

Labyrinth I

by Luke Wilde

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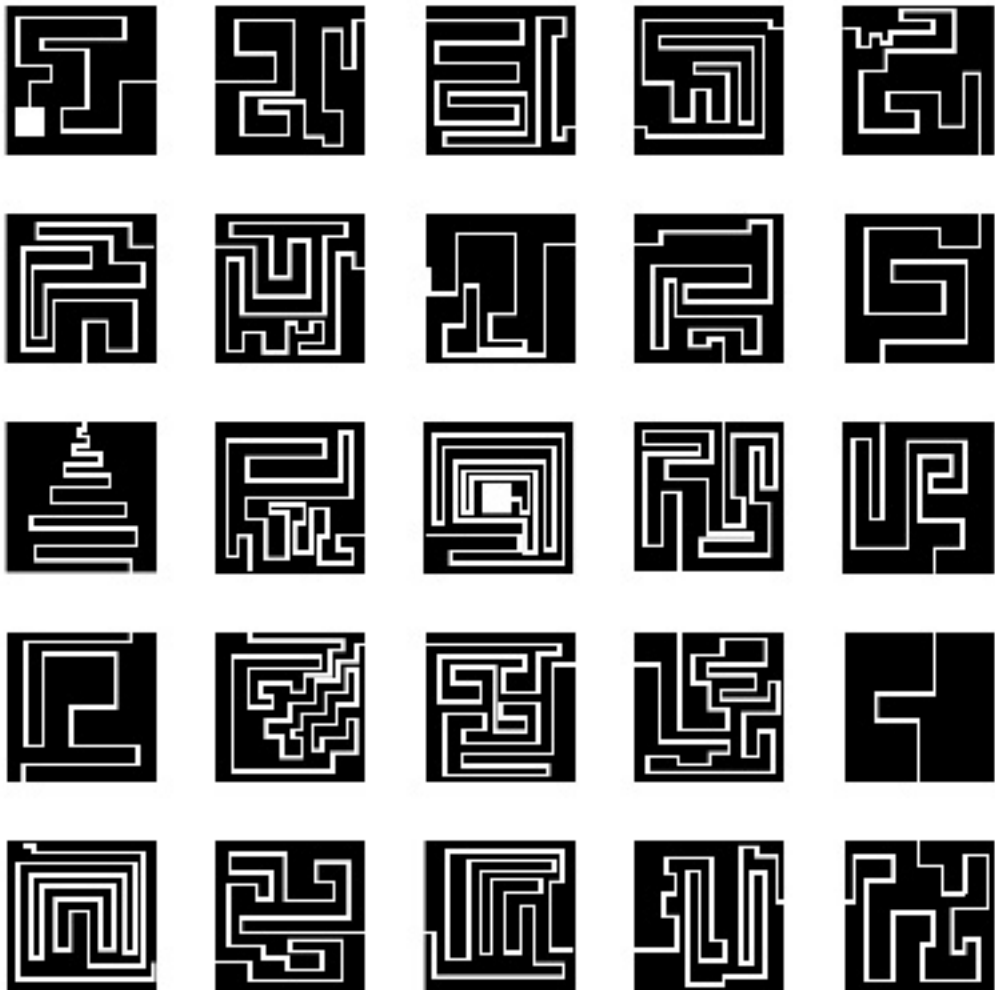


