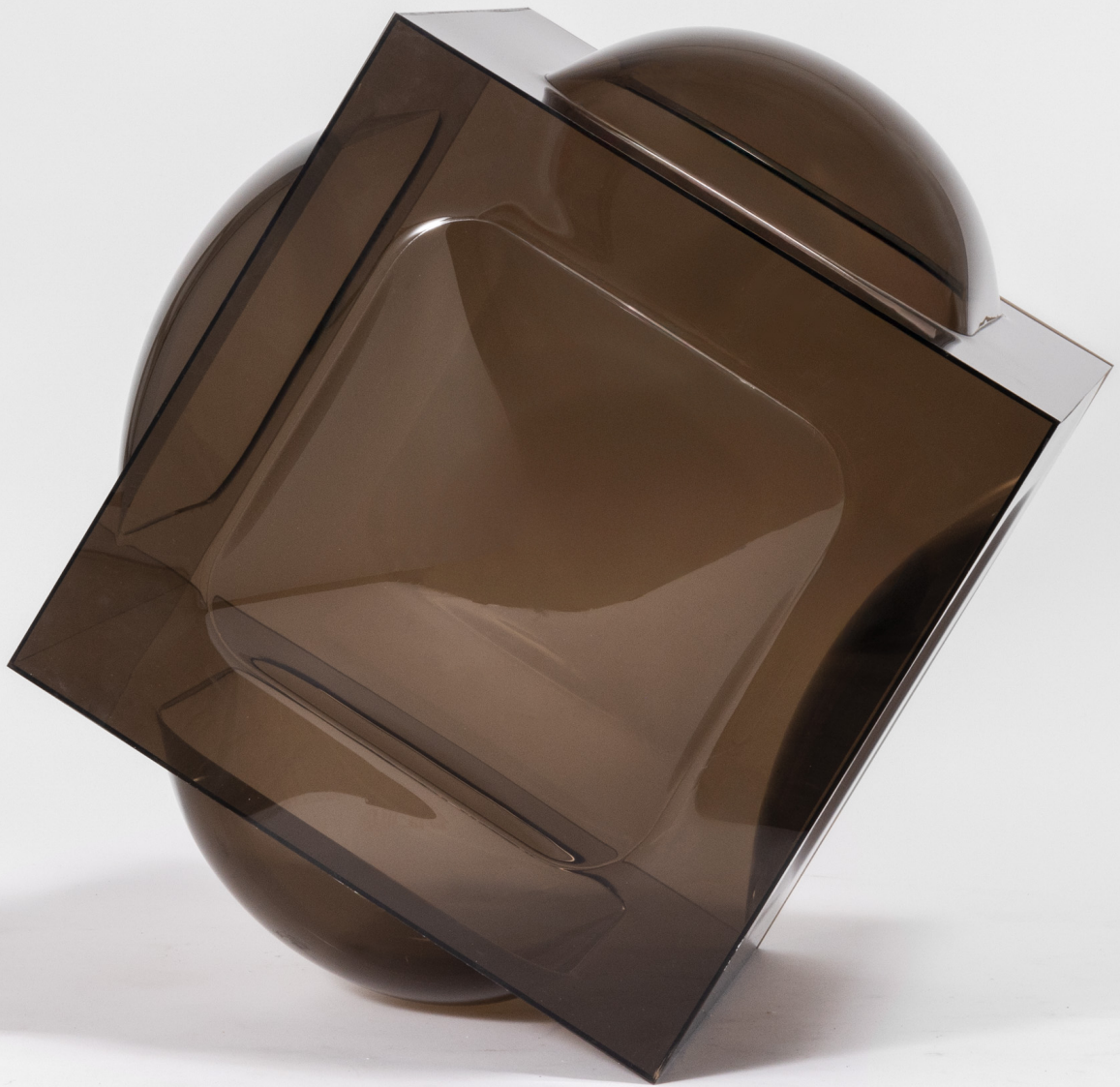


Aaronel deRoy Gruber

Equibrial Wonder 18", 1968

Vacuum-formed bronze-tinted solar-control sheet acrylic
18–24 inches (variable)

