



NOME

BITS AND PIECES
NILS VÖLKER

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DOLZIGER STR. 31
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NOMEPROJECT.COM

ORCHESTRATED *BITS* AND CHOREOGRAPHIC *PIECES*

"I'm making art for many reasons," said Nils Völker in an interview, "but mainly, perhaps, because I like all the different aspects of the process. I like to build, to experiment, I like to try new materials and basically the whole process, from an initial idea to finally setting up an installation. Other artists perhaps have a certain idea in mind when they try to find the best way to express this idea. I like it when I do not exactly know where things will end when I start working." Making art as a way of integrating the unknown is a culture creating gesture that surpasses the self-consciousness of art and enables a symbolic reorganization of the world. At NOME, Völker's *Bits and Pieces* transforms the gallery into an experimental space where the orchestrated movement of ordinary objects creates a poetic performance of choreographic activity. Floating and colorful, Völker's mechanized spheres are an expression of the artist's fascination for often discarded and disregarded everyday objects. Their complex simplicity and material fragility allow for a reintegration of the ordinary into an imaginative, dynamic, and self-contained context.

Bits and Pieces is an installation charged with poetic and emotional depth. It creates new relations within the physical environment in which it is situated and opposes mediated appropriations. "Most of my work is of a rather technical nature," the artist previously explained, "creating electric circuits, programming, drawing circuit boards and soldering. But in the end, all of the engineering lies hidden under a surface that appears organic and can only be imagined." 108 spheres, powered by micro-controlled servomotors, fold and unfold in organic rhythms, their modulation a possible metaphor for the ways in which art can negotiate the everyday and the objects of its practice. There is dynamic movement in the programmed series of lyrical motions that the artist choreographs with the help of these isokinetic structures. It extends the floating composition into a synthetic performance where the ordinary object operates

harmoniously and cohesively. The mechanical rhythm in the prepared systems generates tension between the simple and the complex, the structural and the accidental, with variation as an expression of pure experimentation. Visitors are not pointed toward a given interpretation; their reactions will not have been necessarily intended by the artist — for this is an experimental situation where relations do not exist as such, they can only be orchestrated, practiced and exercised. The mechanism moves according to altered rules and the parameters are embedded in a motional relation that is at once gestural and expressive. There is no inter-subjective relation that would condition meaning, only continuous performativity, intelligence and reaction.

Völker's work is choreographic in that coding itself is but the performance of scripted sets of rules. It becomes an imaginative space where improvisation and material relations reveal differences in how objects can be perceived, in a process that is pragmatic rather than conceptual. What matters is not the arrangement or aggregation of objects in a given context, but their dynamic interplay as part of the installation and how they affect the interpretation of viewers who discover new details and perspectives every time. By taking the ordinary object and transforming it through the use of software and hardware, Nils Völker creates an orchestrated artefact and a choreographic situation that addresses new relations between movement and information. As Katja Kwastek argues in her writings on the aesthetics of interaction in digital art, certain aesthetic experiences enabled by digital artworks can open up new perspectives for our understanding of how art and media outline a space of choreographic thought: real space and data space, temporal structures, the instrumental and the phenomenal, or the relationship between materiality and interpretability are the very premises upon which it is possible to discuss the aesthetics of interaction.

Bits and Pieces can be seen as a space of poetic resonance and responsive encounters. The focus here does not lie on a finite object as such, nor on the technology it is built with, but on the motional processes and social interstices that can be generated within this lyrical environment. Sculptural in its presence, the installation provokes thought and challenges given perceptions about the ways in which the viewer can inhabit the space of the work. It allows for unexpected links and operations to be created, connecting imagined narratives and likely relations that form between its elements to develop new modes of interaction. In the interlacing of the real and the imagined, the kinetic translates trajectories that may bring into question what representation actually means. Is it possible to speak of representation when we imagine and speak of traces and trajectories? The conception of an object investigated through experimental means, as developed and articulated within a space of material representation, shows that it is impossible to maintain the traditional meaning of representation since it might elude the specificity of the procedures at work. The technical devices in Völker's installation are not conceptual embodiments but experimental objects and material articulations of a series of dynamic trajectories whose choreography fulfils an epistemic function. They are part of a process during which unprecedented situations are actualized and the procedural outlines a processual interpretation. In articulating choreographic trajectories, Völker's experimental approach allows the viewer to enter the space of imagined interplays of realization, materialization and interpretation. One cannot grasp the work as an object, but is observant of the poetic motion as manifested through repetitive and iterative acts, with their own balance and rhythm. *Bits and Pieces* brings new readings of itself into being, readings that have no given meaning, no canonical or definitive interpretation, but are actively engaged in a choreographed process of creative interpretation.

