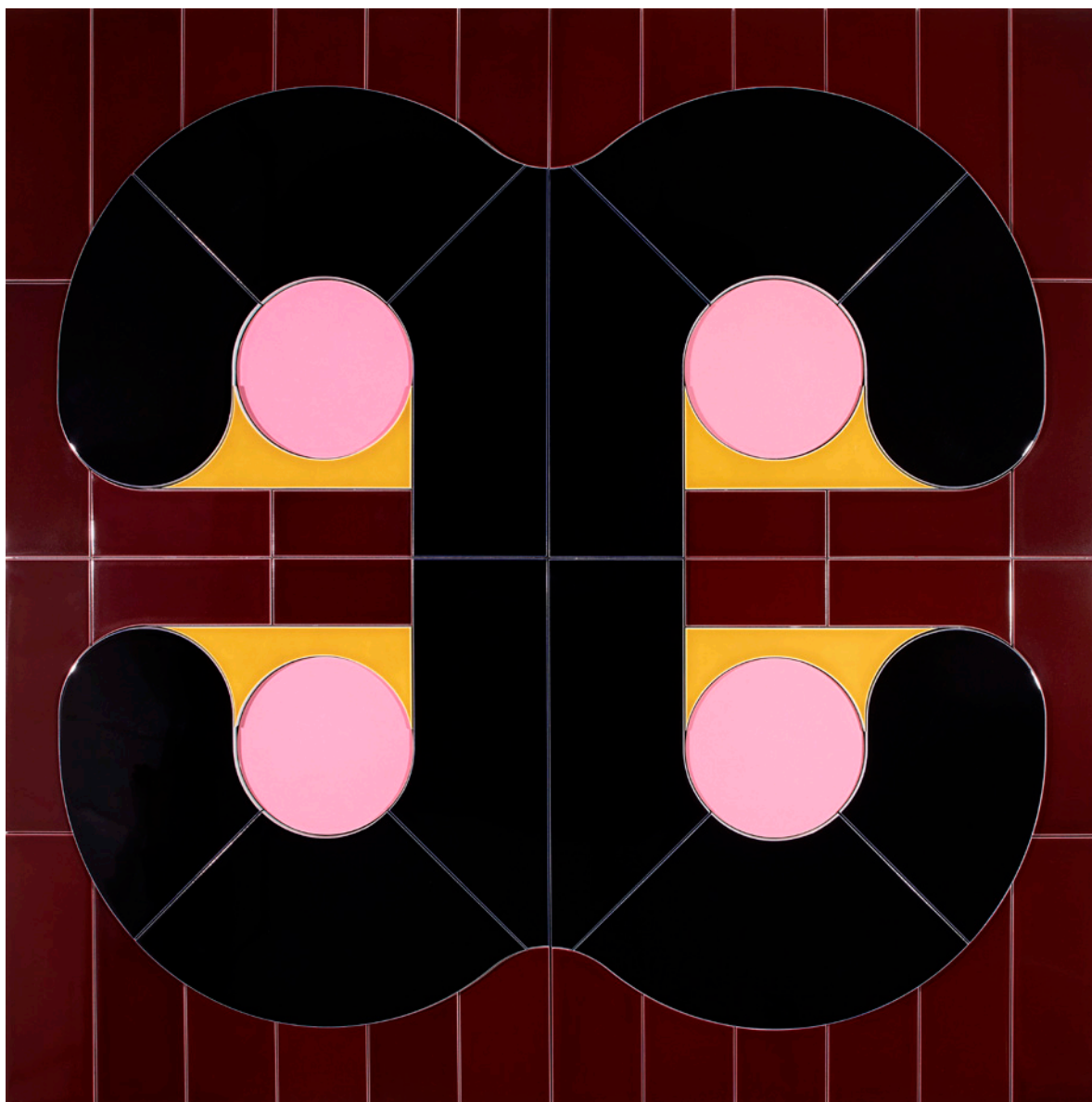


LUBNA CHOWDHARY

CODE SWITCH



JHAVERI CONTEMPORARY

LUBNA CHOWDHARY

CODE SWITCH

14 JAN—27 FEB 2021

Code-switching, the ability to alternate effortlessly between two or more discrete sign systems, is a faculty practiced and perfected by all diasporic subjects, whose itinerant biographies commonly extend across national borders and between disparate linguistic and cultural contexts. To code-switch is to be multiple and relational, to embody and inhabit difference, to resist claiming origins and refuse the imposition of categories. As a methodology, code-switching is integral to Lubna Chowdhary's artistic practice which has long sought to stake out a conciliatory middle or common ground between various binaries: art and craft, East and West, ornamental excess and minimal restraint, industrial and handmade, architecture and body, and object and image.

Chowdhary's monumental *Metropolis* (1991-2017) consists of a mesmerizing display of more than a thousand small, handcrafted and lushly glazed clay sculptures that together scramble and synthesize her myriad sources, inspirations and references, which range from anthropological artifacts and mass-produced commodities to architecture, both modern and pre-modern, and both industrially and manually produced design objects like furniture and toys. These unruly hybrids triumphantly resist all attempts at taxonomy and categorization. Gathered together in a sprawling cacophonous display that further confounds our ability to establish the origin and context of any individual unit, they are near impossible to place except, that is, in relation to each other, in their shared alterity. A quiet riot of multiplicity and difference and the inevitable everyday encounter with it, the work, as its title asserts, encapsulates the logic, pulse and thrill of city life.

Marking a notable shift from three to two dimensions, Chowdhary's *Certain Times* (2019) consists of small groupings of variously shaped tiles—both industrially produced and commercially available and custom-designed and cut by waterjet—on wall-mounted shelves. Regardless of how they are fabricated, Chowdhary hand glazes each tile, its horizontality allowing for more precise designs and saturated colours than a clay object does. Following the architectural subtext of her three-dimensional works, these short linear arrangements of simple and complex geometries and patterns can be read as fragmented skylines or flattened cityscapes. But they can also be interpreted as linguistic or semiotic compositions, as coded phrases or sentences, each individual tile a lexical unit in an unfamiliar language. This suggestion of the syntactical or semiotic is condensed within a single frame in Chowdhary's most recent ceramic works, such as the aptly titled *Sign* series (2020), which endeavors to develop a novel vocabulary of abstraction, one that sheds some of the referential weight of her past work without forgoing either ornament or colour.

Begun during a residency in Stockholm, Sweden, during the early months of the pandemic, the other works in "Code Shift" index a pivot in Chowdhary's practice away from ceramics, the medium she was trained in and is best known for. They also reject *horror vacui* as both production and display logic, abandoning the space-filling sprawl of a work like *Metropolis*. The resulting works feel more meditative, centering and centered. Almost ritualistic in their seriality they seem a particularly apt response to the interminable sameness of life under lockdown. Regardless of the specific medium used, they are all marked by a flat, frontal focus, their forms, lines, vectors and patterns hemmed in by a rectangular frame. And like much of her previous work, they intentionally blur the line between industrial and manual modes of production.

LUBNA CHOWDHARY

CODE SWITCH

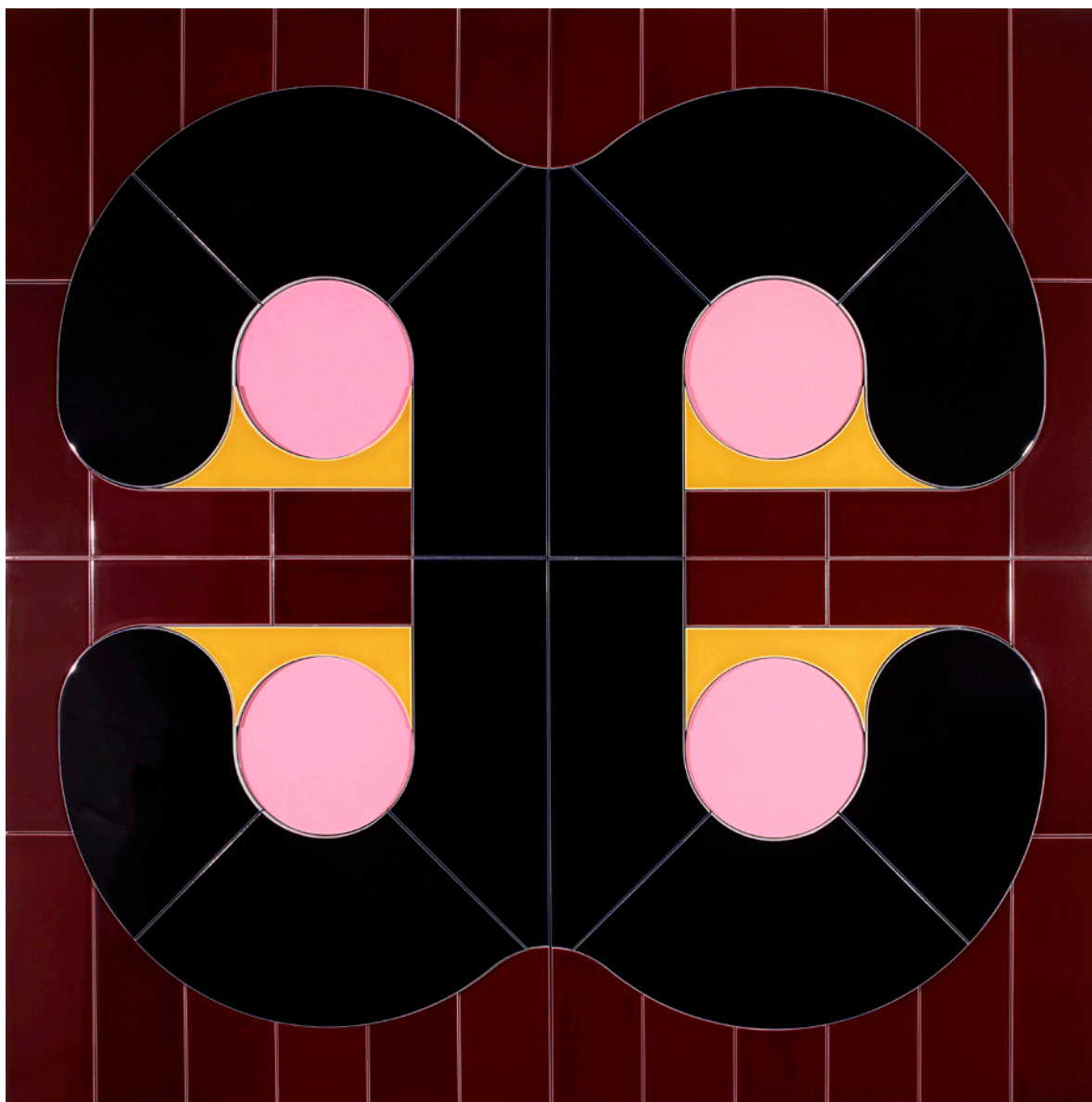
14 JAN—27 FEB 2021

For *Switch* (2020), Chowdhary used commercially available stickers to create shapes and patterns on pink graph paper. Each circular sticker was carefully and laboriously hand painted red resulting in subtle tonal variations across the individual units. Similarly, while the compositions were designed and refined in Adobe Illustrator the stickers were applied manually, using the paper's gridlines as a guide. "Series 1" investigates the tension between the gestalt fullness of geometry and ornament's capacity to deflate it. Chowdhary does this by strategically filling in the interstices in regular arrays of large circles with smaller ones so as to embed a smaller opaque shape within a more porous larger one. "Series 2" has a more architectural feel, the shapes resemble spatial plans, the grids of circles suggesting a patterned floor. For *Code* (2020), Chowdhary used digitally designed templates to industrially cut boards into sets of smaller interlocking shapes which were then reassembled back into rectangular fields. The forms and patterns painted atop these jigsaw-like composites, in a palette as vivid and luscious as her signature ceramic glazes, often extend across the physical cuts, suturing them together visually. The result is a subtle but uncanny disjunction between the two layers of the resulting image, between support and surface, between underlying structure and emergent form.

Though coloured differently in each iteration certain structural motifs reappear: one consists of two vertical ellipses, their inner edges overlapping at the center resulting in a shape that resembles a dividing cell or an opened pod; others include various nested shapes—a Frank Stella-like cross, a jogging track-like oval, a starburst that evokes the traditions of Islamic ornament—their colour schemes determining whether the visual force of the composition is centripetal or centrifugal, whether it diffuses or focuses sight and mind. While not explicitly citing specific precedents, the forms in this series are intentionally suggestive of sacred geometries, developing a repertoire of signs and symbols wherein abstract form can serve as a vessel for divine essence or spiritual reflection, its simplified geometries functioning as portals through which enlightenment or transcendence may be attempted and attained. Yet, as with much of Chowdhary's irreverent practice, intimations of the sacred are grounded by the weight of the profane. The flat shapes and graphic simplicity of her emerging visual lexicon are just as indebted to the countless corporate logos and brand identities that saturate contemporary visual culture and dominate the media landscape, a symbolic language driven by the more immanent baser concerns of capitalism. Acknowledging the displacement of the spiritual power and rhetorical force once attributed to abstraction into the service of consumerism this series also indexes a more recent shift, intensified by the pandemic, from materialist consumption to a no less consumptive desire for sanity, spirit and, ultimately, the promise of salvation.