\$30,000.00



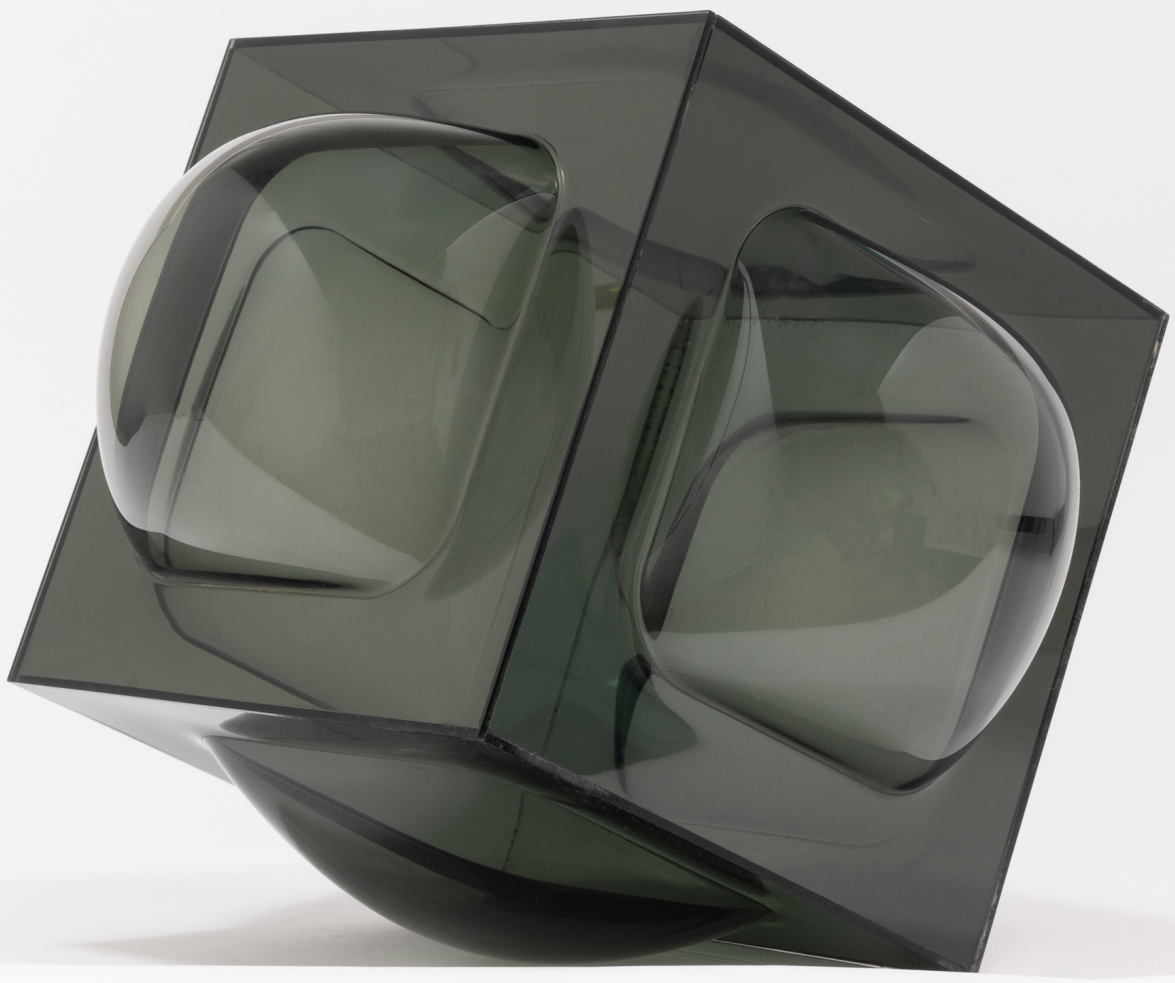


Aaronel deRoy Gruber

Equibrial Wonder 10", 1969

Vacuum-formed grey-tinted solar-control sheet acrylic
10-16 inches (variable)

\$20,000.00



Who can say that words from any language are actually communicative or that conveying one's thoughts can express the message we intend?

The vision that produces the message comes from a vast number of experiences and ideas so individual and so private as to be almost solipsistic—self is the only object of verifiable knowledge.

