

02.12.2021 - 12.02.2022

NORBERT FRANCIS ATTARD
THE ARCHETYPE SERIES

Fifteen-piece collection of diminutive structures

Curated by Ann Dingli

02 / 12 / 2021 - 12 / 02 / 2022



The Archetype Series is a fifteen-piece collection of diminutive structures, each built from the interlocking of two, compressed or expanded, parallel metal strips by artist Norbert Francis Attard. The series first emerged in the year 2000 as a series of objects and drawings, which led to a series of conceptual art papers. Its point of departure is the belief that a structure can be seen as a series of interlocking planes. The series is a fundamental element in the creation of Attard's architecture. Each of the fifteen structures is a unique composition of metal strips, which are interconnected in a variety of ways. With each unique structure, Attard explores the interplay of light and shadow, the relationship between form and function, and the transparency of nature. The series is a study of structure, of balance, of tension, and of the beauty of simple geometry.

The series is also a study of the interplay of light and shadow. The structures are designed to be seen in a variety of ways, and the artist has created a series of drawings and photographs that show the structures in different lighting conditions. The series is a study of the relationship between form and function, and the artist has created a series of drawings and photographs that show the structures in different lighting conditions. The series is a study of the relationship between form and function, and the artist has created a series of drawings and photographs that show the structures in different lighting conditions.



**NORBERT
FRANCIS
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THE
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The Archetype Series is a fifteen-piece collection of diminutive, architectural structures, each built from four-sided measuring rulers that are conventionally used in construction-based activity. The series' point of departure is the object itself, using the ruler as a foundational element in the creation of Attard's 'archetypes'. Each of the fifteen is presented as a vessel for wider social, cultural, political and mythological commentary. With each singular structure, Attard's forms unlock ideas around a broad range of subject-matter – from the poetics of geometry to the transcendence of nature, the inescapability of pop cultural iconography, and the bleeding relationship between low and high culture. The series' commonality lies in its offering of symbols, or 'archetypes', as custodians of deeper meaning.

The series finds lineage in the practice of Found Object Art or *objet trouvé*, with strong links to Symbolist, Minimalist and Conceptual Art canons. It begins with the structures – bold, black objects that are either hung or free-standing. On a formal level, they reflect the influence of Attard's architectural background. Each holds the same balance, proportionality, and physical soundness required for a building to stand up. When mounted, they take on the architectonic visuality of buildings in elevation. Collectively, they are a landscape of miniature, metal monuments. Unlike full-scale architecture, the archetype structures are divorced from any determined setting. In a similar way to how the Minimalist works of Donald Judd performed in the 1960s, Attard's archetypes call on the space around them to add to the impact of how they are read, received and interpreted.



Installation views of exhibition in the Project Space at Valletta Contemporary





"The Archetype Series includes independent structures that are not influenced or depend on a specific context," Attard explains, describing the choice of scale used throughout the series. "They are based purely on a concept and can be placed, moved around, and can be exhibited anywhere. Their size is small-scale because the ruler is intrinsically small. They come in three sizes, 30cm, 25cm and 15cm in length".

The untethered nature of the structures is important to the overall intention of the collection – which is to put forward form as a trigger for intellectual and emotional exploration. Form is the starting point, but the weight of the series lives beyond its physicality. The structures are energised by allegory, superstition, folklore, critique, and at times lamentation. Attard positions his archetypes as carriers of amplified ideas – the object is a mere framework, with power transferred from 'object' to 'idea' within the moment of reading.

"It's not enough for me to create abstract forms and shapes that have no meaning. Everything I do must have a concept – that is the starting point of every artwork," Attard says, describing the underlying stimulus behind each of the series' structures, which enlist the legacy of Plato's concept of 'pure form', wherein higher form embodies the fundamental characteristics of any given thing. "Symbols have power because they concretise the abstract and have multiple layers of meaning – they help us to understand the world around us, they go beyond the literal, they can be used in a poetic way and therefore produce more impact".

It is here, within a landscape of objects driven by metaphor, that Attard finds his stride in the series. Through symbolism, Attard finds space to interrogate both timely and timeless subject-matter. With the former, he alludes to conditions of today – political corruption, the pandemic, and the relationship between truth and user-authored media. With the latter, he questions enduring questions around faith, morality, truth and righteousness. These themes merge and intertwine across the series, and reach their most powerful and synergetic moment when audiences meet with the fifteen structures.

For Attard, *The Archetype Series* marks a period of prolific art production – created during months of near solitary confinement within his Gozo studio, during the Covid-19 pandemic, where he funnelled a life's worth of ideas into a collection of tangible emblems. Now accessible and on display, the structures invite scrutiny over some of the most pressing themes and notions existing in contemporary life. As audiences conjure their own meaning around each of the series' fifteen symbols, Attard incites a broad exercise of questioning: what are the symbols that represent and define each and every one of us? Which of the structures resonates with our own ideas and emotional landscape? And how will these symbols evolve as generations of humankind continue to ignite new intellectual conversations, visualise their thoughts, and identify new existential archetypes?