The installation could be seen as (new) media *arte povera*, an expression of how the discarded and the disregarded are language too. In a culture teeming with recovered materials,

reuse and contamination, fragments and noise, the intention to generate trajectories and dynamic choreographies through the use of the disregarded is a psychological and political gesture. Materials apparently without quality, such as those Völker uses in his installations, show that the use of non-privileged materials is closer to everyday situations. The artist proposes works made of quotidian elements that stress everyday morphologies and the material agencies that can be generated therewith. This *arte povera* approach — where naturalness, unpredictability, artifice and the accidental create new means of communication and diffusion — transforms collective experiences and makes them immediately available to everyone. They allow the viewer to reconsider everyday life by making manifest the hidden, choreographic and inter-multimedia dimension of small gestures and small things. What Nils Völker does is to repurpose everyday objects as a possible way of understanding the poetry of temporary experiences, with unmediated sensations and experiment as a means to create culture under a regime of the unpredictable, unknown and unforeseen.

In the frangible balance between technology and interaction, Völker's kinetic installation aims to find a poetic balance. Within this imaginative space, it is possible to negotiate language differently, subvert conventional divisions between subject and object, and make manifest the lyrical agents that enable horizontal relations to take form. This can also be seen as a symbolic inversion, that is, an expressive act of inversion, contradiction and abrogation that presents the thinking viewer with alternatives to current cultural codes, values and norms, whether artistic, social or political. It is an active practice of cultural negation, disrupting categories and denying systems and orders. The subliminal world of gestures and unmotivated actions creates a choreographic terrain to explore, one in which viewers can also reflect upon the relationships they establish, perform and interact with.

Bits and Pieces is a fragmental gesture about the way we think, act, produce and experience movement with the aid of media and everyday objects. The material nature of the

installation creates a lyrical frame for experimentation to occur, inviting viewers to cultivate intimately choreographic and performative relations or interactions. The mechanized spheres are ludic in their appearance, inspiring people to approach them more directly and less restrainedly, while the structural complexity and engaging construction of the installation manifest something human and familiar, harmonic and serene, allowing one to ponder over disregarded forms of materiality and the types of relations they breed. Stripped of their usual industrially designed appearance and their immediate purposes, Völker's electronic devices open up for experiment and variation. We live amidst too many things whose functions we don't really understand very well: by stripping these artefacts of their usual roles, it becomes possible to better understand not what they do, but what they're capable of doing. They produce their own immanent language and acquire the potential to become a vehicle for communication, adverting us to what we're often overlooking; they question the meaning of explanation and thus contribute to reshaping it. From this perspective, Nils Völker's installation is an experimental exercise through which it is possible to question the hierarchy of things and reverse the idea that our world is organized by human knowledge. It is, on the contrary, the unknown and the unexpected, as manifest through movement and choreography, that allow us to find new relations with the world and repurpose the means that will allow us to create more experimental situations and subjective hypotheses. Surreal and colorful, *Bits and Pieces* is a poetic exploration into the imaginary capacity of objects, observant of how they extend — erratically and choreographically — as space, electricity and relation.