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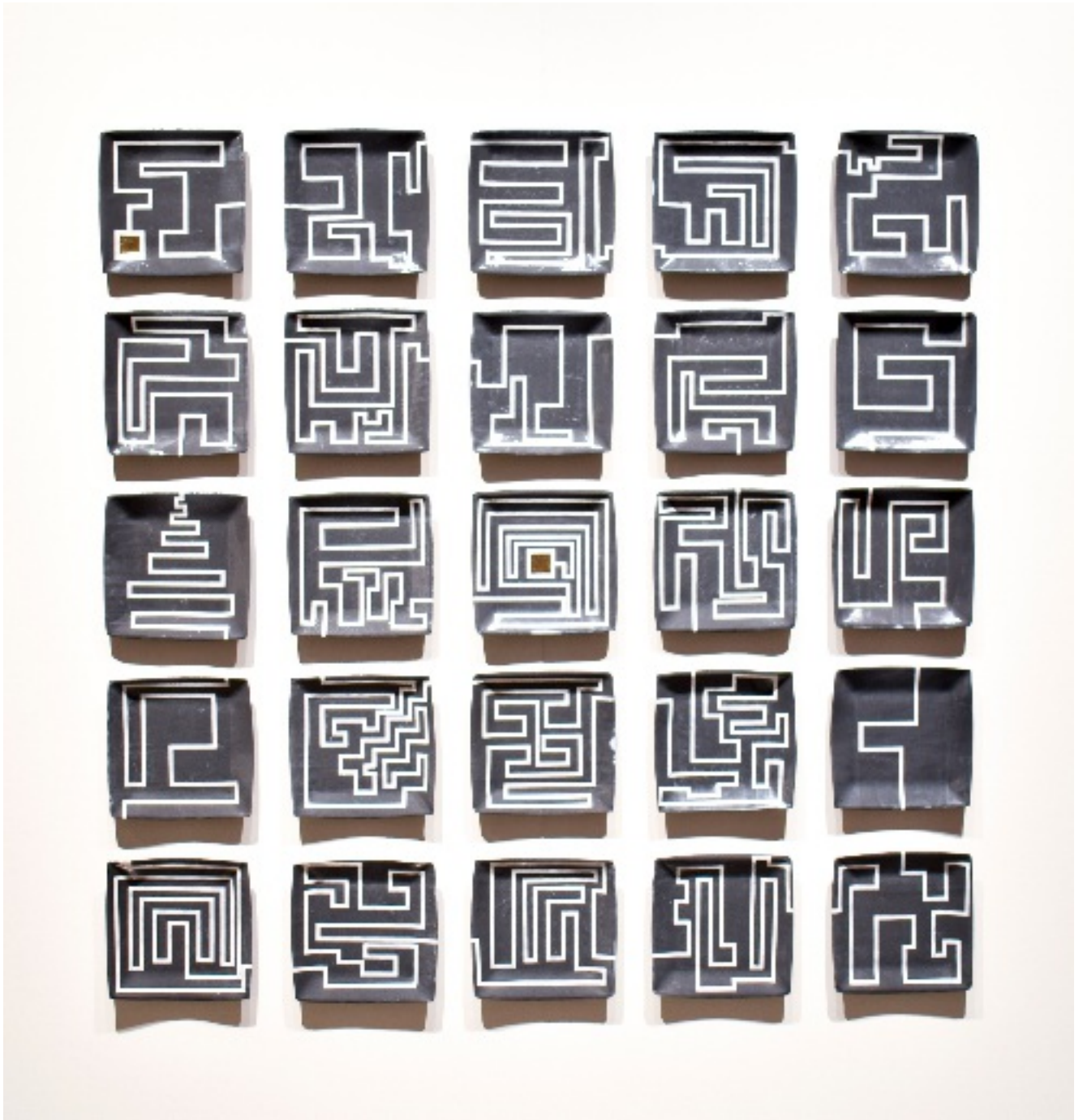
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Artist Statment

The labyrinth is utilized as a constraint to define the space between two points. Its complexity is determined by the length of the lines and number of changes in direction. Each plate in this series has a predetermined placement that is essential to the whole. A path that moves through these objects unifies the set while giving each piece a unique identity, similar to tracks in a circuit board or chapters of a story. As purpose is created through specialization, our value is defined by our individuality.