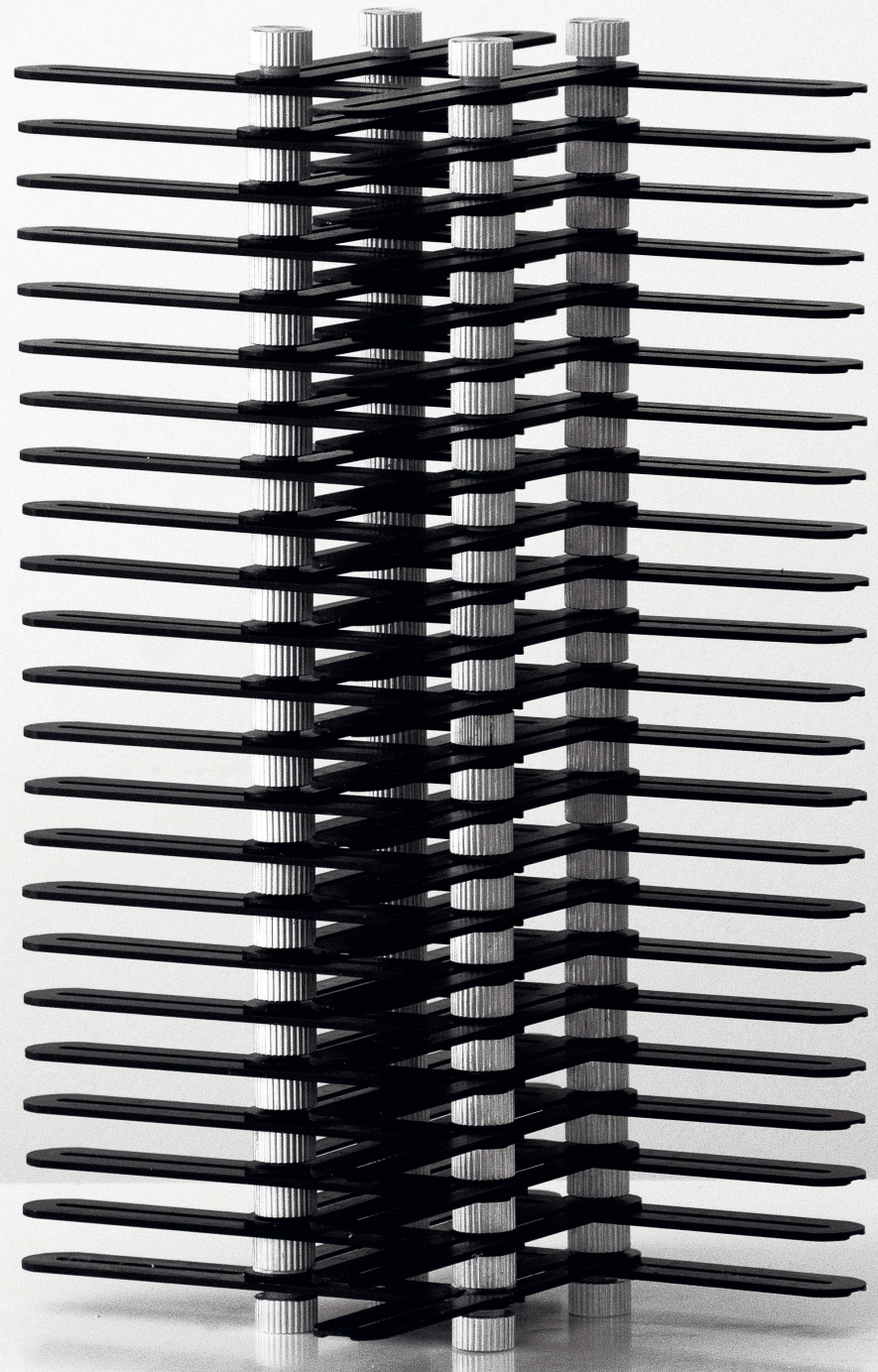
ANN DINGLI



NORBERT FRANCIS ATTARD *HASHTAG 24* Aluminium rulers, 28 nuts, stainless steel studs, 18 x 30 x 11cm, 2021