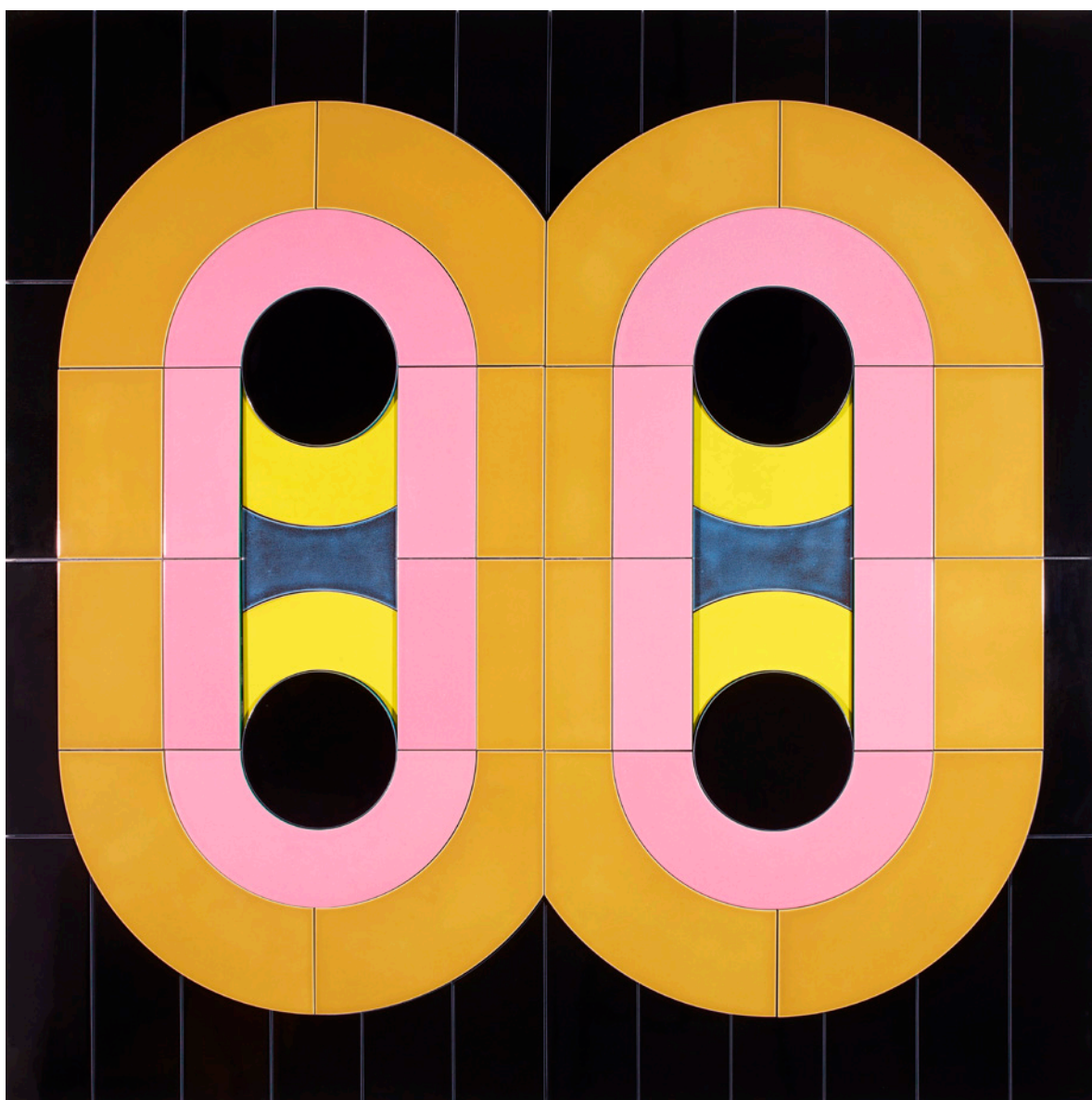
Murtaza Vali

LUBNA CHOWDHARY



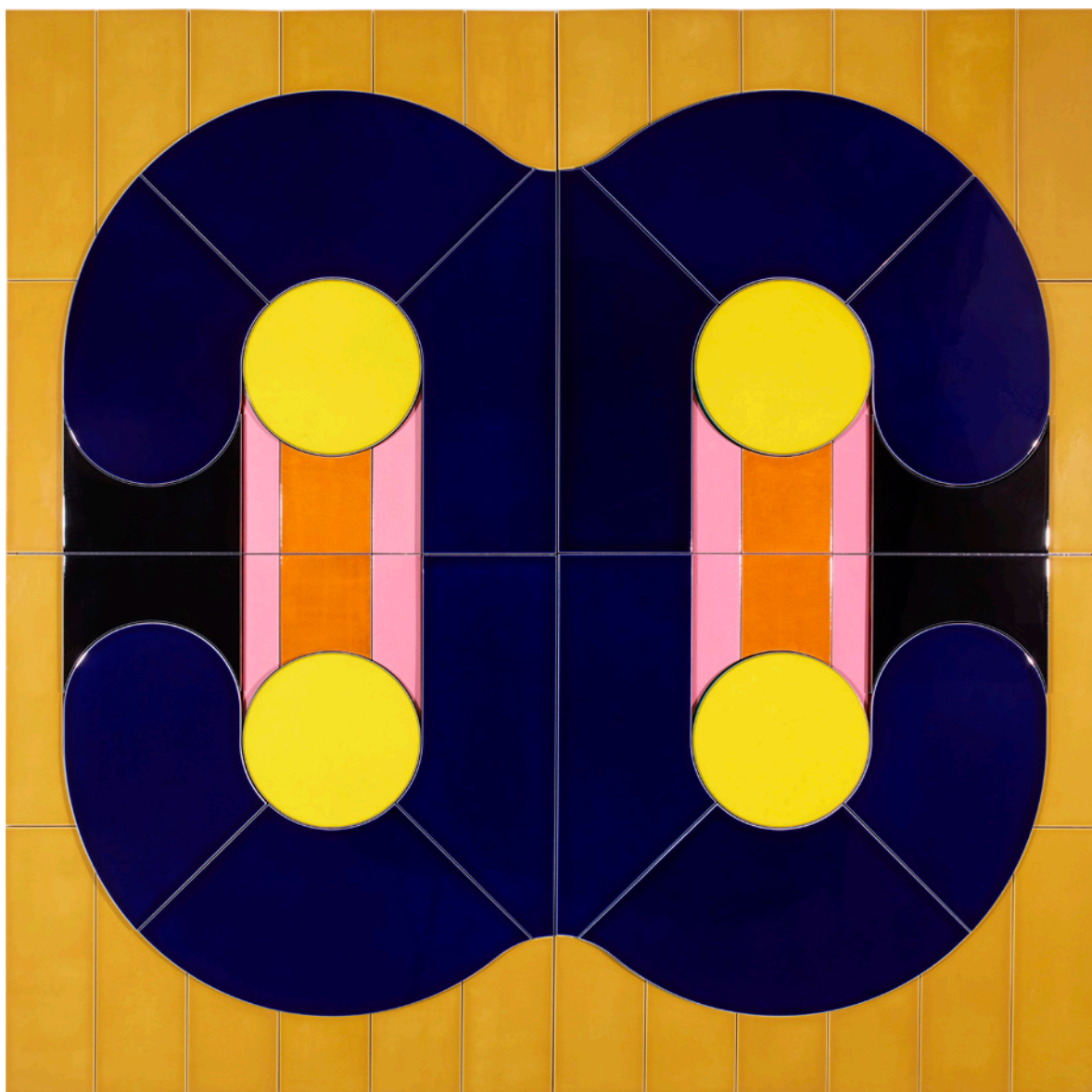
*Sign 1*, 2020  
Glazed ceramic, wooden board  
140 x 140 x 4 cm

LUBNA CHOWDHARY



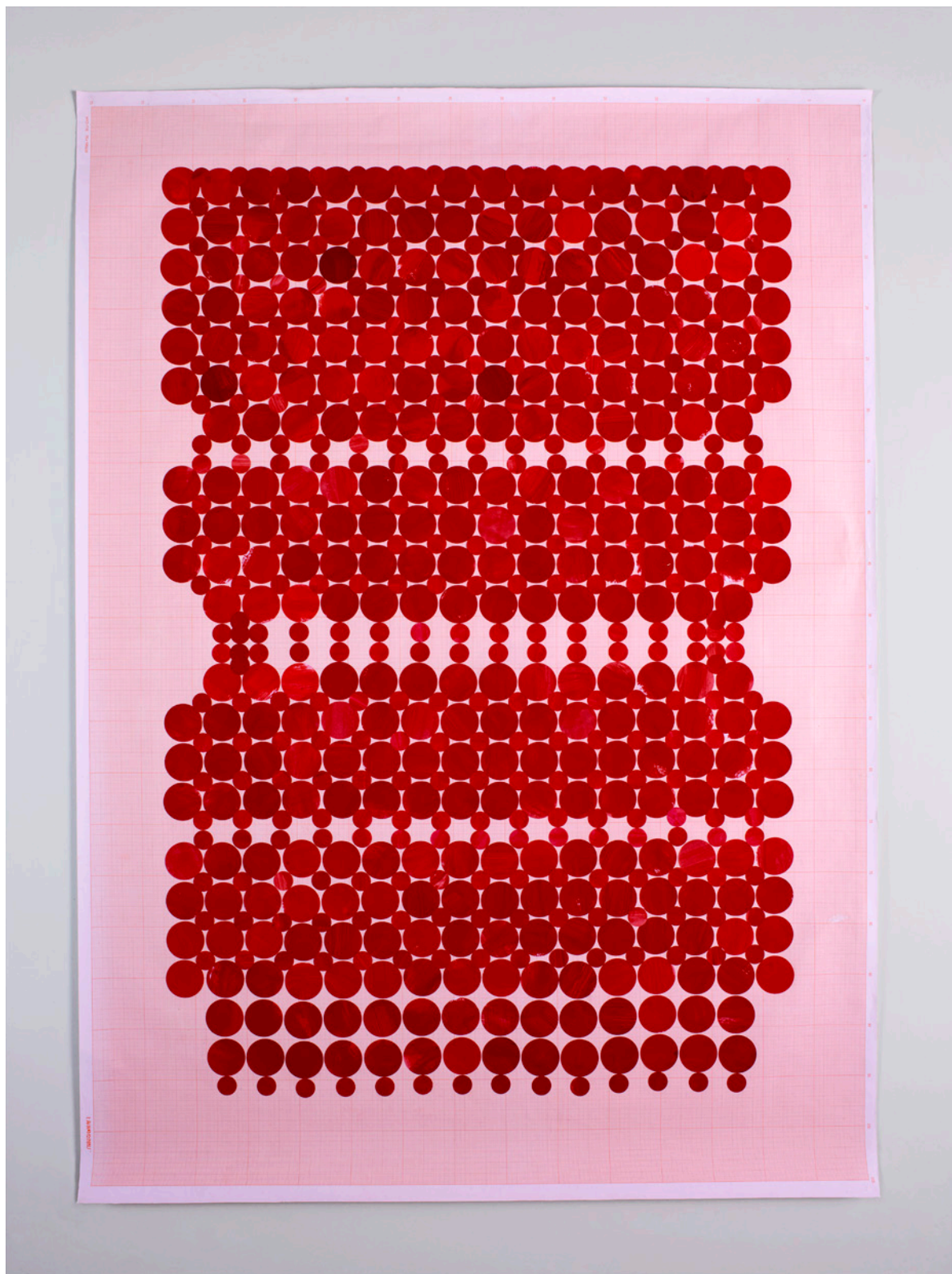
*Sign 2, 2020*  
Glazed ceramic, wooden board  
140 x 140 x 4 cm

LUBNA CHOWDHARY



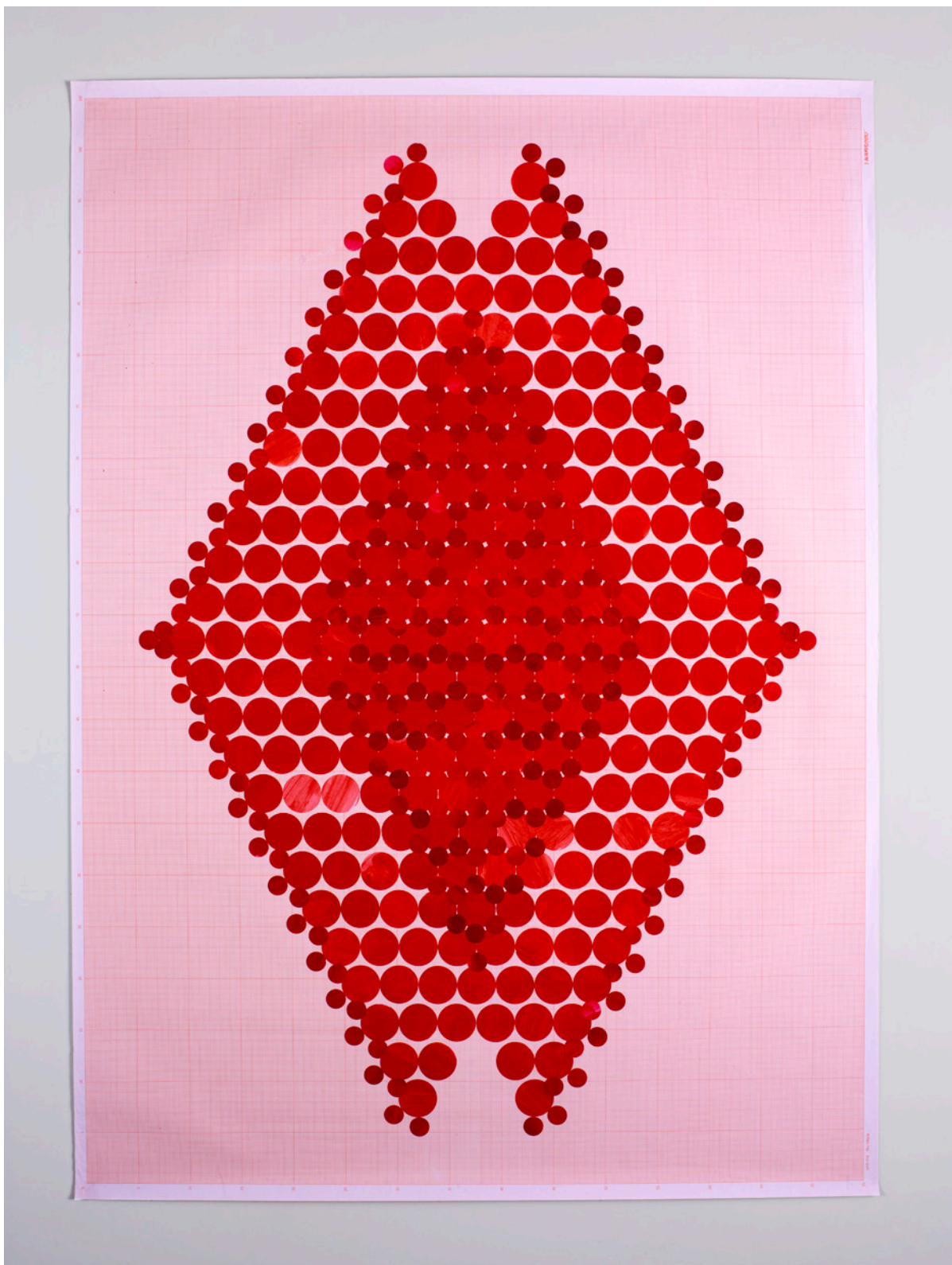
*Sign 3*, 2020  
Glazed ceramic, wooden board  
140 x 140 x 4 cm

LUBNA CHOWDHARY



*Switch (Series 1: Number 1)*, 2020  
Graph paper, adhesive paper, acrylic  
105 x 75 cm

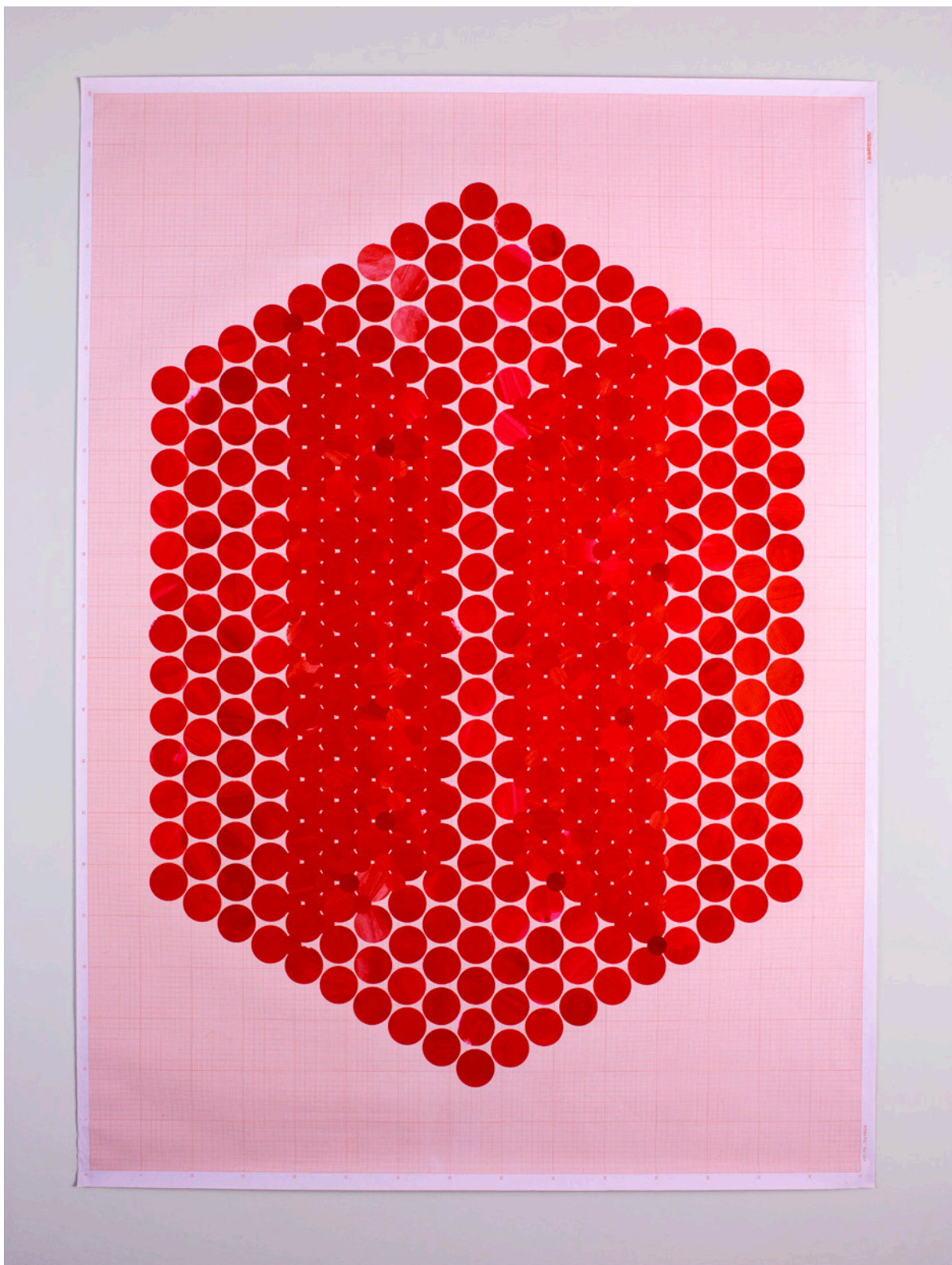
LUBNA CHOWDHARY



*Switch (Series 1: Number 2)*, 2020  
Graph paper, adhesive paper, acrylic  
105 x 75 cm