Aaronel deRoy Gruber, 1969



On the Edge of a Precipice: the Interior Cosmos of Aaronel deRoy Gruber

Margaret Kross, Owner/Director, Romance

Among the most inventive artists of her generation to work with industrial materials and processes beginning in the early 1960s—yet often overlooked in relation to her male and coastally located counterparts—Aaronel deRoy Gruber forged a sculptural language that bridges realms typically held apart: the physical and the metaphysical, the mathematical and the psychological. While her work adopts the figure of the artist as engineer—her logic rigorously calculated and permutational—it refuses the neutrality such a position has historically implied. Geometry and form in her luminous prisms of glossy acrylic are neither inert nor idealized, but contingent, affective, and perceptually unstable, rendered in a technicolor palette of cyan and magenta alongside smoky black monochromes. Eschewing symbolism without dissolving association, deRoy Gruber’s work allows material, process, and meaning to accumulate beyond fixed reference or optical perception alone—creating an abstract language that exceeds the pure “objectivity” favored in contemporary sculpture at the time.

This abstract language emerged, in part, from the artist’s environs in Pittsburgh, PA where she spent her life and career. While positioned outside of America’s dominant artistic centers, the artist’s proximity to industrial specialists enabled a prolific technical inquiry into material transformation that shaped her attitude to emerging technologies. deRoy Gruber’s earliest full studio shared its location with a skylight fabricator, giving her access to learn vacuum-forming, a commercial process in which acrylic sheets were heated into a pliable state and shaped over her own custom-designed molds using pressure and air. The result was not simply a change in shape, but a transformation in how matter behaves, registering reflection and distortion as integral to both structure and emotional feeling. From this scientific process, she developed her signature aesthetic and affective vernacular: rigid plastic softened into viscous curves, sharp planes expanded into bulbous volumes. “I strive to make the process of development invisible in the synthesis of my work,” deRoy Gruber stated.¹

¹ Aaronel deRoy Gruber, *Sculpture*, exh. cat. Syracuse University Lowe Art Center, Syracuse, NY, Sept. 10–Oct. 4, 1971.

Their construction intentionally inscrutable to the viewer, her works are comprised of nested cubes, elongated triangles, and more organic, droplet-like forms she described as “nuclei,” materializing an invisible, interior force as much as they suggest visible, exterior phenomena: from celestial bodies to atomic particles to an internal cosmos as a source of meaning. While sometimes incorporating motorized kinetics or otherwise evoking motion through form alone, the resulting pristinely machined objects also convey a sense of grounding, a kind of interior heart center. If her sculptures at times approach a futuristic, fantastical abstraction, they equally manifest the tensions of their moment, registering the bodily and psychic conditions of rapidly shifting technologies and experiences of femininity—both their promises and their disquiet.

As such, deRoy Gruber was an art historical enigma for reasons beyond geography and gender. Working contemporaneously with historic Minimalism, her practice significantly departs from those artists on the East Coast who insisted on a rectilinear logic and claims to objectivity. At a moment when design was largely disavowed within serious sculptural discourse, and when plastics were becoming synonymous with mass production and synthetic surface, her embrace of these associations and electric color marks a subtle but decisive break. As did her insistence that meaning also resides within the artist’s own subjectivity as much as the material fact of the work. As she wrote:

Who can say that words from any language are actually communicative or that conveying one’s thoughts can express the message we intend? The vision that produces the message comes from a vast number of experiences and ideas so individual and so private as to be almost solipsistic—self is the only object of verifiable knowledge.²

Though influenced by Constructivist artists such as László Moholy-Nagy who began experimenting with plastics in 1934, and color relationships shaped by Bauhaus figures such as Josef Albers in addition to citing Jackson Pollock, her work resisted the inheritance of geometry and color as stable, external order.³

deRoy Gruber’s titling reinforces this different orientation, anchoring abstraction in the felt experience of life, situated culturally and personally, rather than expanding

² Aaronel deRoy Gruber, *Aaronel deRoy Gruber*, exh. cat., Galería Juana Mordó, Madrid, 1969.