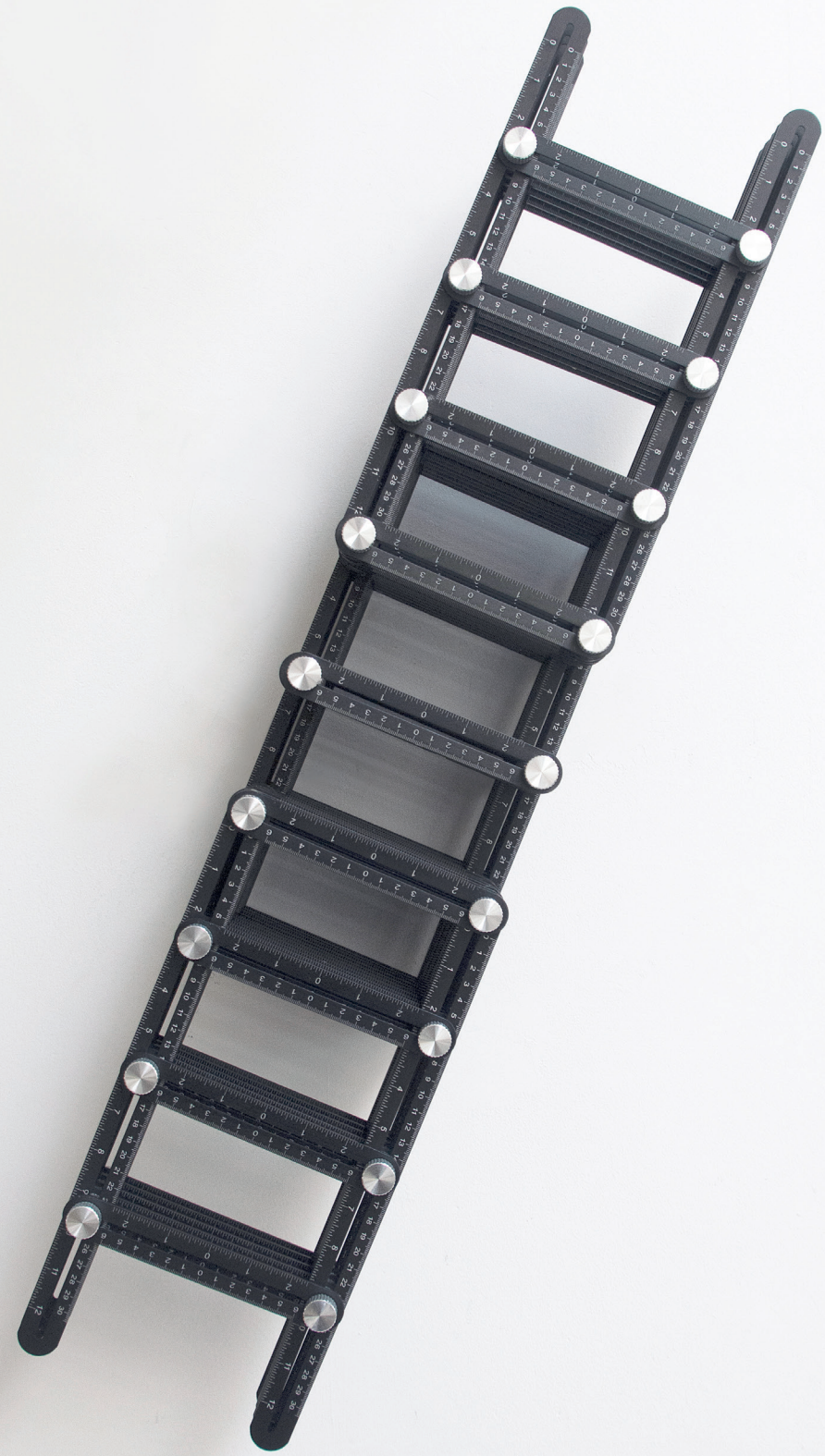
NORBERT FRANCIS ATTARD *CIRCLE 64* Aluminium rulers, 72 nuts, stainless steel studs, 60 x 60 x 13.5cm, 2021



NORBERT FRANCIS ATTARD *SQUARE 92* Aluminium rulers, 96 nuts, stainless steel studs, 25 x 40 x 25cm, 2021



NORBERT FRANCIS ATTARD *PYRAMID* 39 Aluminium rulers, 44 nuts, stainless steel studs, 46 x 46 x 23.5cm, 2021



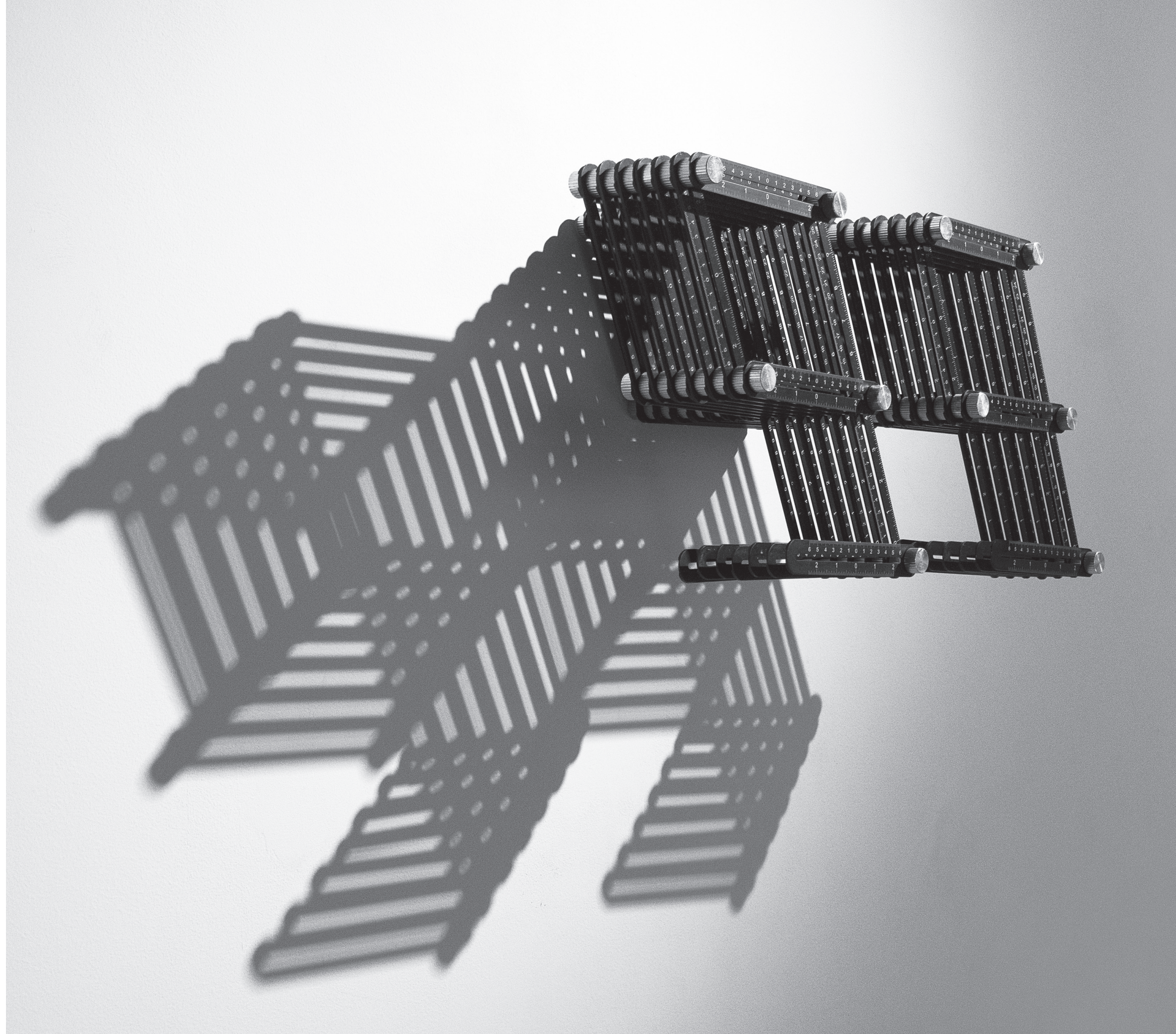
NORBERT FRANCIS ATTARD *LADDER* 100 Aluminium rulers, 153 nuts, stainless steel studs, 17.5 x 83 x 18cm, 2021