Text by Sabin Bors



A R T W O R K S

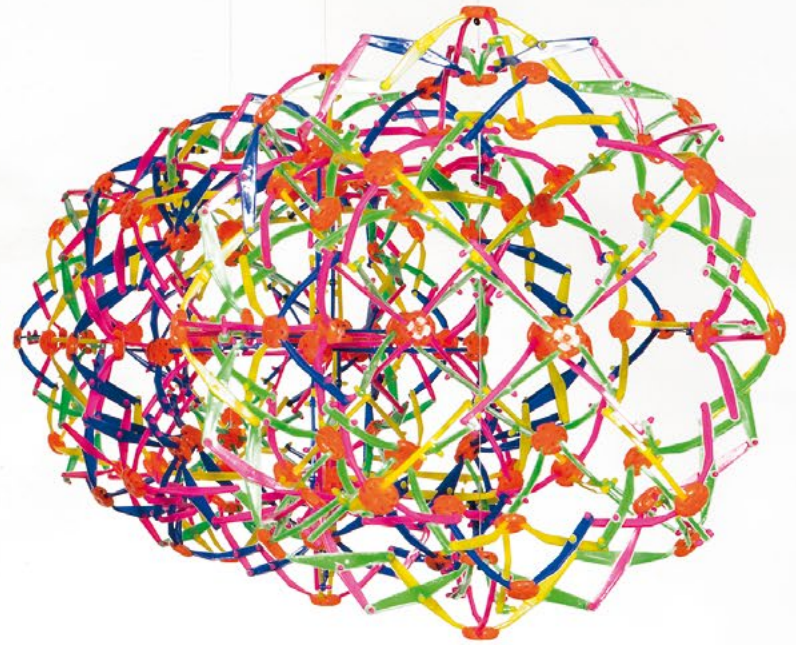
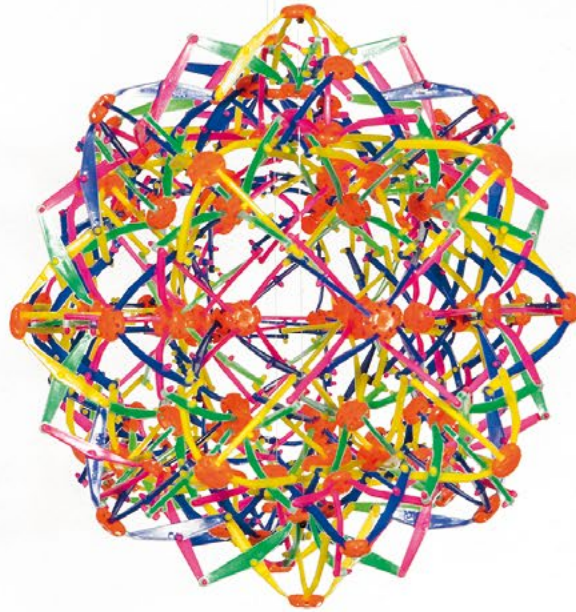
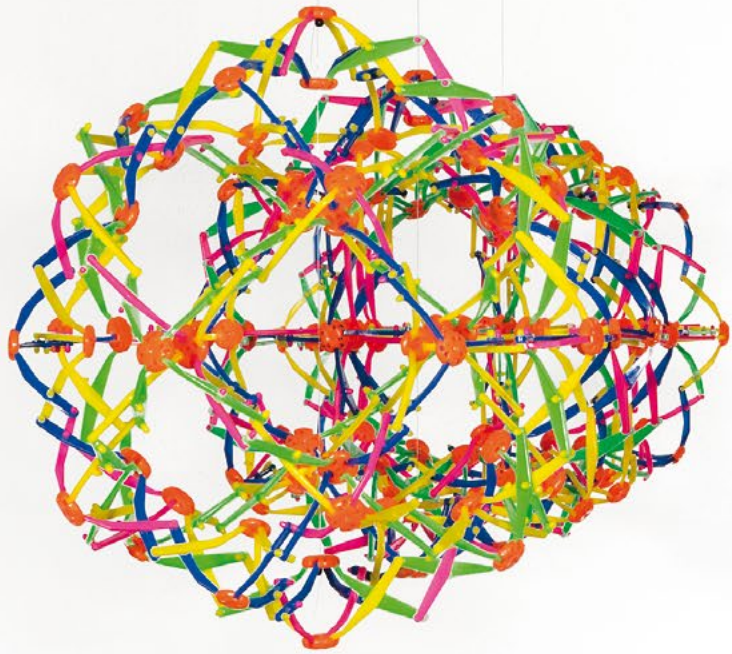
BITS AND PIECES, 2016