³ Aaronel deRoy Gruber, *Artist of the Year 1981*, Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, Pittsburgh, Spring 1981.

entirely onto a sci-fi fantasy in which technology is divorced from the physical world. Examples include language such as “Go Within” or “Moment in Time.” Even her most seemingly autonomous forms remain tethered to conditions of subjectivity and memory. Importantly, she continued: “I do not intend that, in looking at [my work], a person relive my own experience, but rather that they find in my work a rewarding object for contemplation.”⁴

What emerges is not a departure from formal investigation, but a reorientation of it. Geometry remains exacting, even as her process harnesses forces of transmutation, almost alchemically, from hard edge into softness, plane into volume, so that structure becomes the site through which feeling and perception take form. Rotation or drift, like celestial or atomic structures, figure in her work beyond the image into a condition: a slowed, continuous reorientation of space and relation. In this sense, her work enters into a precise dialogue with the perceptual investigations of the California Light and Space movement, whose artists similarly mobilized industrial materials to produce unstable optical fields contingent on light and the viewer’s position.

Yet where Light and Space externalizes perception as an environmental or phenomenological condition, deRoy Gruber’s sculptures fold that instability inward. As the artist wrote, “developing this forward and backward visual thrust, the constructions project in and out within the cube or rectangle... I try to contrast the free and the rigid, the focused and the diffused. There is intended an ambiguous balance.”⁵ This sentiment, while subtle, is a far cry from Carl Andre’s aims: “I wanted very much to seize and hold the space [of the gallery]--not simply fill it, but seize and hold that space,” as Anna Chave quotes in *Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power*.⁶ Rather than occupying space, asserting power over architecture and viewer alike, deRoy Gruber’s objects oscillate between containment and expansion. Her use of acrylic intensifies this condition, imbuing an industrial material with perceptual and emotional charge: a sense of futurity tempered by spectral affect, at times inspiring wonder, crystalizing into hyperfixation, drifting into melancholy, or, as deRoy Gruber wrote, “balancing on the edge of a precipice.”⁷

⁴ Aaronel deRoy Gruber, *Aaronel deRoy Gruber*, exh. cat., Galeria Juana Mordó, Madrid, 1969.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Carl Andre qtd. in Anna C. Chave, “Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power,” *Arts Magazine* 64, no. 5 (January 1990): 44.

⁷ Aaronel deRoy Gruber, *Sculpture*, exh. cat. Syracuse University Lowe Art Center, Syracuse, NY, Sept. 10–Oct. 4, 1971.



Aaronel deRoy Gruber (b. Aaronel DeRoy, 1918–2011) was a Pittsburgh-based multimedia artist whose practice centered primarily on sculpture. She attended the Carnegie Institute of Technology (now Carnegie Mellon University), receiving a BS in Costume Economics in 1940, interacting with art and design departments and continuing to study painting. She was a key member of the Abstract Group (later Group A) in its formative years, joining her past professors in the pursuit and discussion of abstract art. Her paintings were shown in her earliest solo exhibitions at Art Directions Gallery and Monede Gallery in New York in 1959 and 1961 before she turned to sculpture in steel and Plexiglas acrylic and later, photography.

During her lifetime, deRoy Gruber exhibited with Bertha Schaefer in New York and with Juana Mordó in Madrid. Select institutional solo exhibitions included Aaronel at the Everson Museum of Art Syracuse (1973) and Aaronel deRoy Gruber at the Grand Rapids Art Museum (1974). Her work was included in the survey exhibition *Made of Plastic* at the Flint Institute of Arts (1968), as well as group exhibitions at the Jewish Museum, New York (1969), The Renaissance Society, Chicago (1971), Hong Kong Museum of Art (1973 and 1975), the deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum, Lincoln, MA (1973), and Carnegie Museum of Art (1977), among others. deRoy Gruber has begun to receive renewed attention in recent years with solo exhibitions at The Westmoreland Museum of American Art (2023) and 57W57 Arts, New York (2016). Recent group exhibitions have been held at the University Art Gallery, University of Pittsburgh co-curated by Brittany Reilly and Alex Taylor (2025), GAVLAK Gallery, Los Angeles, curated by Beth Rudin DeWoody (2023); the Oklahoma City Museum of Art (2021); and the University of Toronto and the Canadian Cultural Centre, curated by the Synthetic Collective (2021).

Her work is held in numerous public collections, including the The Butler Institute of American Art, Carnegie Museum of Art, Davis Museum at Wellesley College, deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum, Flint Institute of Arts, The Frick Pittsburgh, Grand Rapids Art Museum, Syracuse University Art Museum, and The Westmoreland Museum of American Art, among others.

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