NORBERT FRANCIS ATTARD
MOUNTAIN
 42 Aluminium rulers, 74 nuts, stainless steel studs
 92 x 25 x 22.5cm
 2021



NORBERT FRANCIS ATTARD *INFINITY* 42 Aluminium rulers, 49 nuts, stainless steel studs, 80 x 23 x 12.5cm, 2021



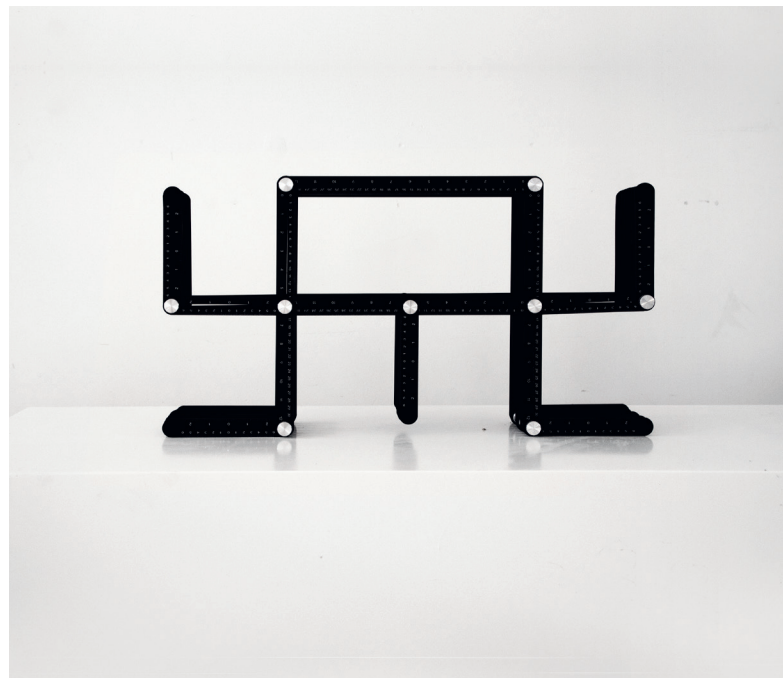