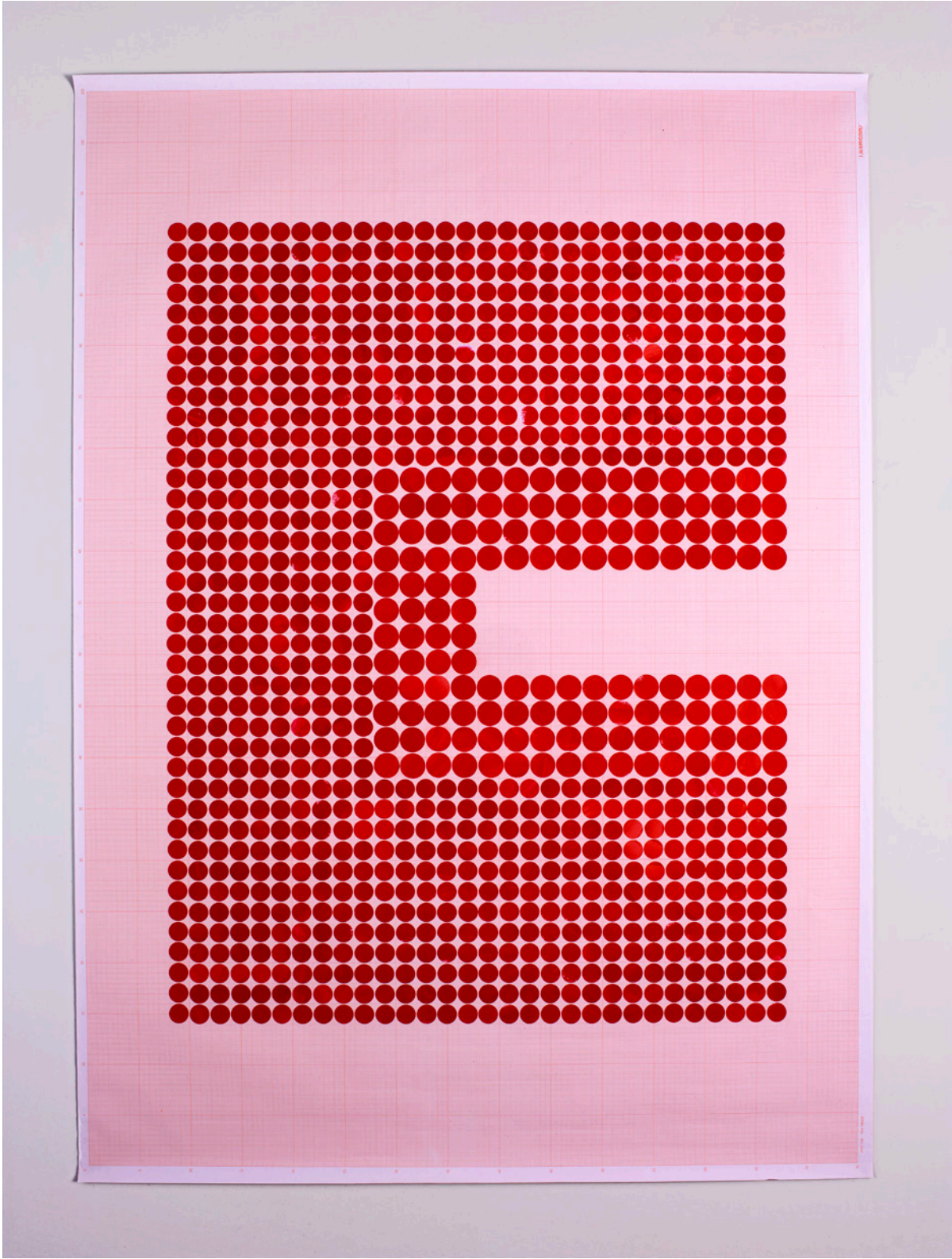


LUBNA CHOWDHARY



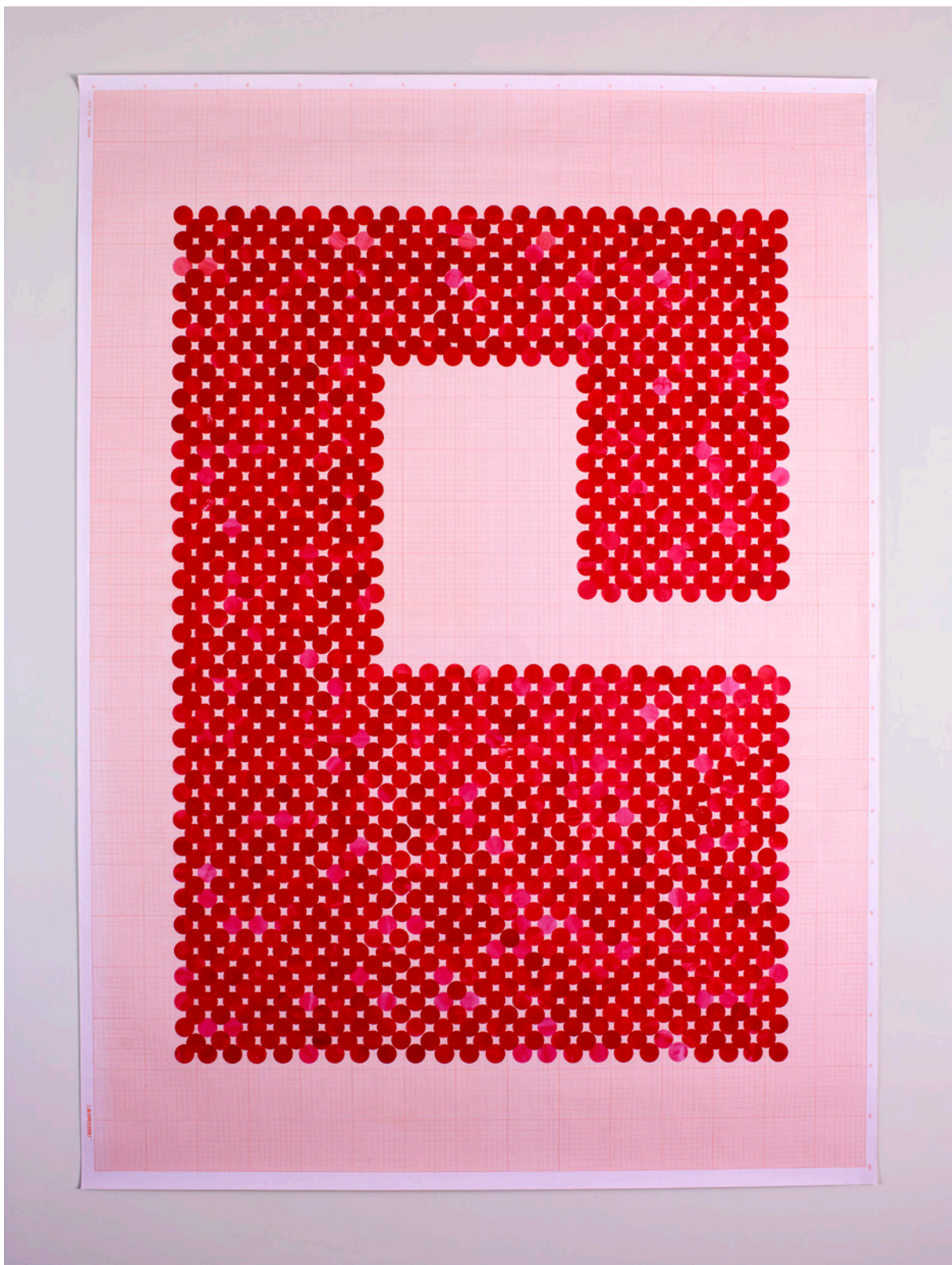
*Switch (Series 1: Number 3)*, 2020  
Graph paper, adhesive paper, acrylic  
105 x 75 cm

LUBNA CHOWDHARY



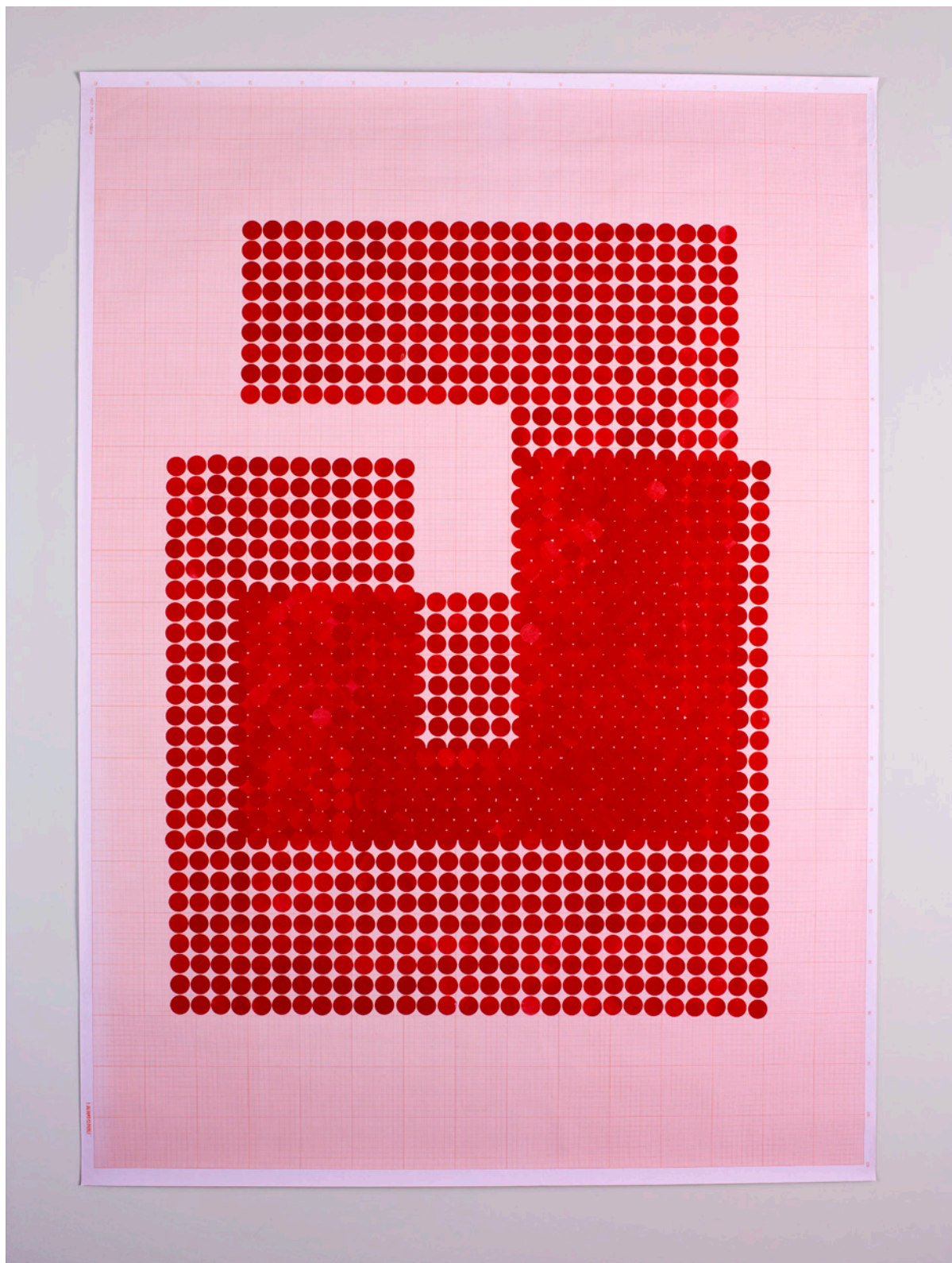
*Switch (Series 2: Number 1)*, 2020  
Graph paper, adhesive paper, acrylic  
105 x 75 cm

LUBNA CHOWDHARY



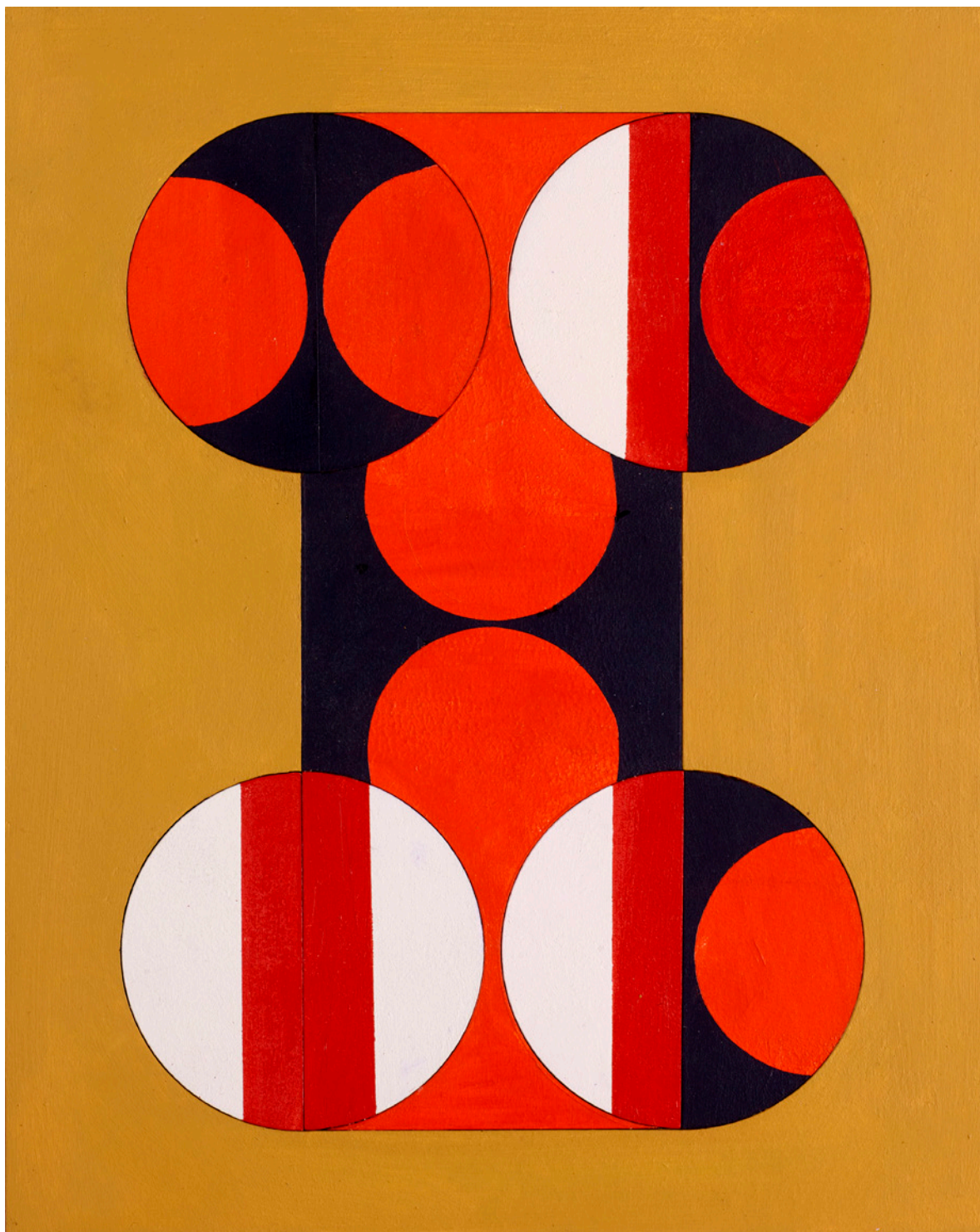
*Switch (Series 2: Number 3)*, 2020  
Graph paper, adhesive paper, acrylic  
105 x 75 cm

LUBNA CHOWDHARY



*Switch (Series 2: Number 5)*, 2020  
Graph paper, adhesive paper, acrylic  
105 x 75 cm