Nils Völker

Hoberman spheres, wood, motors, customized electronics and programming

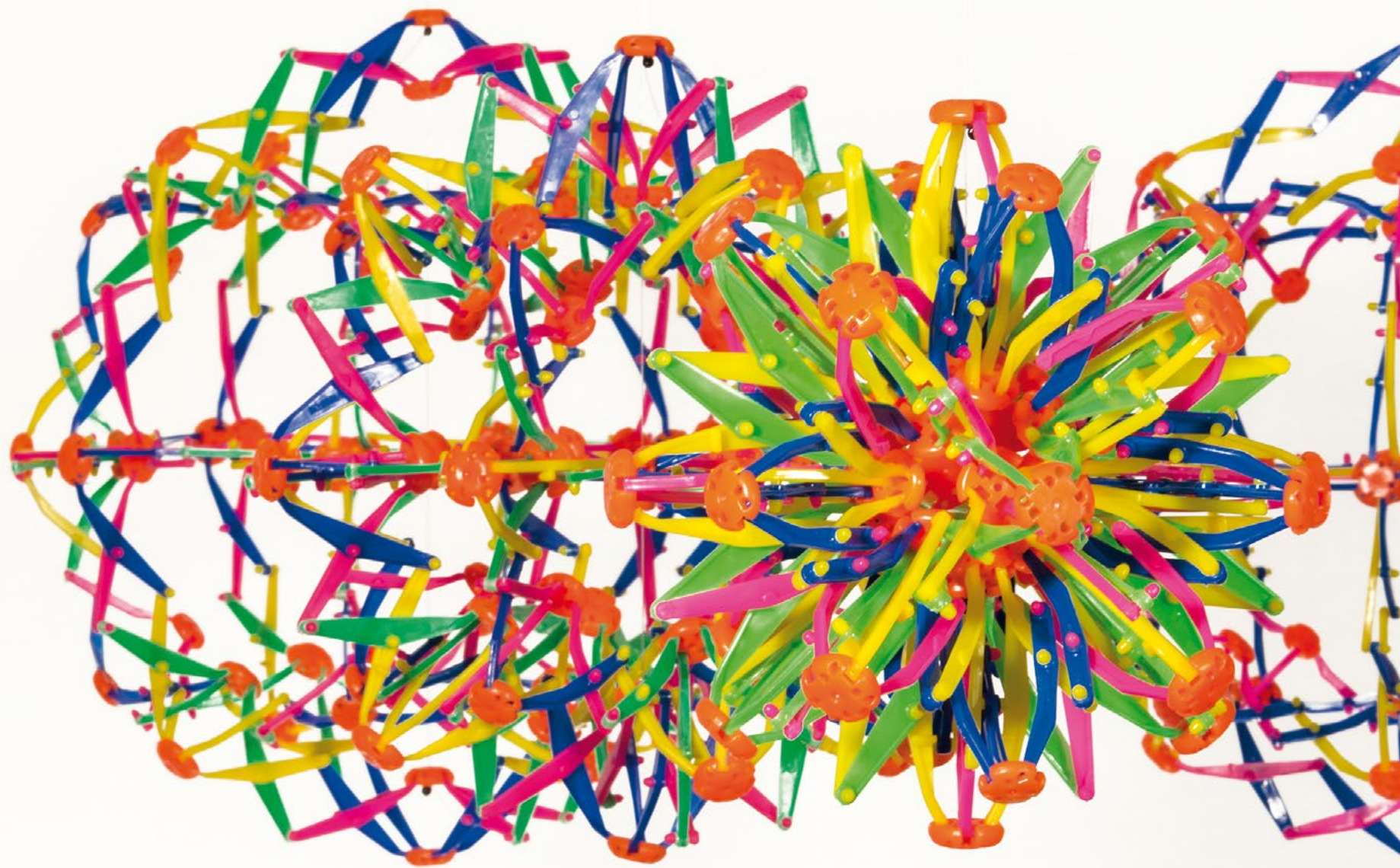
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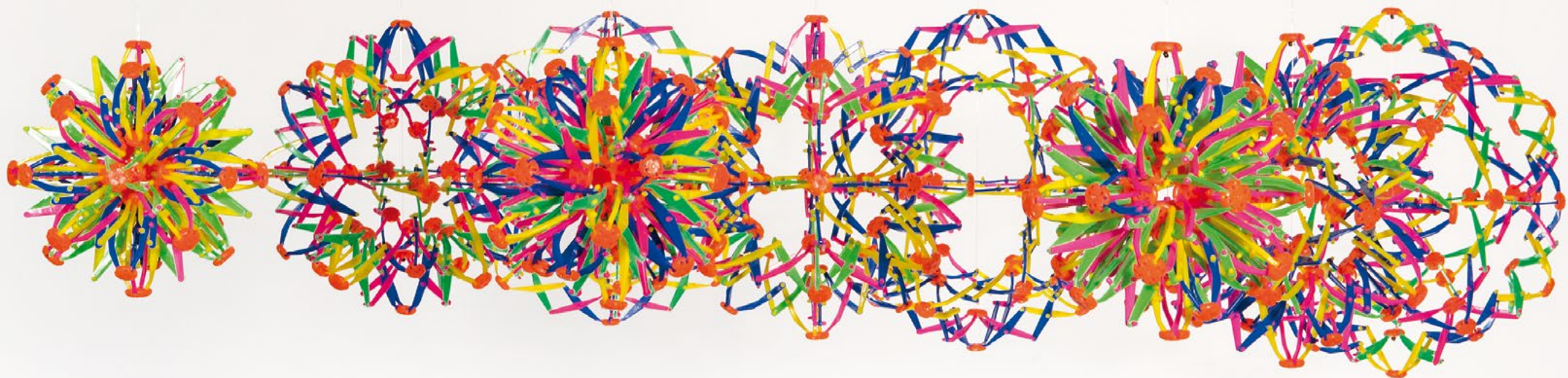