NORBERT FRANCIS ATTARD

QUOTATION MARK

82 Aluminium rulers, 104 nuts, stainless steel studs

47 x 28 x 24cm

2021



NORBERT FRANCIS ATTARD

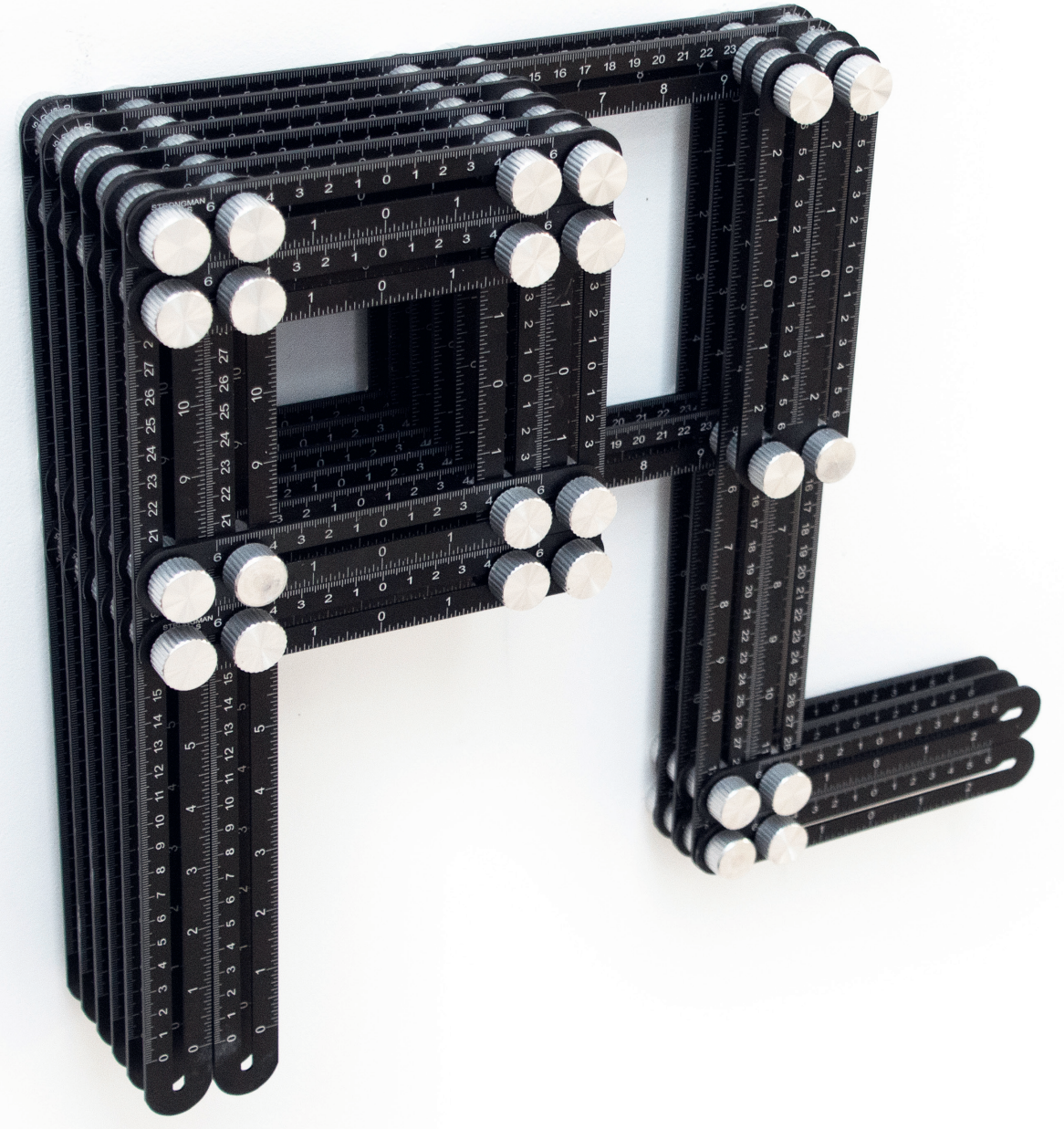
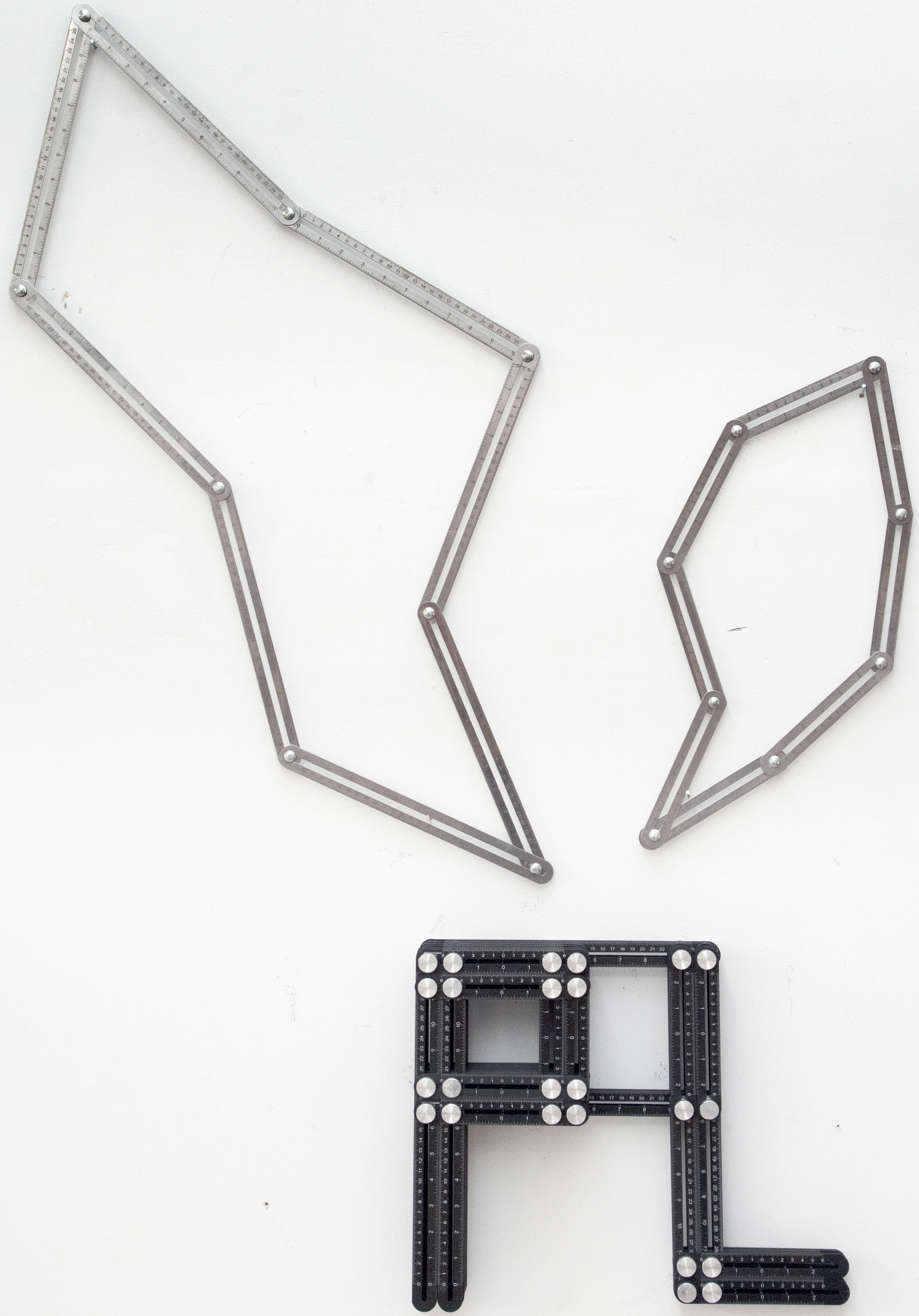
SWASTIKA