LUBNA CHOWDHARY



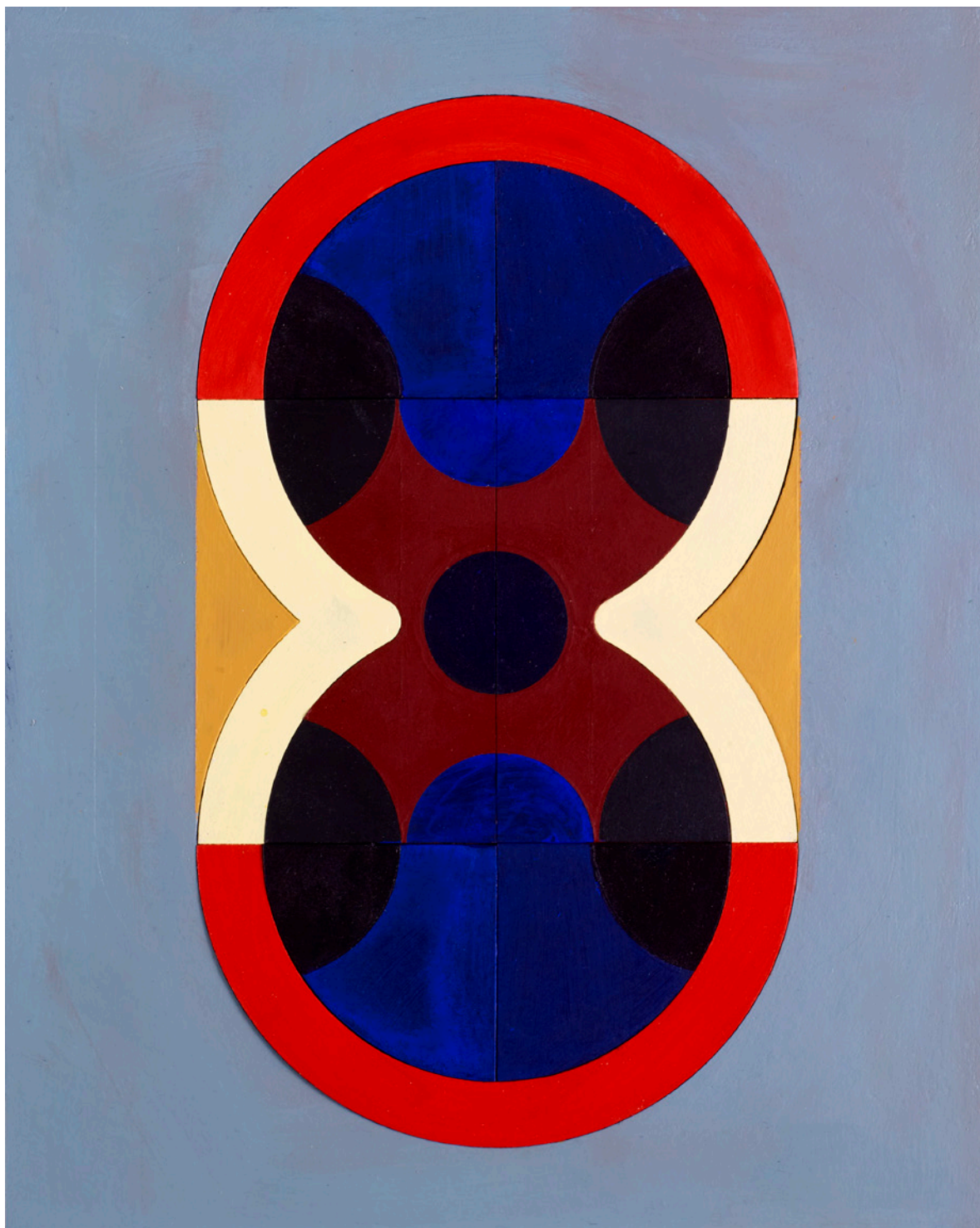
*Code 1*, 2020  
Gouache and acrylic on gessoed board  
29 x 23 cm

LUBNA CHOWDHARY



*Code 2*, 2020  
Gouache and acrylic on gessoed board  
29 x 23 cm

LUBNA CHOWDHARY



*Code 3*, 2020  
Gouache and acrylic on gessoed board  
29 x 23 cm

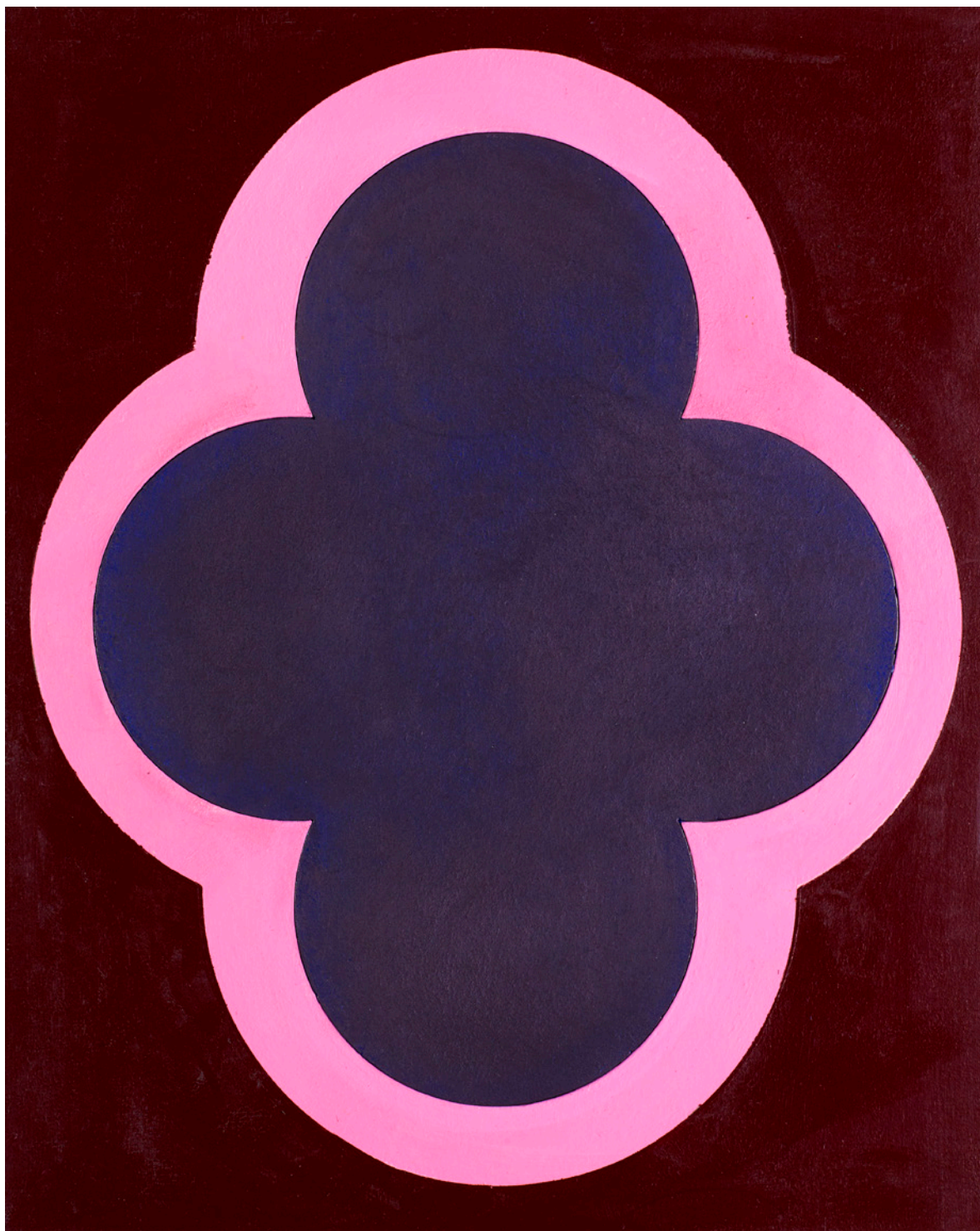
LUBNA CHOWDHARY



*Code 4*, 2020  
Gouache and acrylic on gessoed board  
29 x 23 cm



LUBNA CHOWDHARY



*Code 5, 2020*  
Gouache, acrylic and graphite on gessoed board  
29 x 23 cm

LUBNA CHOWDHARY



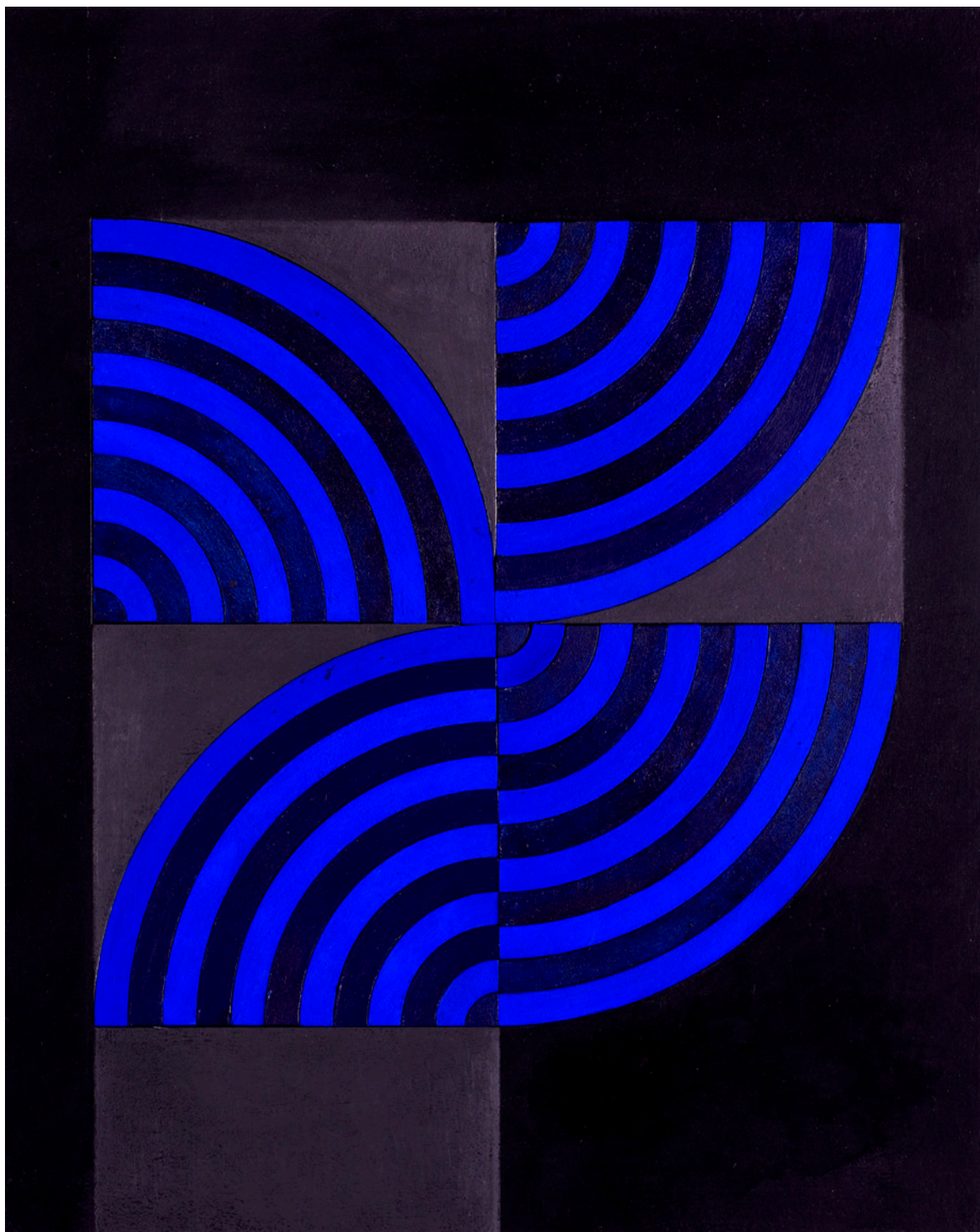
*Code 6, 2020*  
Gouache and acrylic on gessoed board  
29 x 23 cm

LUBNA CHOWDHARY



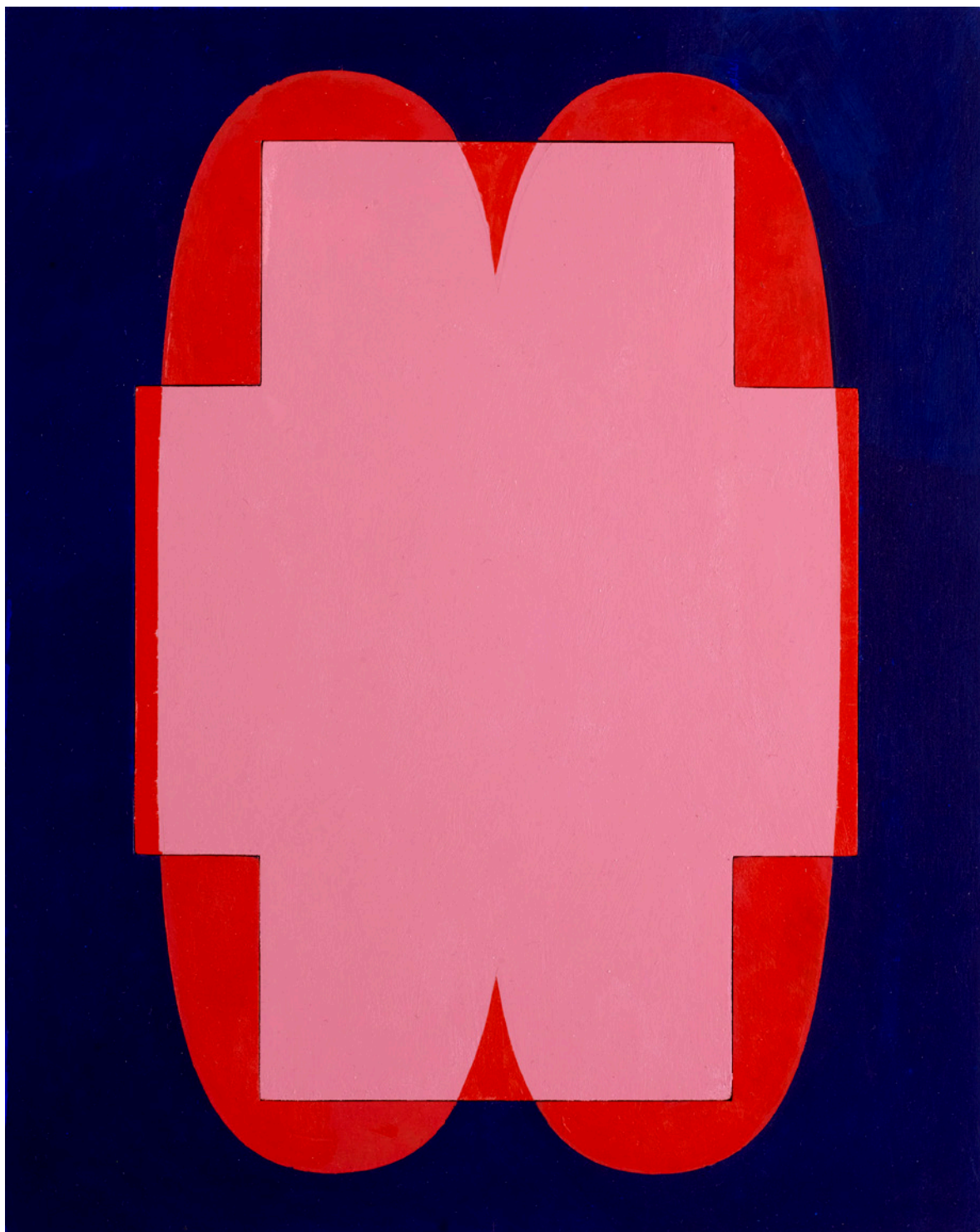
*Code 7, 2020*  
Gouache and acrylic on gessoed board  
29 x 23 cm