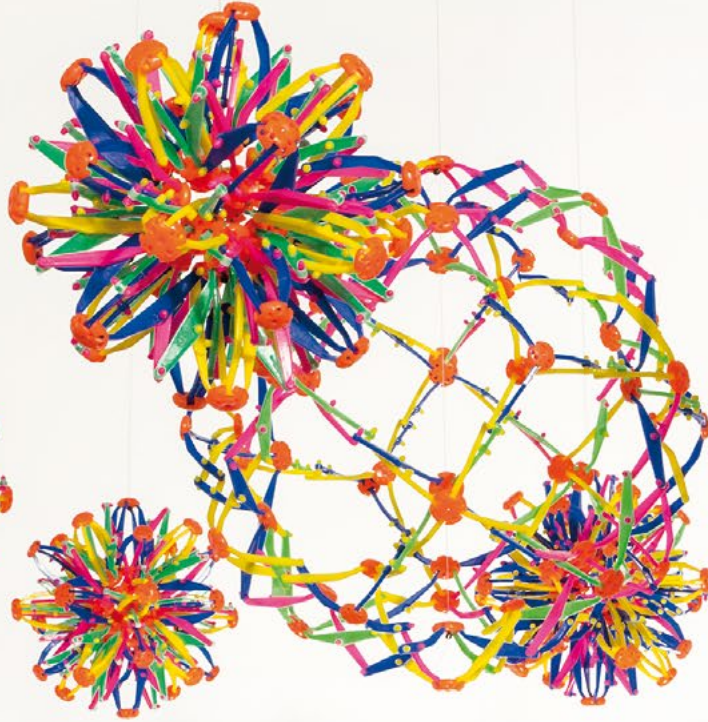


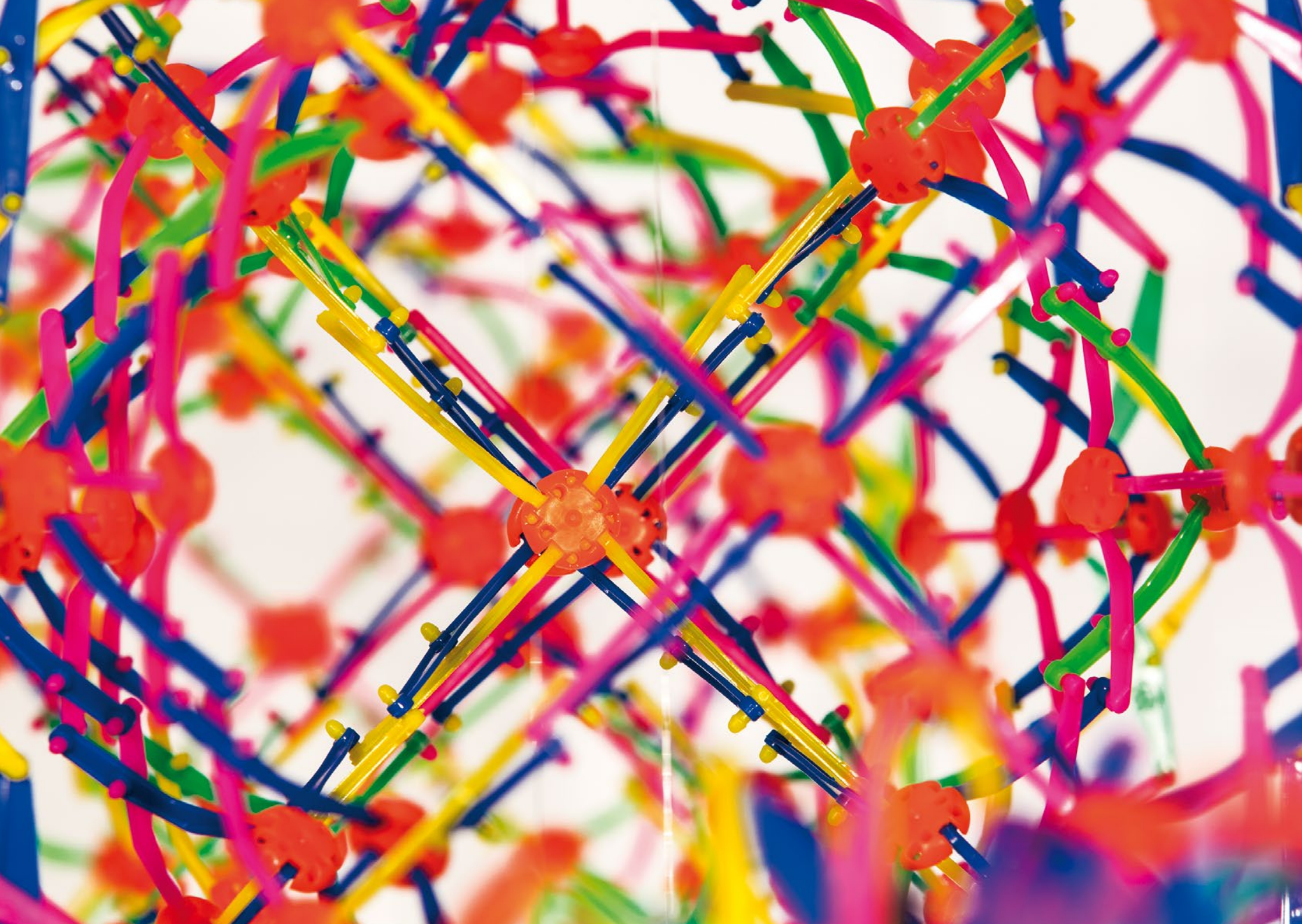












NILS VÖLKER

Nils Völker is a media artist based in Berlin whose creative path led from communication design to the use of physical computing. His artistic practice embraces electronics and programming, combined with a fascination for everyday objects and carefully selected fragile materials.

Völker realizes large-scale sculptures and site-specific kinetic installations to investigate mechanical rhythm — such as wavelike animation — in prepared systems and to create a conflict between natural and unnatural phenomena. Incorporating sound and simple components such as plastic bags, computer cooling fans, and lights, his minimalistic artworks carry poetic and emotional depth, constantly changing the setting of the exhibition space.

Since 2010 the artist has been working on a series of “choreographed breathing” installations — mostly consisting of a matrix of cushions of different sizes and materials which inflate and deflate in controlled rhythms — as a development of his highly acknowledged and widely exhibited piece *One Hundred and Eight*. The largest of these, made from 252 silver cushions for the exhibition *Captured* (2012) in collaboration with Sven Völker, was followed by further site specific commissions for the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Kuandu Museum of Fine Arts in Taipei, Gewerbemuseum Wintertur, MUDAC Lausanne, Kunstmuseum Celle, and the OÖ Kulturquartier, Linz.

Recent works include *Nineteen* (2015), the artist's largest installation to date, consisting of 19 enormous golden cushions of mylar foil hanging from the ceiling, in the temporary art pavilion MOBi in Groningen (The Netherlands); and *Fountains* (2012), his first public interactive artwork which has remained as part of the permanent collection of Xixi Wetland Park in Hangzhou, China.

A project by **Nils Völker**

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