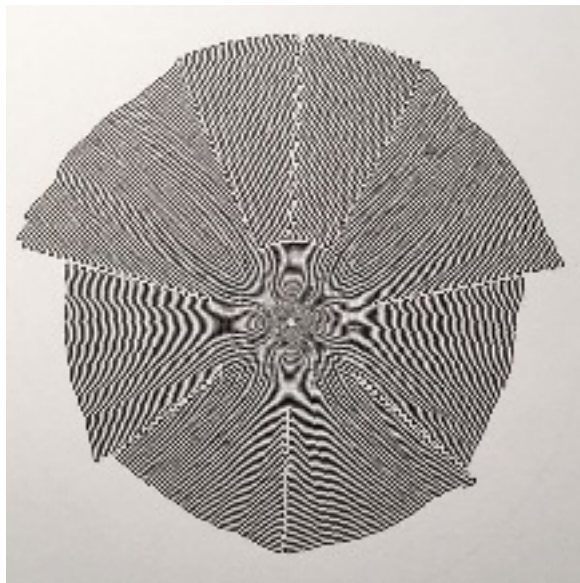




Abstract

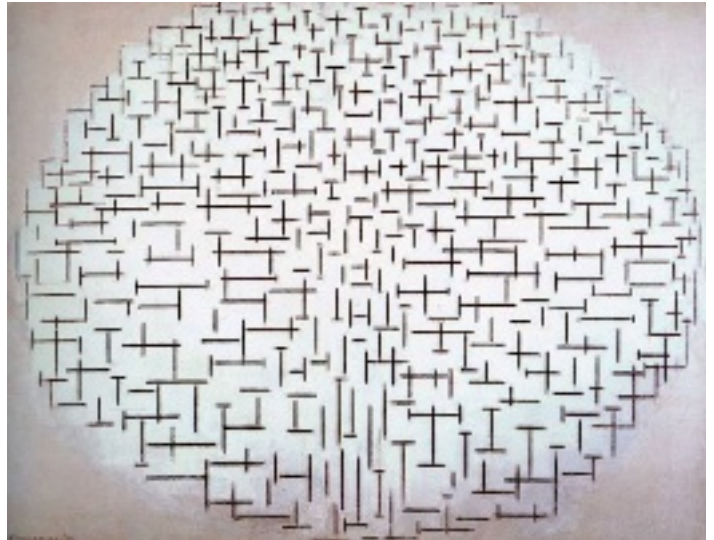
My thesis is an investigation into systems, like circuit boards and puzzles, focusing on the individual pieces that constitute them. Within these systems is information that is not readily understood, but through the process of deciphering one can figure out the meaning of each component. When examining a labyrinth, looking at a series of connected lines broken down into pieces versus as a whole can help one understand its complicated nature. The connection that unifies them is also the thing that gives each one an individual purpose. I am creating a pathway that crosses between objects, but the course it takes is completely unique to each connector.

My influence ranges from artists like Mondrian and Clint Fulkerson to ancient designs like the labyrinth and meander. When looking for inspiration I find it mostly in non-representational work. Mondrian's severe abstraction of the real world in *Pier and Ocean* is one of my favorite pieces because it abstracts the reference into something so simple it is hard to connect it back to the source material. There is an investigation that engages one visually to search for meaning while also challenging the viewer to connect the dots outside of the individual piece and examine Mondrian as an artist to fully understand what he was depicting.



Clint Fulkerson, Untitled, 2015

Influence



Mondrian, Pier and Ocean, 1914

In Fulkerson's work it is interesting to me the way he creates abstract designs not by moving from representation to non-representation but through a process of drawing lines where the next line is dependent on the previous. Through repetition of drawing lines he is able to create abstract pieces of art that are a visual progression from starting point to end.

The concept behind an image or symbol is sometimes more influential to me than the thing itself. The labyrinth, for example, is a symbol that has spread across different cultures and different time periods while maintaining a consistent idea behind it. The symbol itself has many different visual interpretations but the concept has always been about a circuitous path that moves towards the center. The idea is about a meditative process through perseverance that can lead to understanding either about oneself or some challenge.



Knossos Coin, 200-64 BC

To me there is a connection between this and digital technologies today. Many things we encounter in our modern lives, like circuit boards and QR codes, are not understood from a cursory glance but require a process of investigation to fully understand. Sometimes a tool is required to facilitate this understanding, as QR codes need to be scanned and deciphered, while other times a person who already has an understanding of how the object works is required, like with circuit boards. Both take a certain level of engagement to figure out.