LUBNA CHOWDHARY



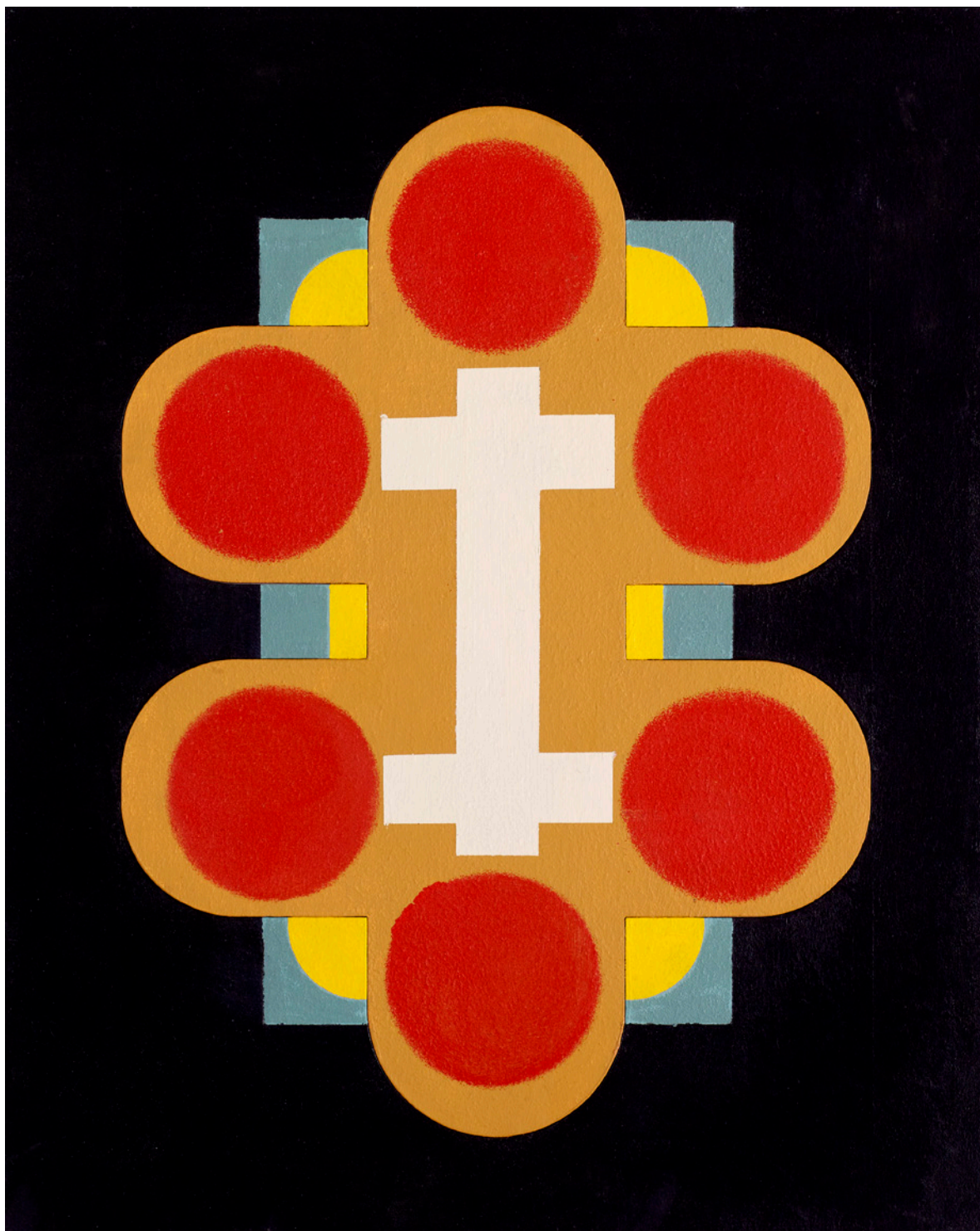
*Code 8*, 2020  
Gouache, acrylic and graphite on gessoed board  
29 x 23 cm

LUBNA CHOWDHARY



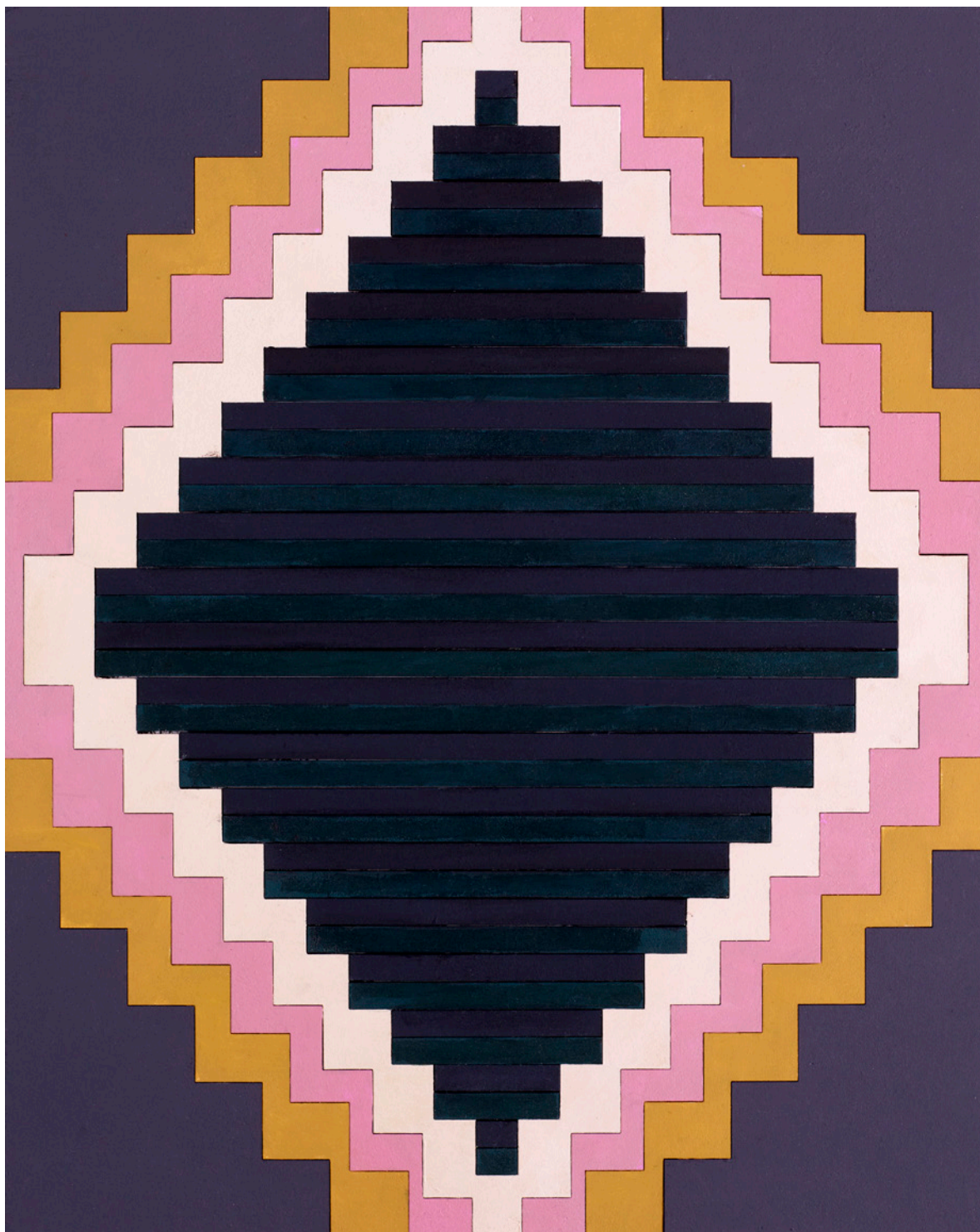
*Code 9, 2020*  
Gouache and acrylic on gessoed board  
29 x 23 cm

LUBNA CHOWDHARY



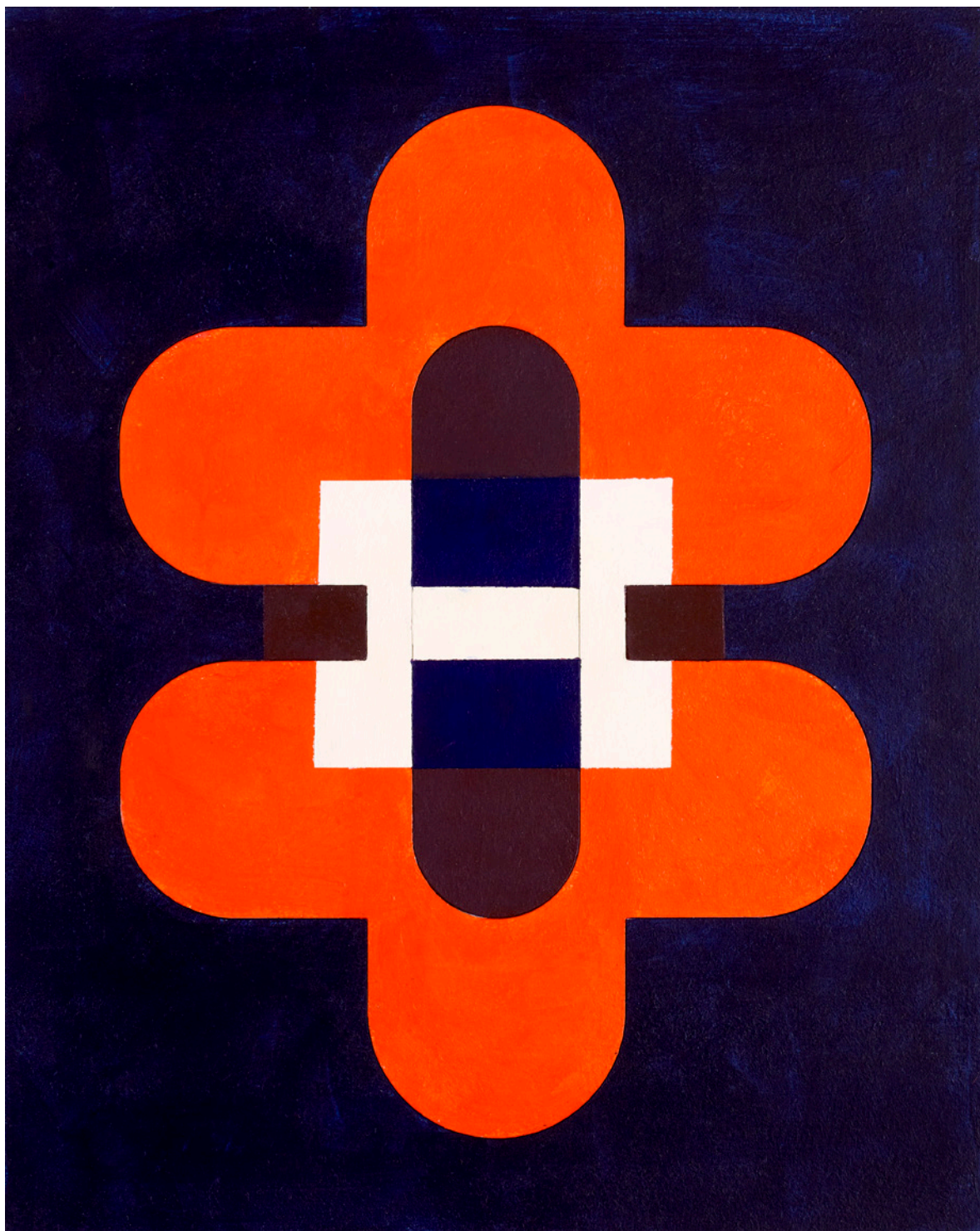
*Code 10*, 2020  
Gouache and acrylic on gessoed board  
29 x 23 cm

LUBNA CHOWDHARY



*Code 11, 2020*  
Gouache, acrylic and graphite on gessoed board  
29 x 23 cm

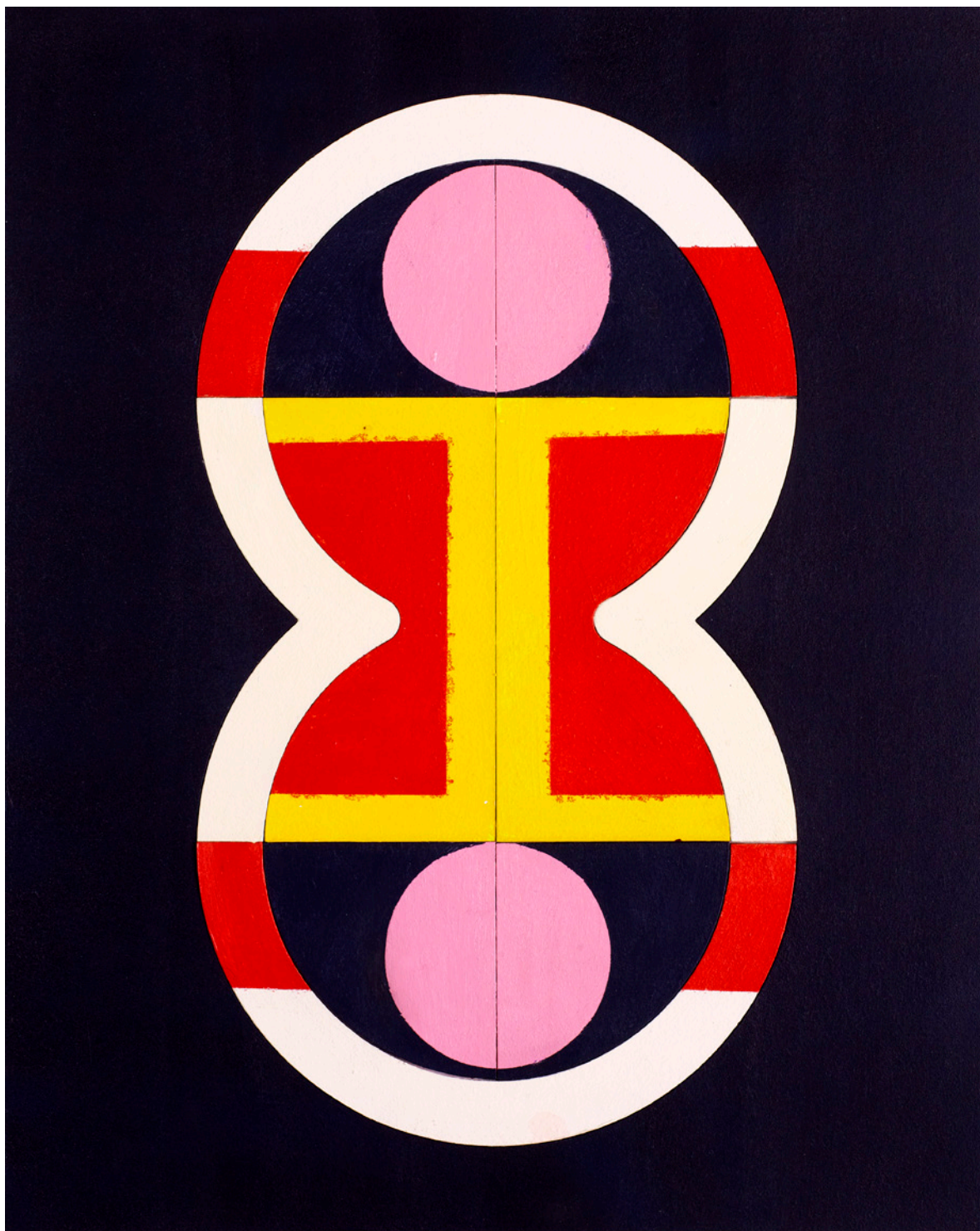
LUBNA CHOWDHARY



*Code 12, 2020*  
Gouache and acrylic on gessoed board  
29 x 23 cm



LUBNA CHOWDHARY



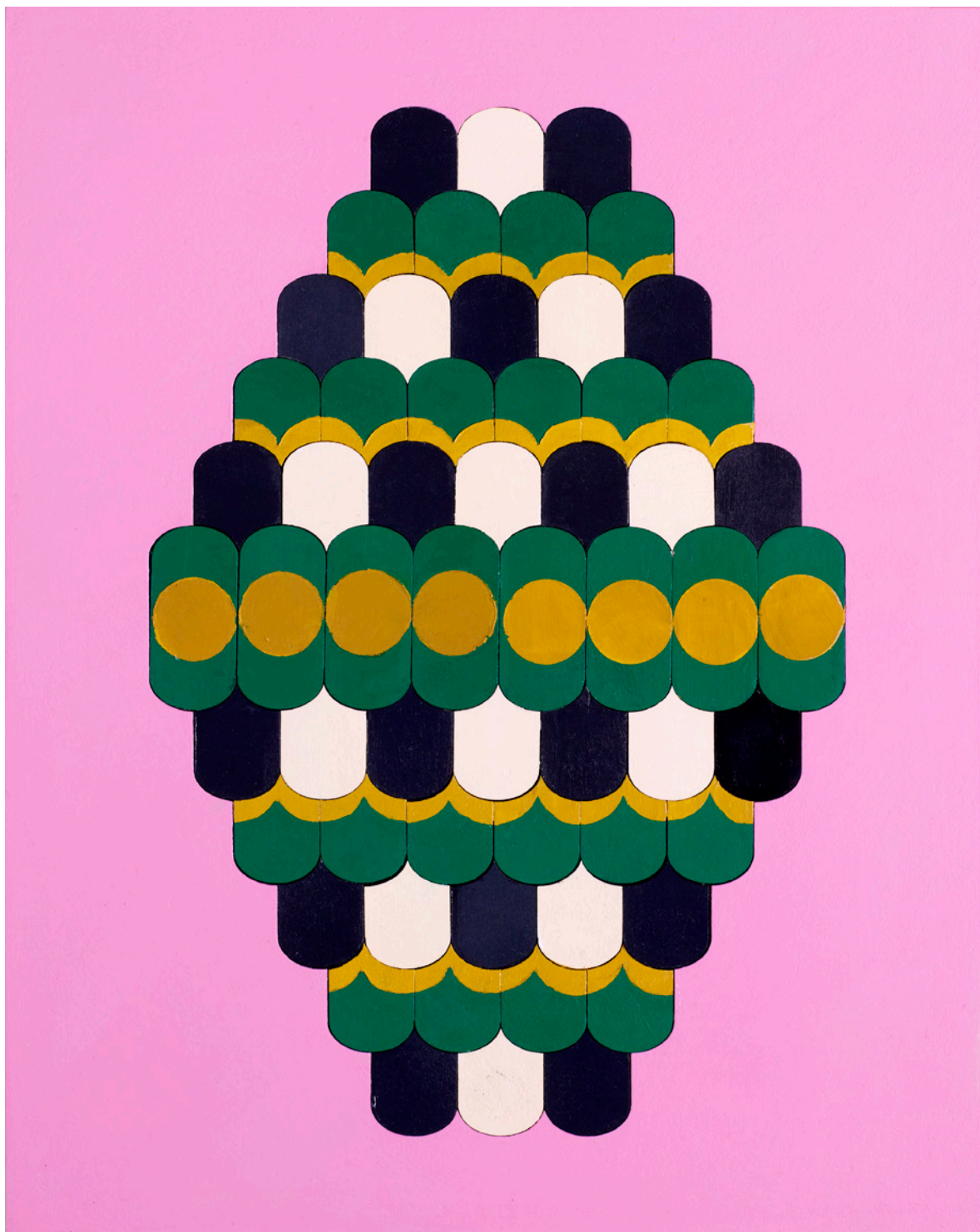
*Code 13, 2020*  
Gouache and acrylic on gessoed board  
29 x 23 cm