77 Aluminium rulers, 72 nuts, stainless steel studs

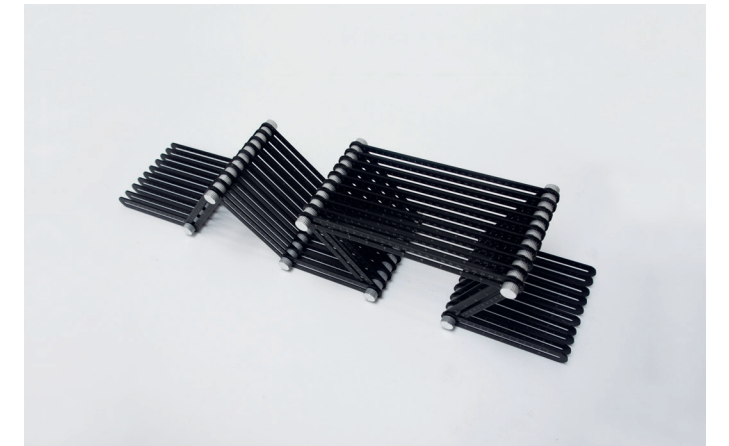
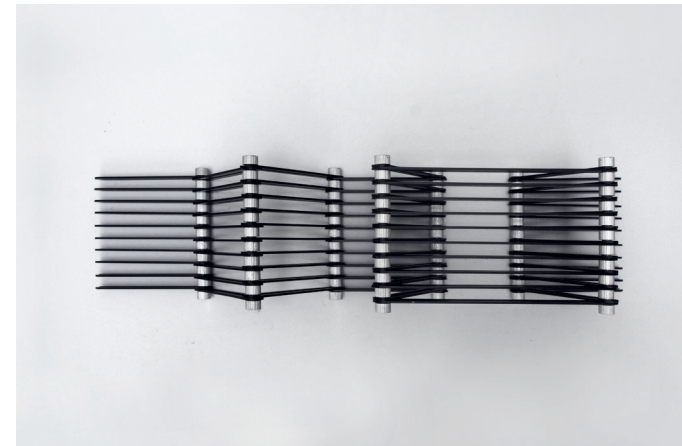
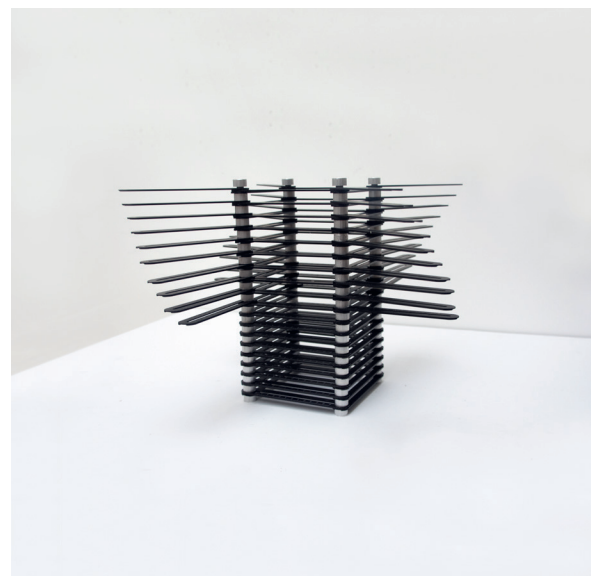
66 x 36 x 12.5cm