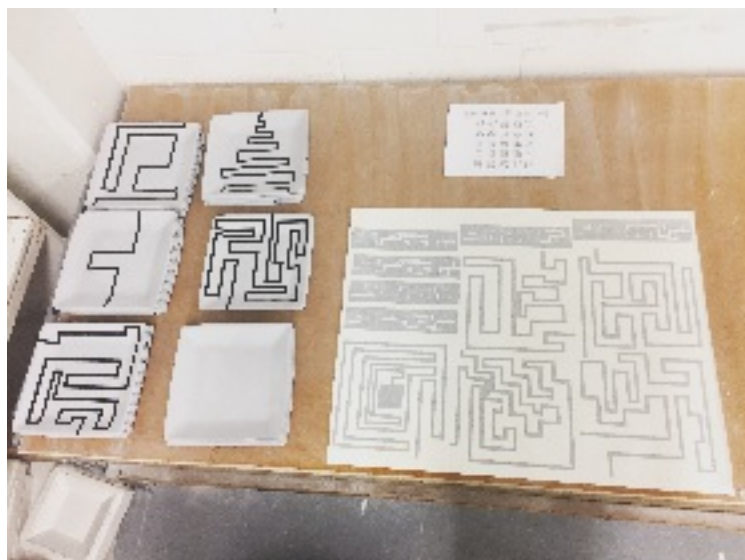
Process

The process begins with the making of each plate. A total of 50 large plates and 20 small plates is needed, half of them being made in colored porcelain. In order to keep the plates uniform a drop mold was created out of plaster, as well as a hump mold that is the negative of the drop mold. Two size molds needed to be made, one for the large plates and one for the small. After the molds were made and sanded, the clay work could begin. To create each plate a large slab is rolled out to about 1 quarter of an inch in thickness. The slab is then divided into as many pieces as possible by cutting out squares that are slightly larger than the size of the mold. This is done so as to ensure the whole drop mold is filled after the clay has slumped. The cut slabs are then place over the mold and centered by eye. Once the clay is in position, a block of foam that is roughly the size of the mold is placed over the clay and pressed down evenly down into the mold. This is to distribute pressure evenly across the whole plate. The foam is then removed and a slightly damp sponge is used to ensure the corners are pushed all the way down. The excess clay is cut around the edges with a fettling knife and removed. A sponge is used to smooth and round the edges. The clay is left to dry until it is hard enough to be flipped onto the negative mold, where it is left to dry until leather hard. After this, the plate is cleaned up of minor imperfections and removed from the mold, set aside to dry until ready to be fired. This is done for all 70 plates.



Leather hard plate on hump mold next to drop mold

Once the plates are bisqued a vinyl resist can be applied to the surface of each plate. The vinyl is cut with a vinyl cutter from a vector stencil created in Illustrator. Each plate is laid out according to the Illustrator stencil and each piece of cut vinyl is oriented across all the plates to ensure that the design is correct. Once everything is in the right place, the vinyl sticker is removed and placed on each plate. After the first vinyl sticker is placed, each successive plate uses the last as a reference to make sure the design lines up properly. When all the plates have a vinyl sticker, a firm plastic rib is used to ensure the vinyl is thoroughly applied and all imperfections are smoothed.



Vinyl stencils being applied to bisqued plates

A wax resist can now be applied to the surface of the plates, and after drying the vinyl sticker can be removed. What's left is the negative image of the vinyl covered in wax, allowing for underglaze to be painted into the positive without worry of painting outside of the lines. Once the underglaze is fully dry, the plates are put into a second bisque in order to remove the wax resist as well as making the underglaze permanent. The plates can now be glazed with a clear glaze and then loaded into a kiln for one last firing.

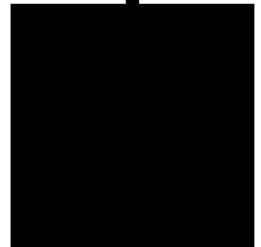


wax resist being painted over vinyl stencil

Technical Information

Clay Recipe

Grolleg	25%
Tile-6	25%
Kona F-4	25%
Pyrex	13%
Flint	12%
Whiting	2%
Veegum	2%



To make Charcoal Gray add:

Black 6657	4%
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Glaze Recipe

Grolleg	20%
Flint	20%
Wollastonite	20%
Frit 3134	20%
Potash Feldspar	20%

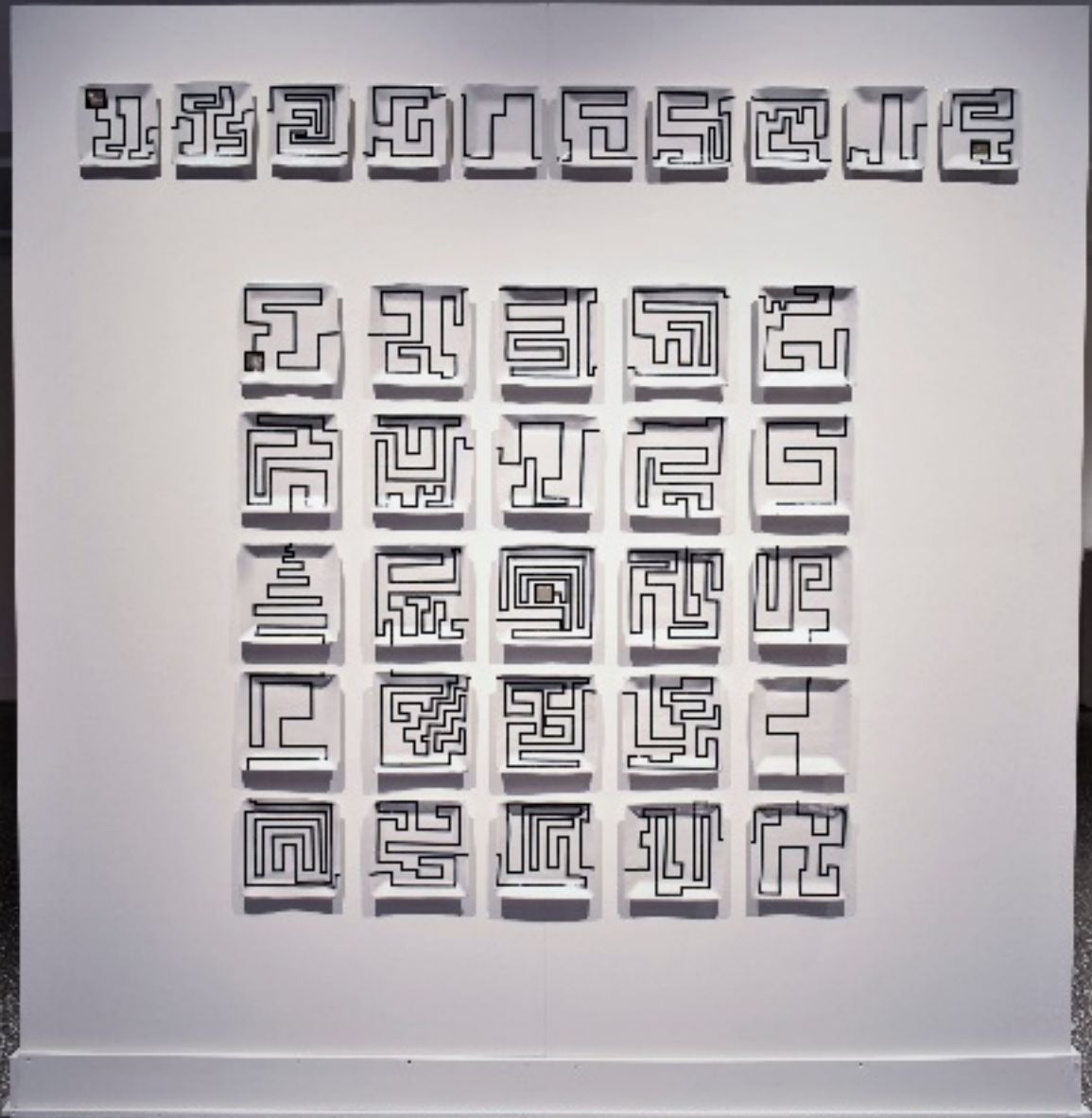
Additional Materials Used:

Amaco Black Underglaze

Amaco White Underglaze

Gold Leaf

Photo Documentation



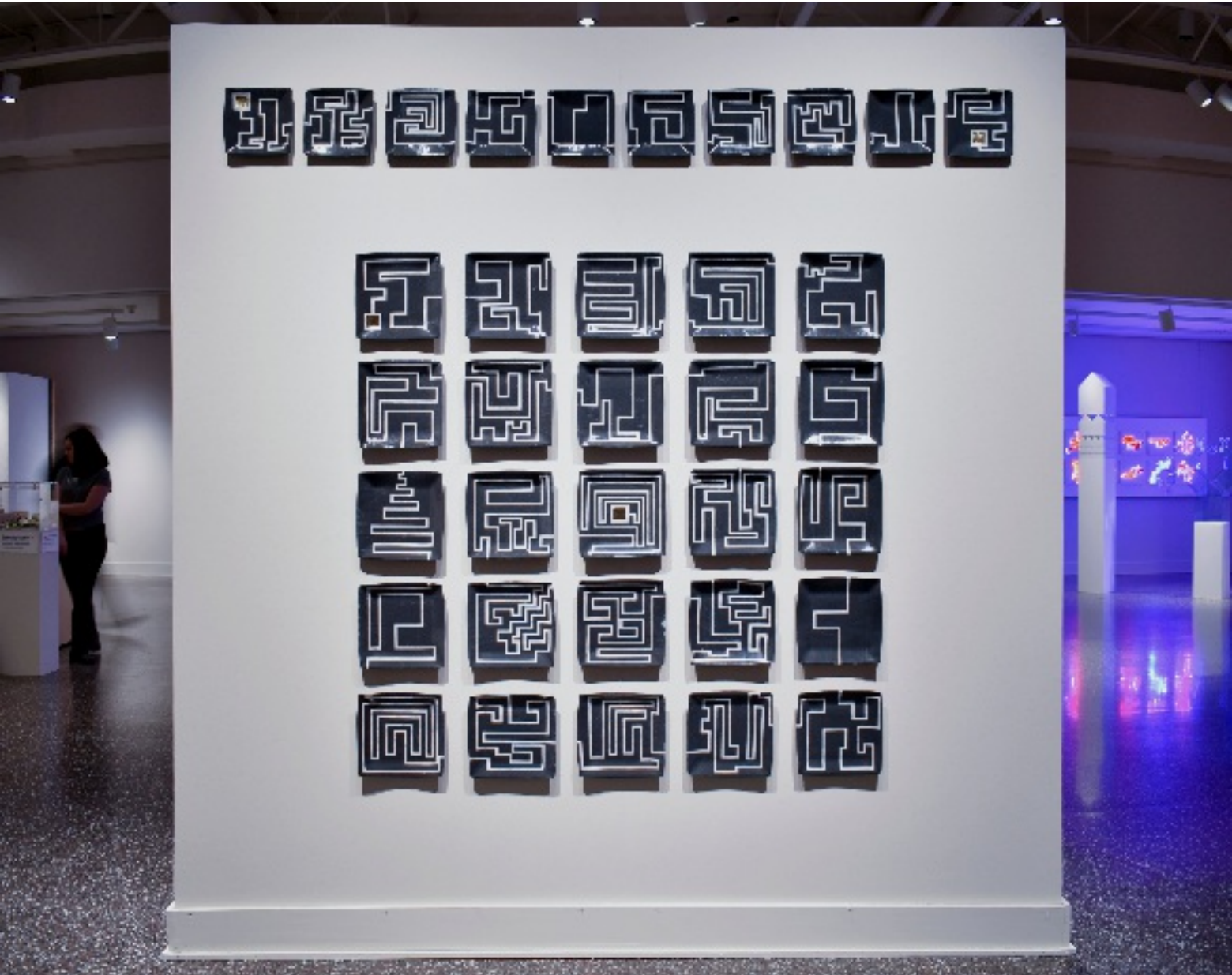
Labyrinth I and Meander I in White

8' x 8'