LUBNA CHOWDHARY



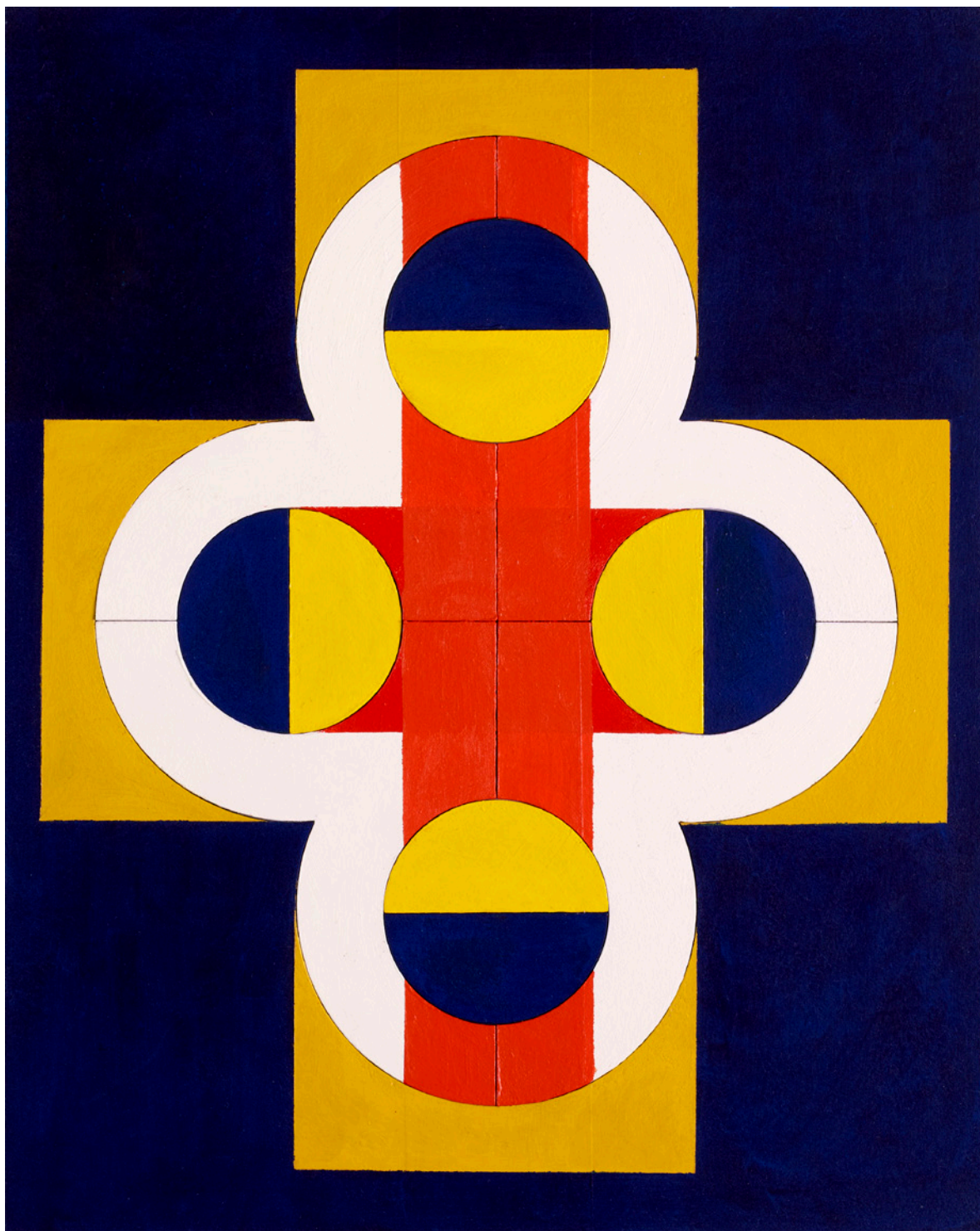
*Code 14, 2020*  
Gouache, acrylic and graphite on gessoed board  
29 x 23 cm

LUBNA CHOWDHARY



*Code 15, 2020*  
Gouache and acrylic on gessoed board  
29 x 23 cm

LUBNA CHOWDHARY



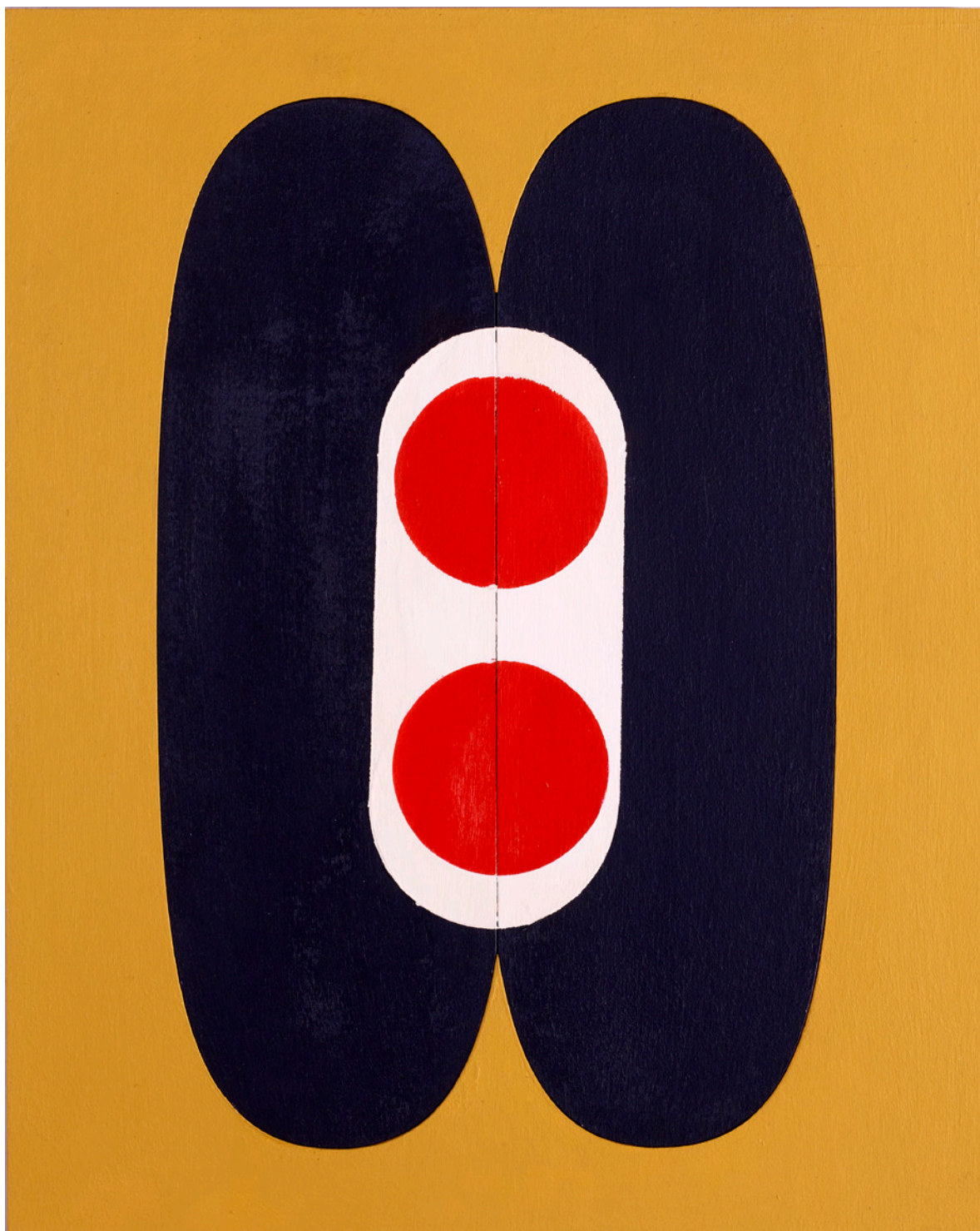
*Code 16, 2020*  
Gouache and acrylic on gessoed board  
29 x 23 cm

LUBNA CHOWDHARY



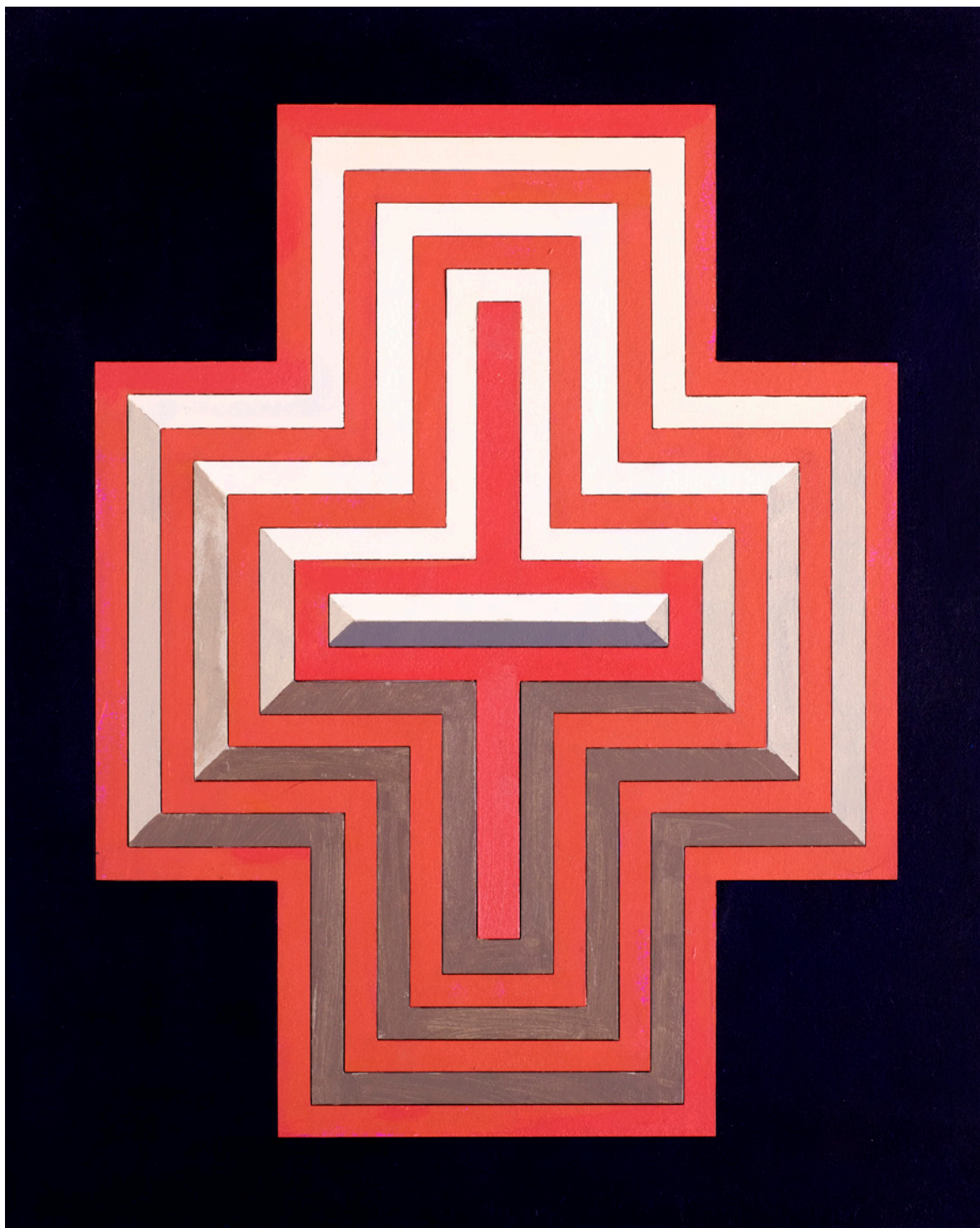
*Code 17, 2020*  
Gouache and acrylic on gessoed board  
29 x 23 cm

LUBNA CHOWDHARY



*Code 18, 2020*  
Gouache and acrylic on gessoed board  
29 x 23 cm

LUBNA CHOWDHARY



*Code 19*, 2020  
Gouache and acrylic on gessoed board  
29 x 23 cm

LUBNA CHOWDHARY



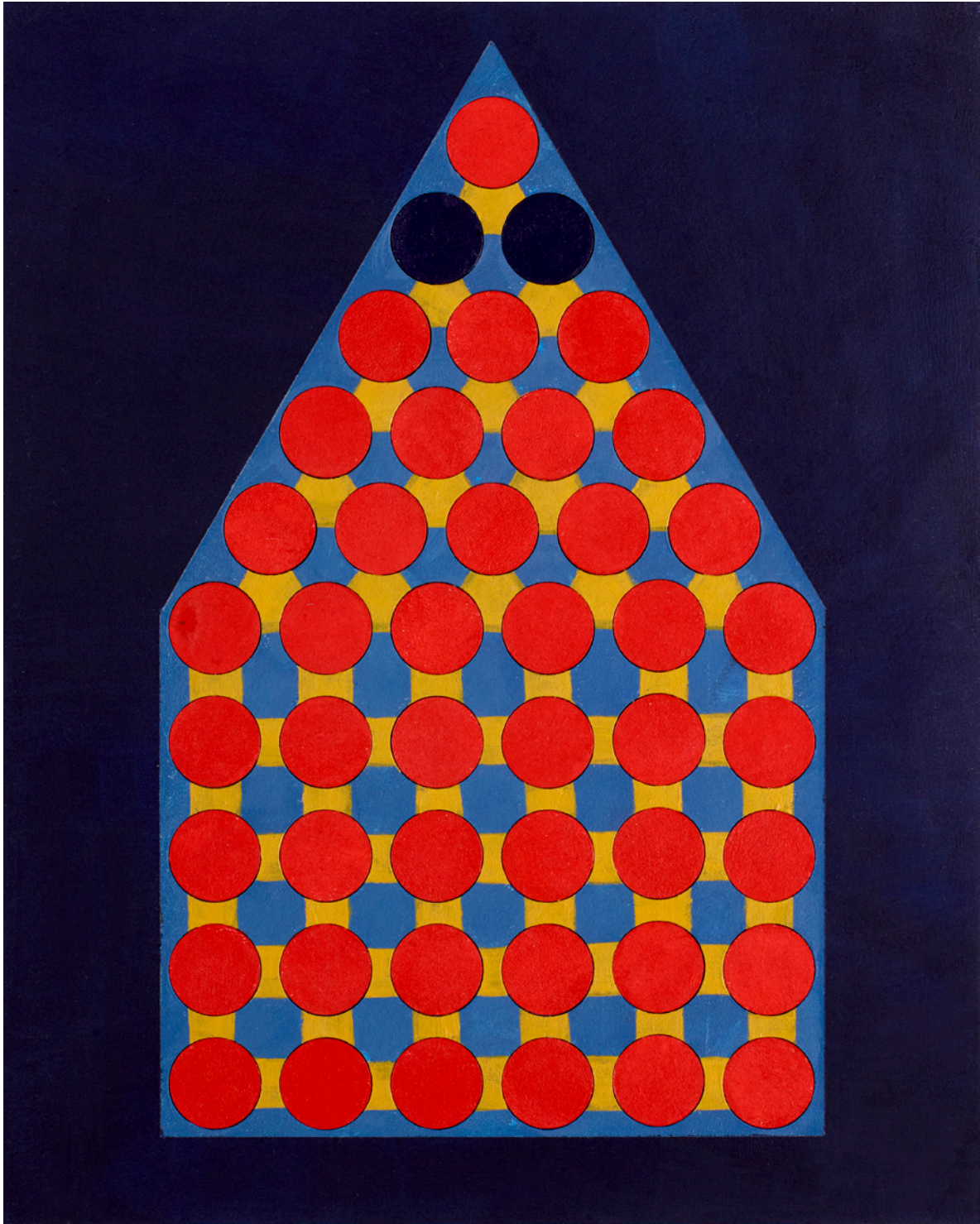
*Code 20, 2020*  
Gouache and acrylic on gessoed board  
29 x 23 cm