2021



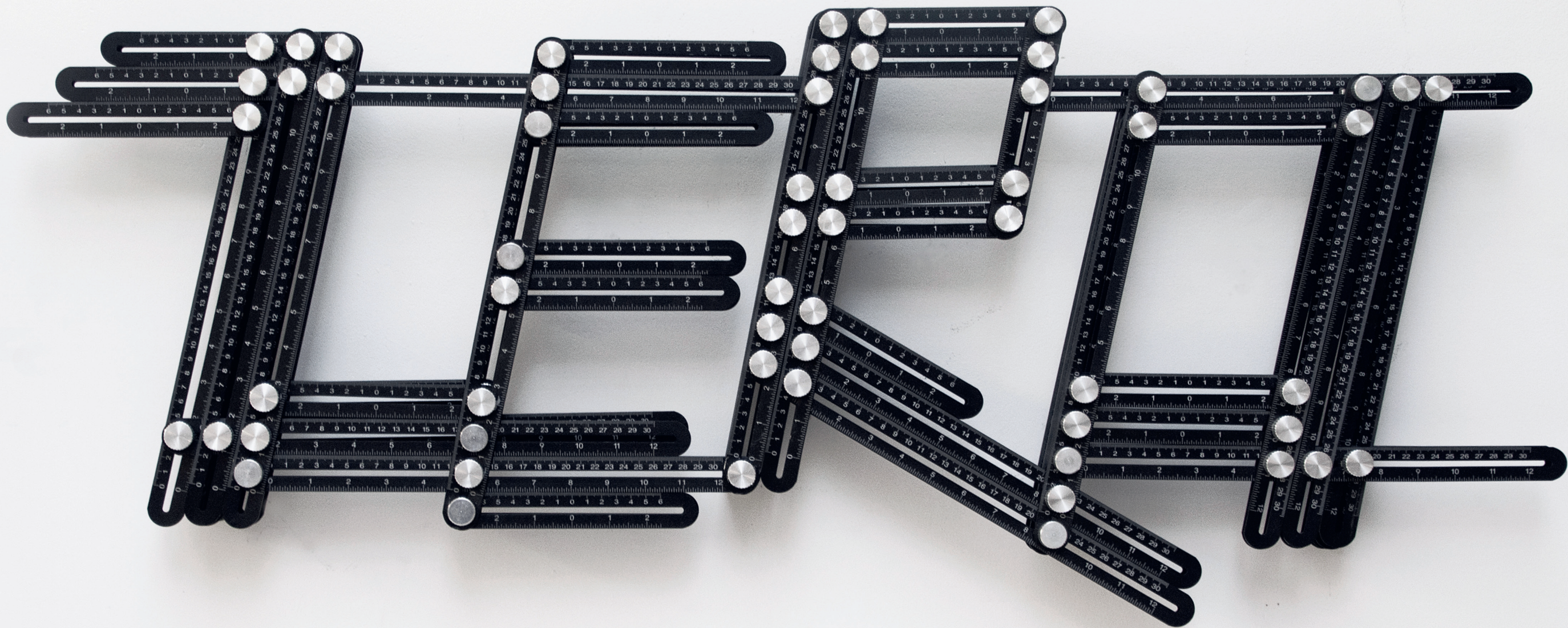


NORBERT FRANCIS ATTARD *PARTIT LABURISTA* 58 Aluminium rulers, 148 nuts, stainless steel studs, 43 x 36 x 10.5cm, 2021