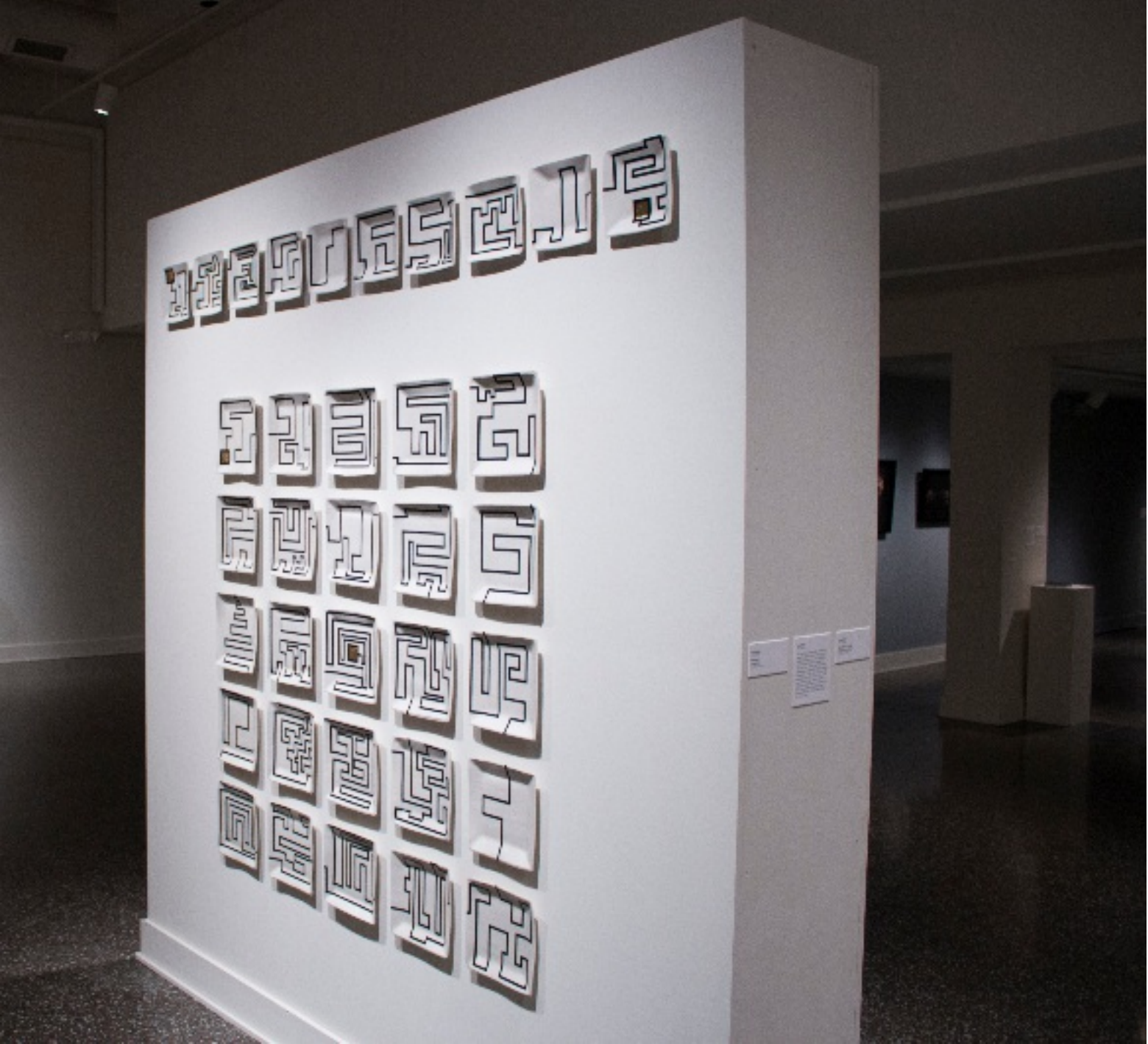
Large Plates: 10"x10"

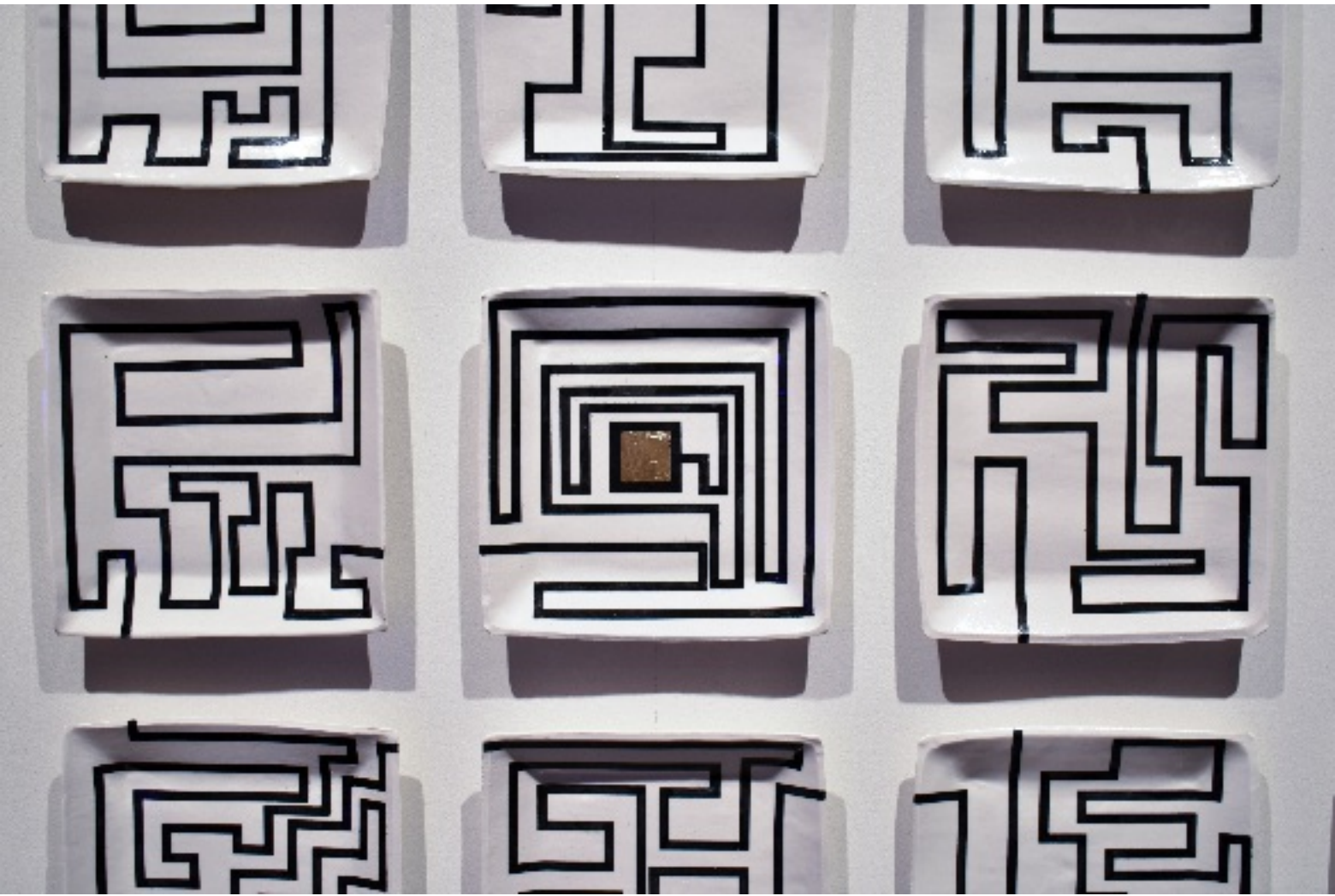
Small plates: 8"x8"