LUBNA CHOWDHARY

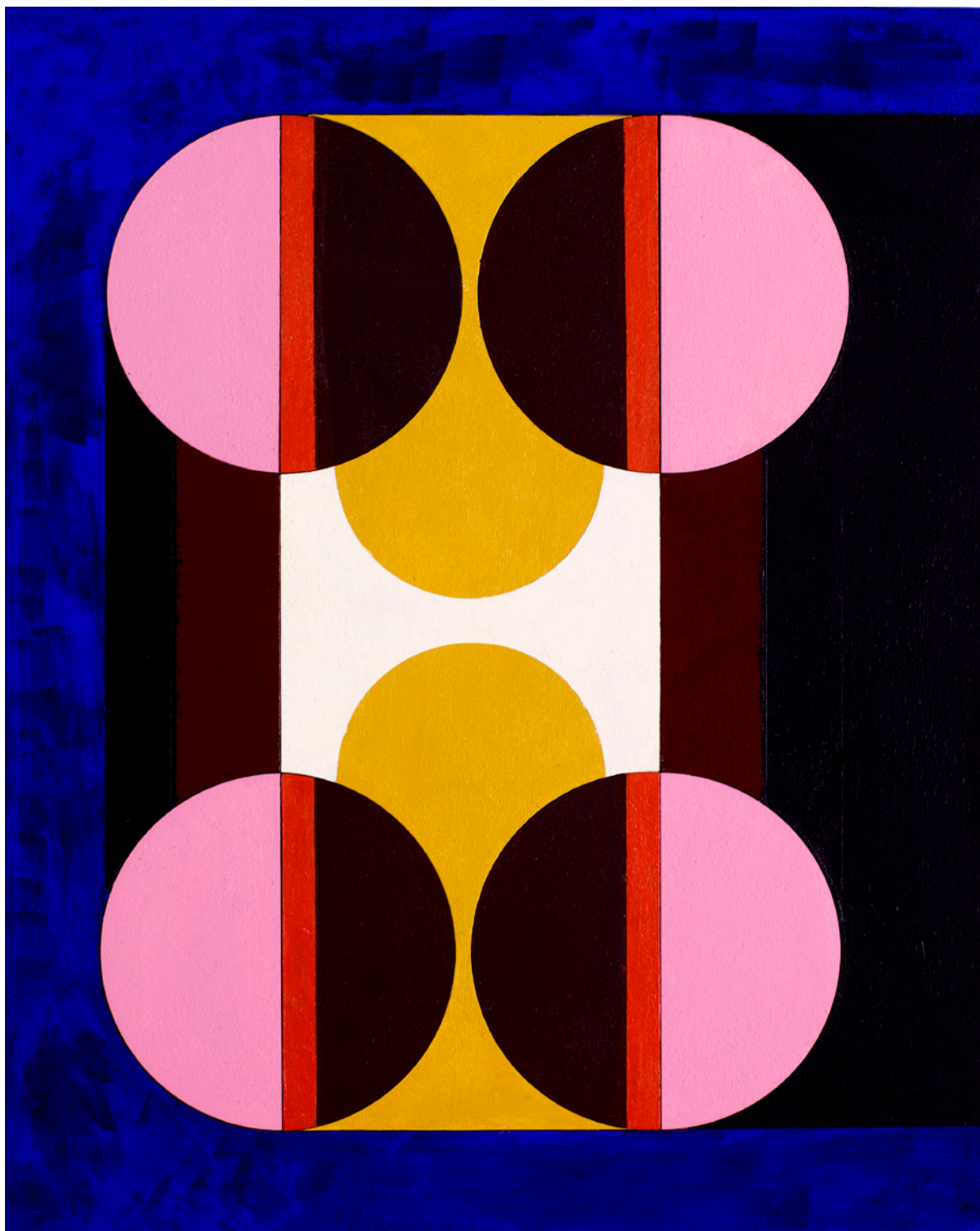


*Code 21*, 2020  
Gouache and acrylic on gessoed board  
29 x 23 cm



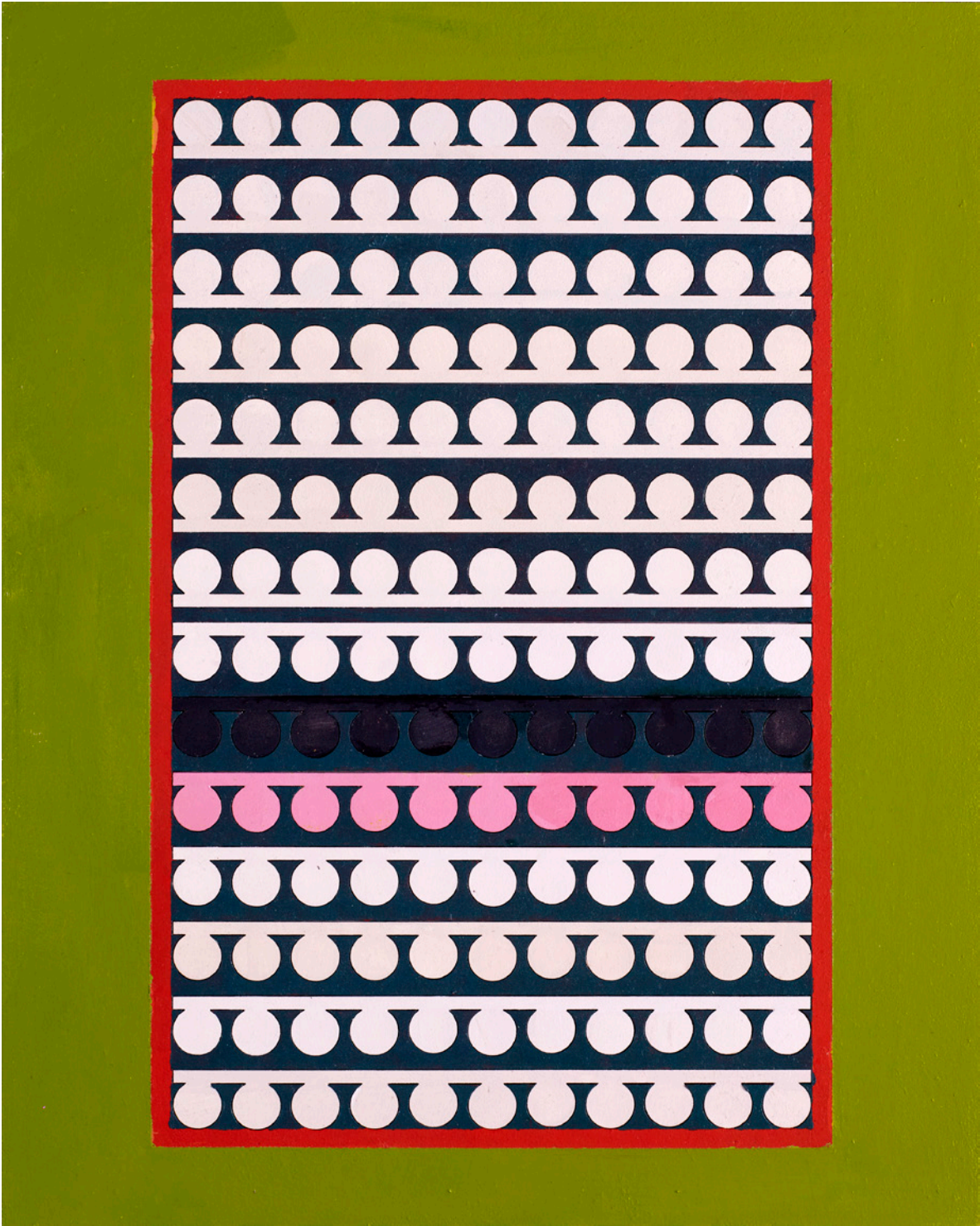
Code 22, 2020  
Gouache and acrylic on gessoed board  
29 x 23 cm

LUBNA CHOWDHARY



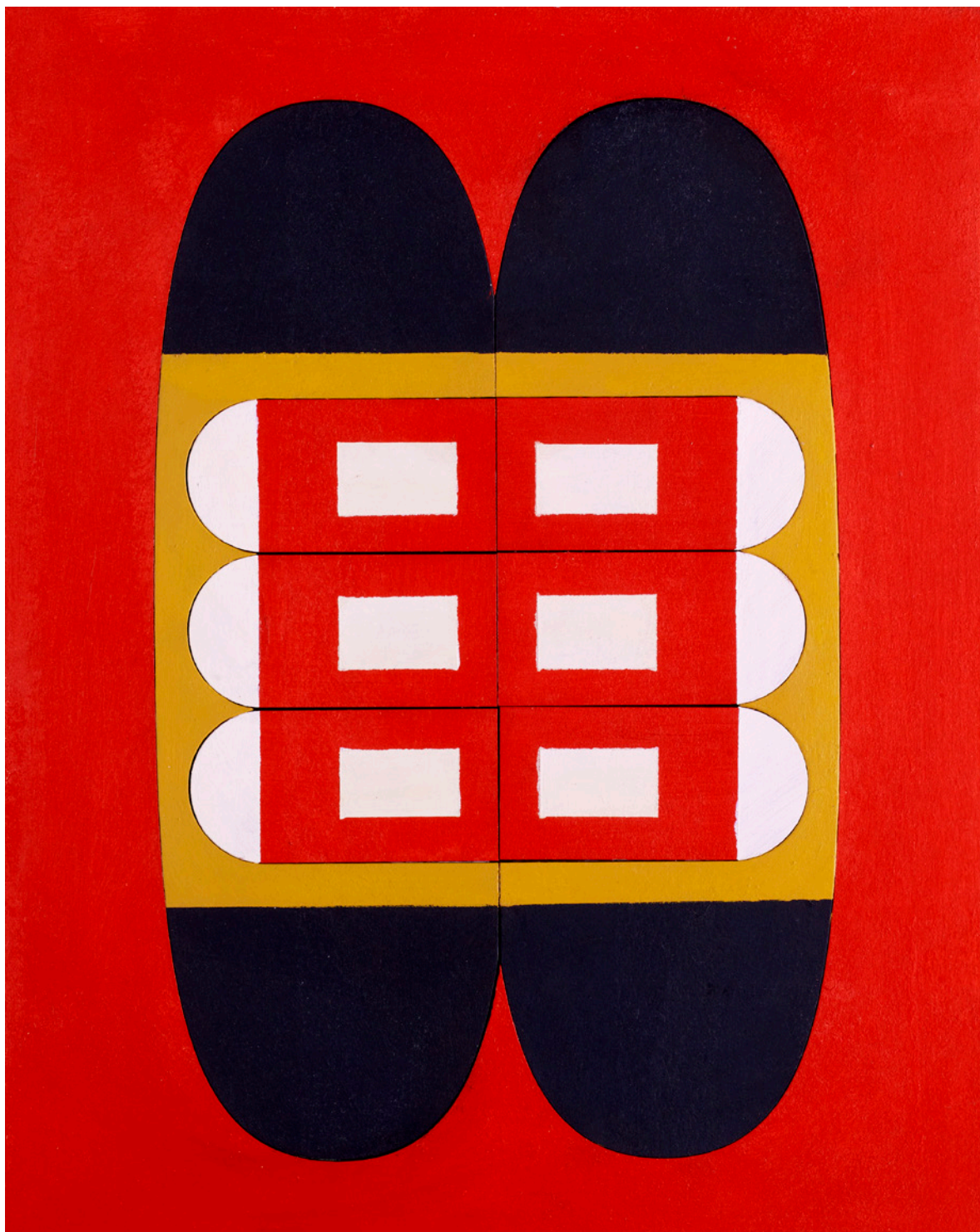
*Code 23, 2020*  
Gouache and acrylic on gessoed board  
29 x 23 cm

LUBNA CHOWDHARY



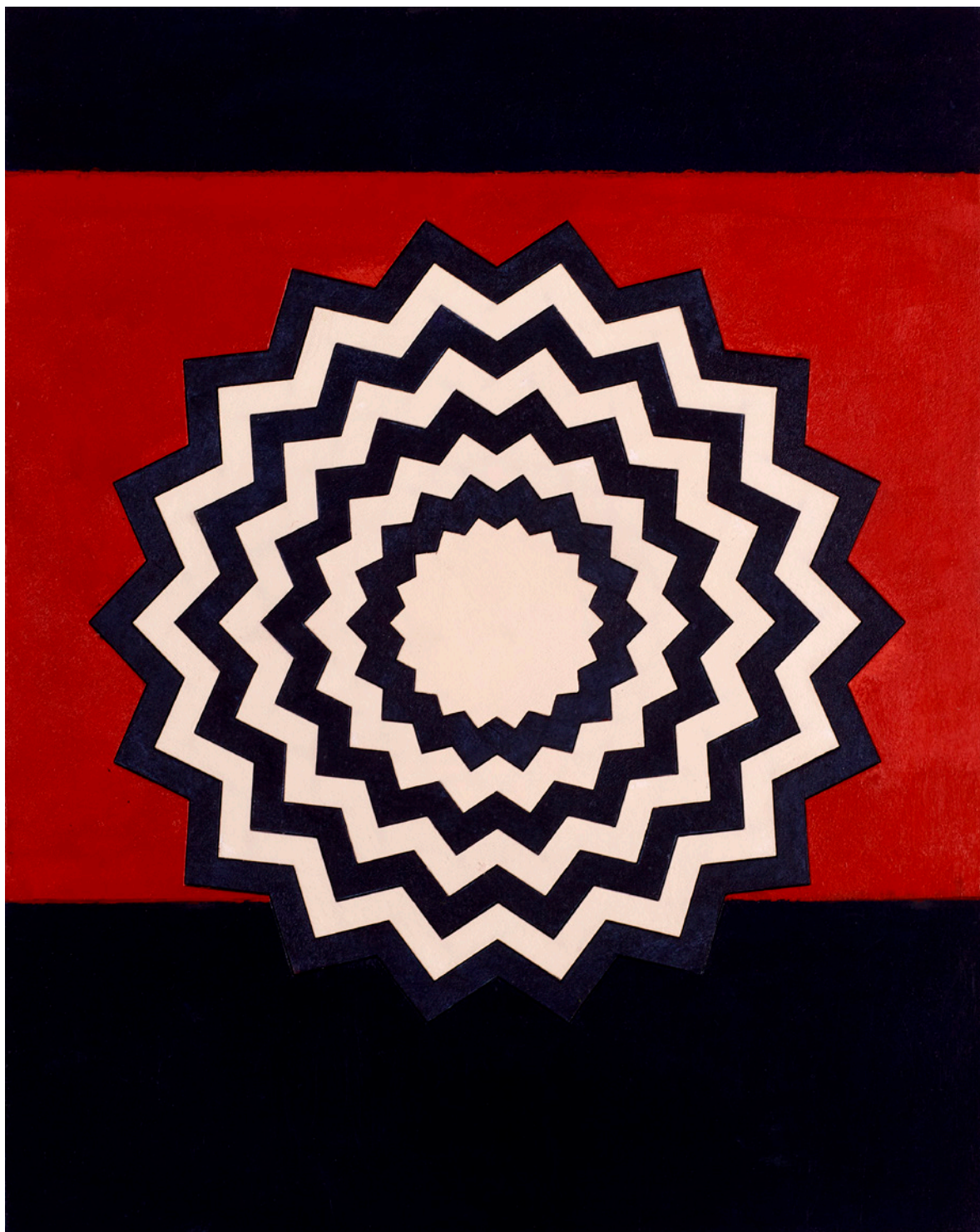
*Code 24, 2020*  
Gouache and acrylic on gessoed board  
29 x 23 cm