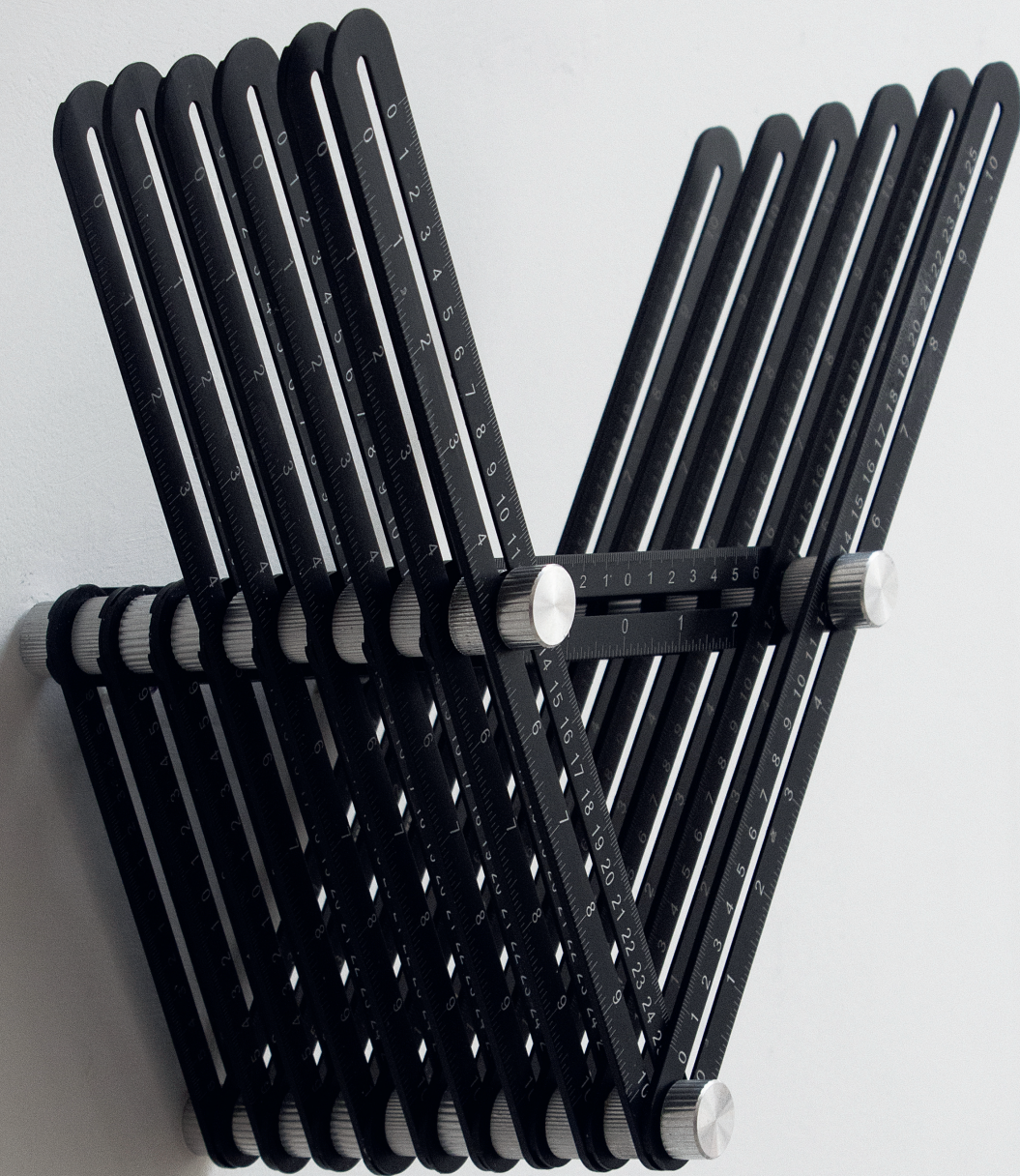


NORBERT FRANCIS ATTARD *ALFA & OMEGA* 96 Aluminium rulers, 91 nuts, stainless steel studs, 75 x 16 x 21cm, 2021

NORBERT FRANCIS ATTARD *UNIVERSAL CURRENCY* 116 Aluminium rulers, 80 nuts, stainless steel studs, 40 x 40 x 34cm, 2021



NORBERT FRANCIS ATTARD *ZERO 77* Aluminium rulers, 196 nuts, stainless steel studs, 105 x 46 x 7cm, 2021



NORBERT FRANCIS ATTARD *CROSS 30* Aluminium rulers, 44 nuts, stainless steel studs, 31 x 36 x 16.5cm, 2021

NORBERT FRANCIS ATTARD *V 25* Aluminium rulers, 30 nuts, stainless steel studs, 32 x 28 x 15.5cm, 2021



Norbert Francis Attard (b. 1951) is based on the island of Gozo (Malta) and since 2010 in Berlin (Germany). He started as a self-taught painter and graphic artist before turning to installation art in 1997. He graduated in Architecture from the University of Malta in 1977, practicing the profession as architect for twenty years until 1996. He lived in Germany in 1978/1979 working with the firm 'Licht in Raum', directed by Johannes Dinnelier, one of Germany's pioneers in light design. Attard's contemporary art practice incorporates architecture, sculpture, photography, video and installation, to explore his major interests in places and their memories. He blurs the boundaries of these disciplines, a characteristic of Attard's work, to incorporate the irreducible physicality of sites, and to explore their sedimented multiple layers of memory, treating them as a product of place, of social interaction, and as a generative process. He is renowned for his poetic and varied approaches to artistic projects. He deliberately combines social, cultural, political, scientific and religious themes with a bold arrangement of unorthodox materials, meticulously constructed with an architect's disciplined eye for detail. He investigates elements of irony, duality, dichotomy and ambivalence and combines every-day materials and found objects in diverse manners.

He was a founding member of stART (2002) - a group of Maltese contemporary artists; a committee member of the Malta Council for Culture and the Arts (2002-2005); committee member of Piazza Teatru Rjal (2013-2020), director of GOZOcontemporary since 2001 - an art space, offering self-directed residencies to international and local artists, on the island of Gozo and currently a committee member on the visual arts sub-committee of MEIA (Malta Entertainment Industry & Arts Association). Norbert Francis Attard is founder of META Foundation which is the organising body of Valletta Contemporary (VC) which he established in April 2018. He is currently the artistic director of Valletta Contemporary.

SELECTED SOLO & COLLECTIVE EXHIBITIONS

- Court of Justice, Luxemburg, (2017)
- Council of Europe, Strasbourg (2016)
- Kunstquartier Bethanien, Berlin, Germany (2015)
- Beijing Biennale, Beijing, China (2015)
- Sculpture by the Sea: Aarhus, Denmark (2015)
- Bewegter Wind, Kassel, Germany, (2014)
- Malta Design Week, Valletta, Malta, (2014)
- Fjerrerup I Bund & Grund, Fjellerup, Denmark, (2013)
- Maifesta 9 Parallel Events, Genk, Belgium (2012)
- Beaufort 04, De Panne, Belgium (2012)
- Meridian/Urban Project, Berlin, Germany (2011)
- Galeria Nuble, Santander, Spain (2011)
- OSTRALE 011, Dresden, Germany (2001)
- I-Park, Connecticut, USA (2011)
- 5th Biennial VentoSul, Curitiba, Brazil (2009)
- 25th Alexandria Biennial, Egypt (2009)
- CUBE OPEN, Manchester, UK (2009)
- 2nd Bienal de Canarias, Canary Islands (2009)
- INHABIT 09, Brisbane, Australia (2009)
- Turner Contemporary, Margate, UK. (2008)
- Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, Ireland (2008)
- INTRUDE 366, Zendai Museum of Modern Art, Shanghai, China (2008)
- 3rd Echigo Tsumari Triennale, Japan, (2006)
- Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts, Taiwan (2005)
- Casoria Museum of Contemporary Art, Naples, Italy (2005)
- ARTIADE, Athens, Greece (2004)
- Macedonia Museum of Contemporary Art, Thessaloniki, Greece (2003)
- 8th Havana Biennale (2003)
- 2nd Liverpool Biennale (2002)
- Edinburgh International Festival, Scotland (2002)
- FLOATING LAND, Noosa, Australia (2001)
- Represented Malta in the 48th Venice Biennale, Venice Italy (1999)
- DIASPORA, Oviedo, Spain (1998), amongst others.

He has published many books and exhibition catalogues and has received several local and international awards. He was nominated for the Cool Silicon Award, Dresden, Germany in 2011.