2017



Labyrinth I and Meander I in Black







2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022 2023 2024 2025 2026 2027 2028 2029 2030

2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022 2023 2024 2025 2026 2027 2028 2029 2030

2017 2018 2019
2020 2021 2022 2023 2024 2025 2026 2027 2028 2029 2030

Reflections

Upon completing this endeavor I have come to realize a few things, the first of which is that your first plan is rarely the right plan. This body of work came through a lot of trial and error, the final result of which is nothing I could have anticipated at the start. I have gained a new appreciation for failure as I would not have come to this point without trying, failing, and then trying again.

The second important lesson I learned through this journey is a direct byproduct of the first, which is that one can never truly understand something except through experience. I thought I knew the direction of my work when I began my senior thesis but the truth is I held only a small piece of a larger picture at the time. It was only through my experience that I could find a process I enjoyed and a product I was satisfied with. The learning process is a humbling one, but one that has given me a new found appreciation for everything I have learned both in and out of school.

Now that my undergraduate exploration has come to a conclusion I can now confidently move forward onto my next artistic project. There are some things that I will continue doing in my work, like creating digital content for output, investigating visual pathways, and a restrained color pallet. There are also things that I know I want to change however. In my past work I have manually created all of the digital content, but moving forward I would like to learn how to program to have procedurally generated content instead. This will enable me to create truly random patterns instead of pseudo random patterns created by hand. Another change that I will pursue in my work is to not limit myself to what I know. I chose the format of plates in my thesis out of stubbornness and a need to create "functional" ceramics. I think in the end this type of thinking limited the possibilities of my work in a negative way. So moving forward I would like to explore more art object where the functionality isn't rigidly defined.

Acknowledgments

My professors Bryan Czibesz and Anat Shiftan helped me see my true potential even when I did not have faith in myself. They were great mentors throughout my whole undergraduate career and helped me follow through until the end. I appreciate their honesty and wisdom as my thesis would not have been possible without it.

Michael Humphrey and Marty Fielding, for their insights on functional ceramics and technical knowledge.

Susanne Stokes, for cultivating my understanding of art theory and pushing me to further expand my interest in art.

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I would also like to thank my Mom for always being supportive and allowing me to be the person I am today.

I would like to thank my fellow students for understanding the struggles that we all go through and helping me when I needed it most.

And lastly I would like to thank my friends, for showing me what it means to be compassionate and to have people worth living for.