LUBNA CHOWDHARY



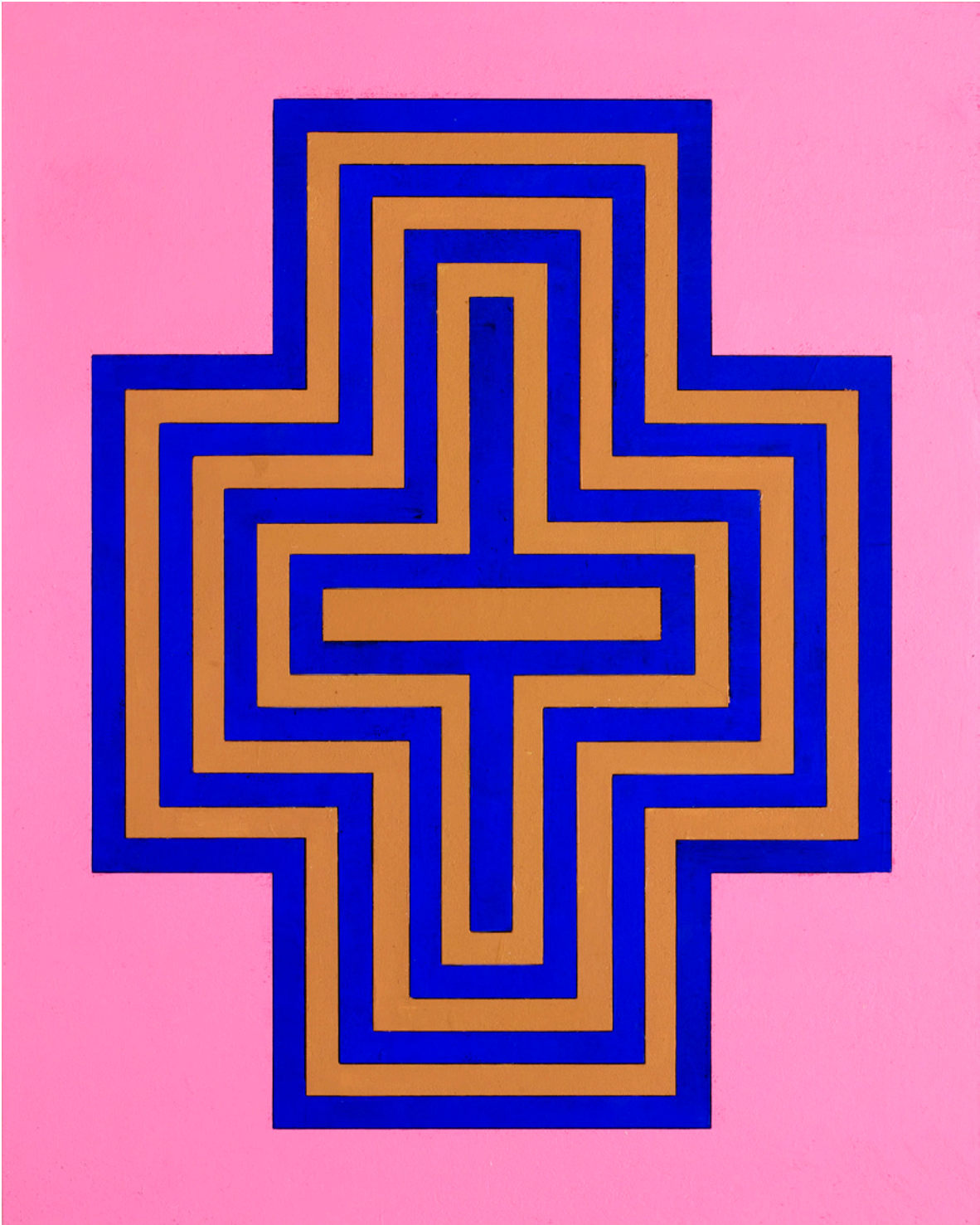
*Code 25, 2020*  
Gouache and acrylic on gessoed board  
29 x 23 cm

LUBNA CHOWDHARY

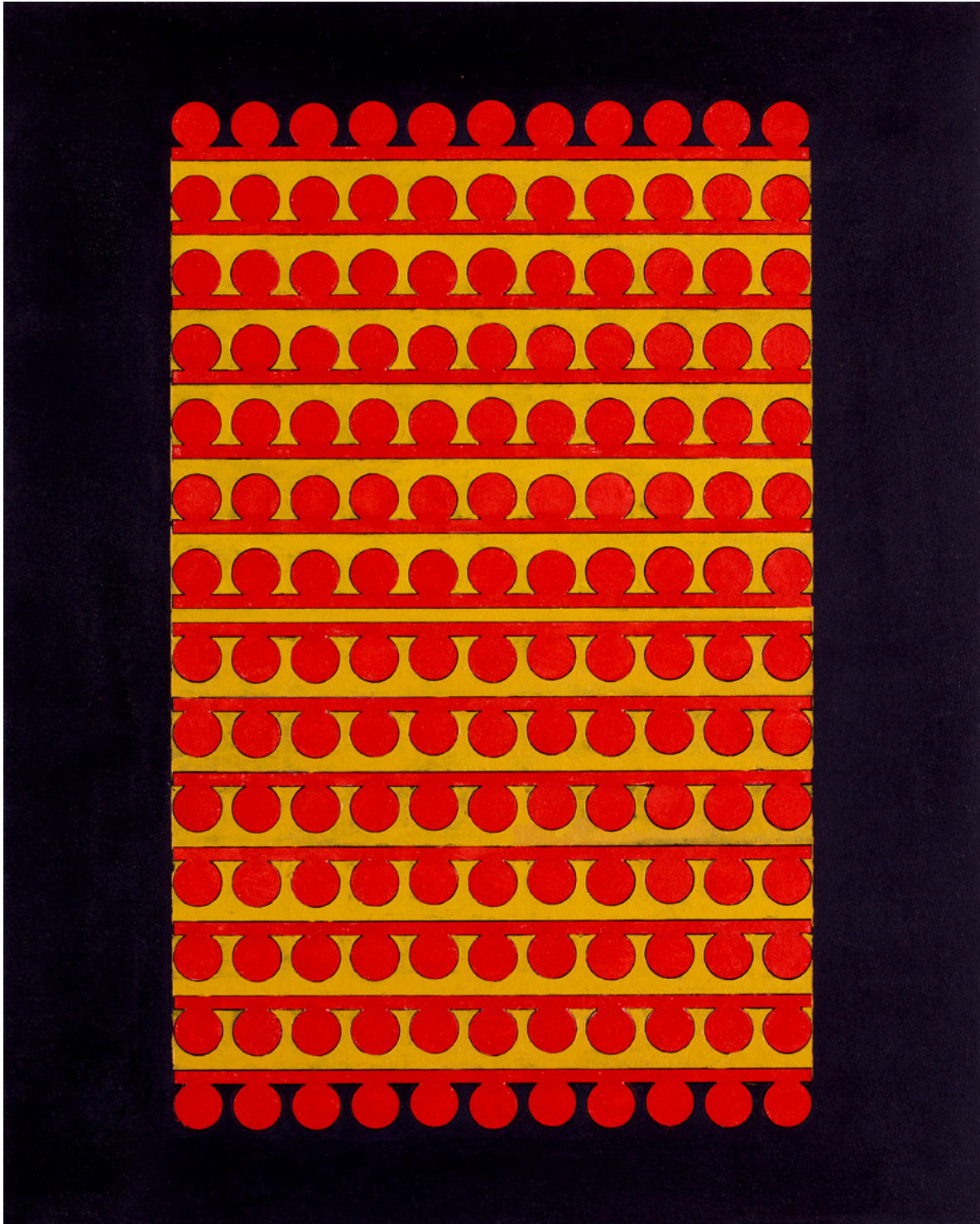


*Code 26, 2020*  
Gouache and acrylic on gessoed board  
29 x 23 cm

LUBNA CHOWDHARY



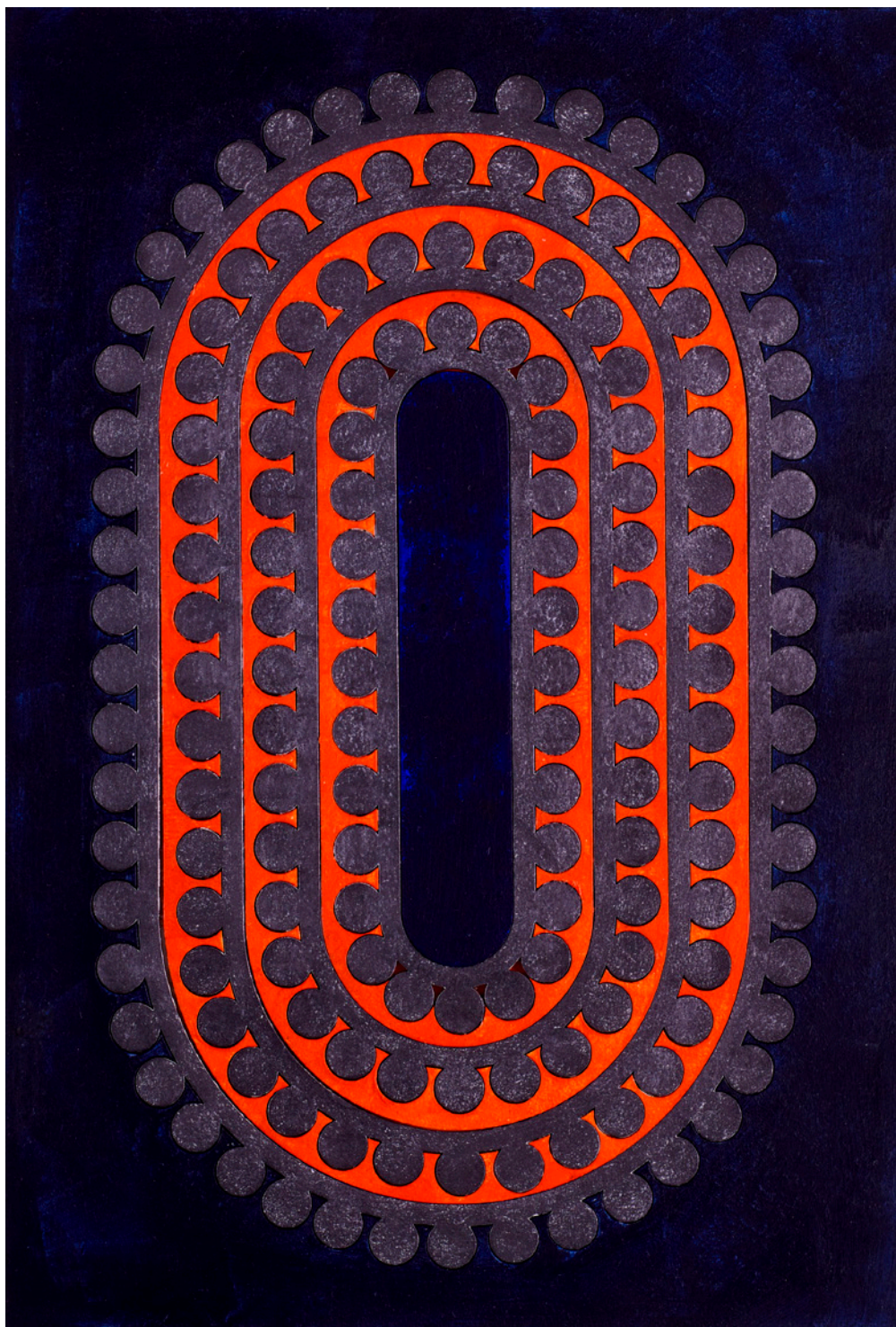
*Code 27, 2020*  
Gouache and acrylic on gessoed board  
29 x 23 cm



*Code 28, 2020*  
Gouache and acrylic on gessoed board  
29 x 23 cm

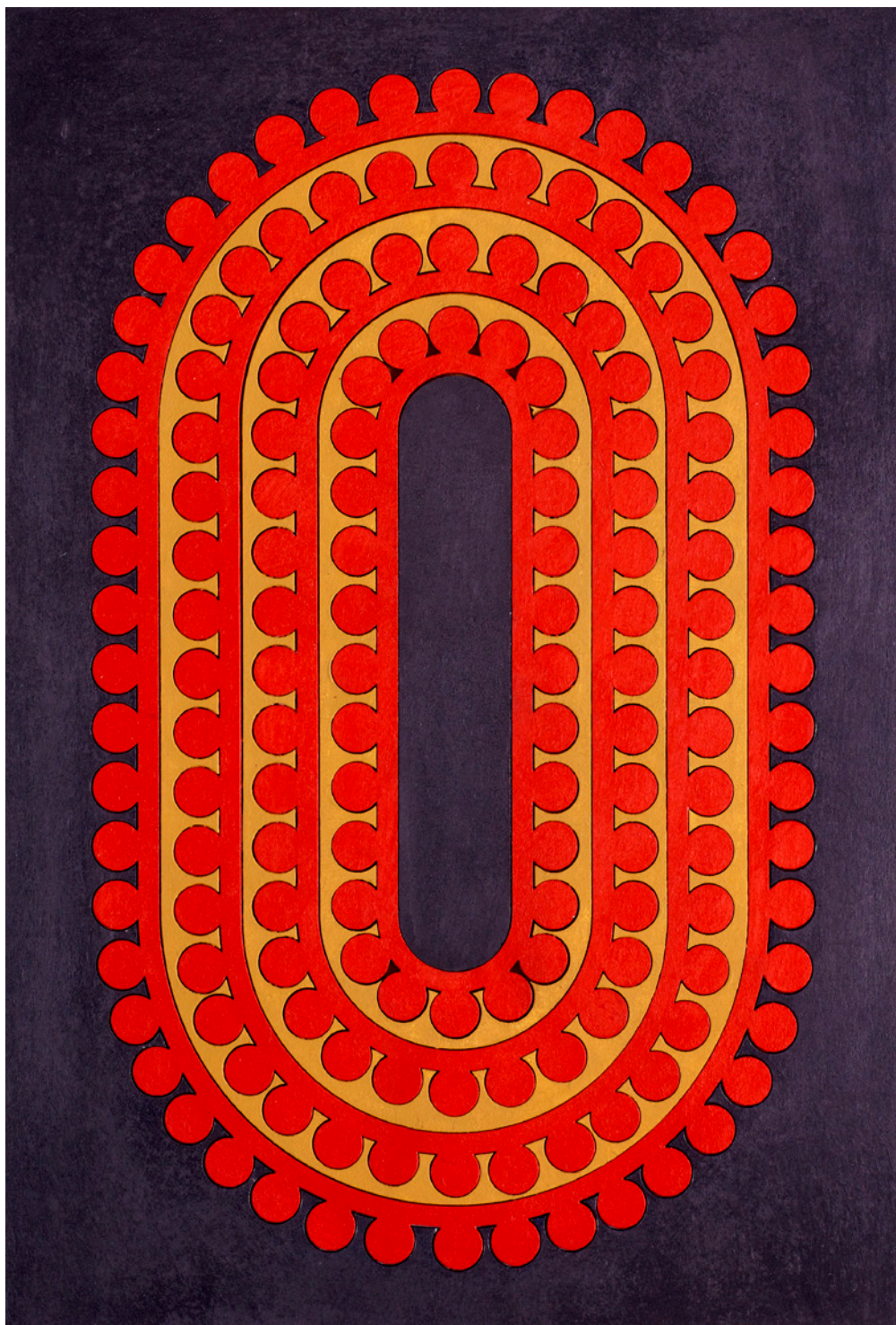


LUBNA CHOWDHARY



*Code 29, 2019*  
Gouache, acrylic and graphite on gessoed board  
29 x 20 cm

LUBNA CHOWDHARY



*Code 30, 2019*  
Gouache, acrylic and graphite on gessoed board  
29 x 20 cm

## LUBNA CHOWDHARY BIOGRAPHY

Lubna Chowdhary (b.1964, Dodoma. Lives and works in London) subverts the traditional context and utility of her chosen medium – clay – to address a longstanding preoccupation with urbanisation and material culture. Shaped tiles, sculptural objects, and spatial installations in ceramic constitute a distinctive oeuvre that bridges the disciplines of architecture, craft, design, sculpture, and painting. Her work harmonises a range of diverse references including, Islamic architecture, Hindu temples, modernist design. In transcending these many categories, the work thrives on interconnection and establishing relationships between diverse aesthetic traditions.

Lubna Chowdhary received her BA from Manchester Metropolitan University in 1988, and MA from the Royal College of Art, London, in 1991 and received The Sir Eduardo Paolozzi Travel Award (1990).

Her work has been shown in numerous solo and group exhibitions, most recently at Art Gallery New South Wales, Sydney (2020); Jameel Arts Centre, Dubai (2020); ICA Milano, Milan (2019); Kochi Biennale, Kochi (2018-2019); Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester (2018).

Public collections that hold Chowdhary's work include Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney; Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham; Jameel Arts Centre, Dubai; Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, New Delhi; Leicester City Museum, Leicester; M+ Museum, Hong Kong; Mead Gallery, Warwick; Nottingham Castle Museum, Nottingham; Oldham Art Gallery, Oldham and Poole Museum, Dorset.

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