

ARTISTS' GAMES

It is our belief that the best artists of our time should be deeply involved in the everyday life of the people. As a step in that direction this magazine in the past invited painters, sculptors and graphic artists to design such everyday objects as stamps, coins, playing cards, paperweights, jewelry, ceramics, needlework, billboards, toys, playground sculpture. Now we present a group of games—both old and new—which, we believe, lend a new dimension to the standard concepts of game design and which we hope to see not only on the printed page but ultimately in the rumpus room

Presented by George Ortman

¹ game \ 'gām \ n [ME, fr. OE *gamen*; akin to OHG *gaman* amusement] 1 a (1) : AMUSEMENT, DIVERSION (2) : the equipment for a game b : FUN, SPORT 2 a : a procedure for gaining an end b (1) : RACKET (2) : a field of gainful activity : LINE 3 a (1) : a physical or mental competition conducted according to rules with the participants in direct opposition to each other (2) : a division of a larger contest (3) : the number of points necessary to win (4) : the manner of playing in a contest (5) : the set of rules governing a game b : a situation involving opposing interests given specific information and allowed a choice of moves with the object of maximizing their wins and minimizing their losses . . .

—Merriam-Webster Collegiate

When I was first asked to organize this project, I immediately thought of artists whose work set forth some gaming ideas. Dick Anuszkiewicz, Gene Davis, Bill King, Les Levine and Ernie Trova were given the option of inventing a new game with new rules or else taking a conventional game and redesigning it.

For each of us, I believe, the game has a special meaning. Anuszkiewicz' game of checkers is also a game of color; the changing of the colors during a game might very well make the player forget the checkers and become an artist. If you can still see after assembling Gene Davis' unique two-sided puzzle, you will see two handsome paintings that will no doubt tempt you to break them up and begin all over. One must have a go with King's sack-race rompers to understand all the subtleties of gamesmanship. Rompers can also be made in silk, aluminum, fur or plastic. Les Levine's chess-checkers game gives us a new approach, substituting lettered blocks for the traditional pieces. "The neuro inputs," Levine explains, "are no longer coded in the same manner; therefore the flow charts call for a different use of the brain architecture . . ." Ernest Trova's spinning man is a perfect extension of his art.

To me the fascination of a game is the participation of the player. I have been interested in a work of art that could be experienced in more than one way. In many of my constructions the viewer has been invited to involve himself in the plastic ideas, to make his own work within the rules. Ideas of kinetics, relationships and moods are the result of the viewer's motivations. The game form then is a game and an ever-changing work of art.

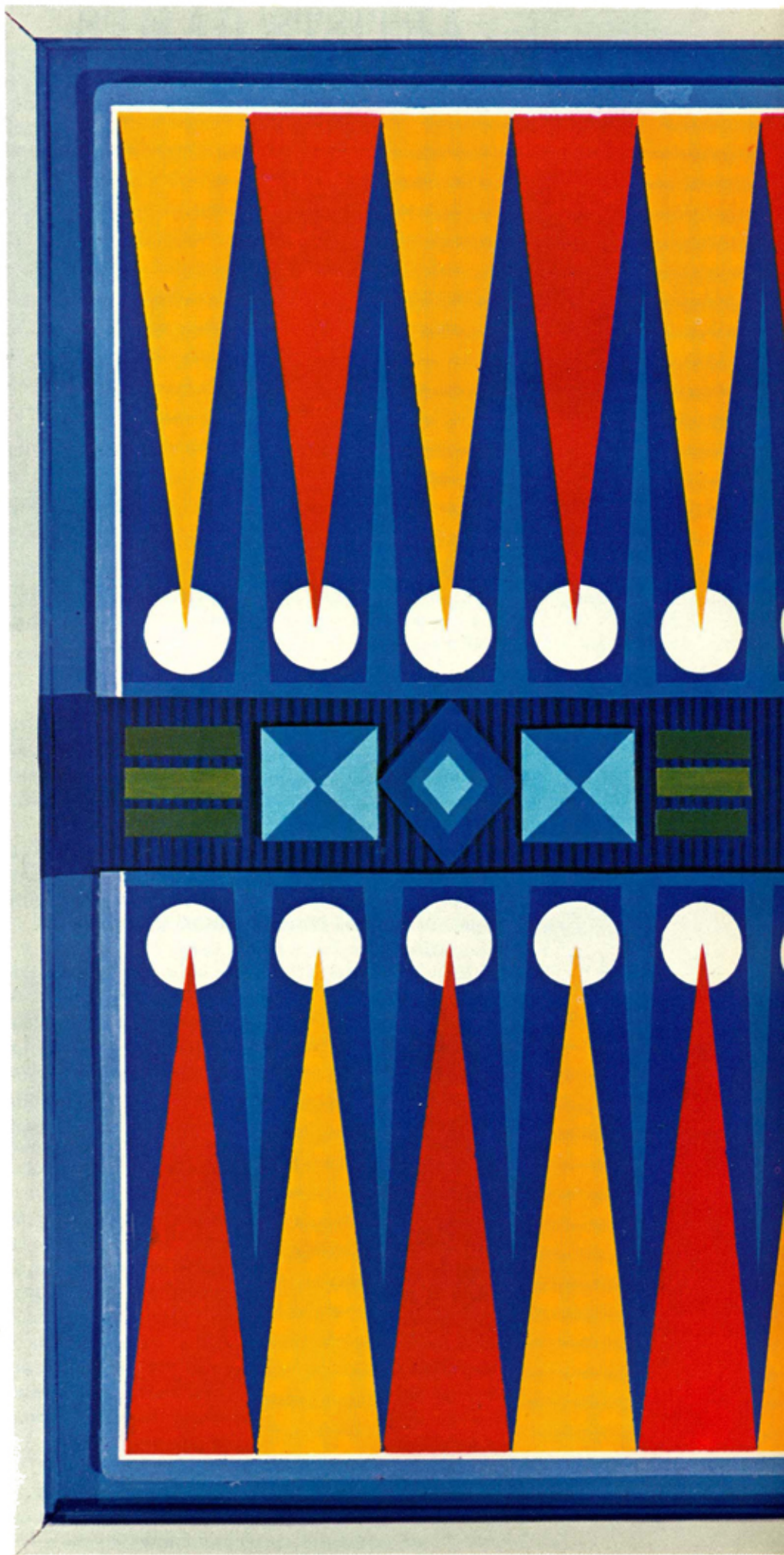
The ideas expressed by Anuszkiewicz, Davis, King, Levine, Trova and myself are a special part of our vocabulary. When I first asked King to do a game he said, "Great idea, George. It would sure be a sorry day if artists couldn't make games."

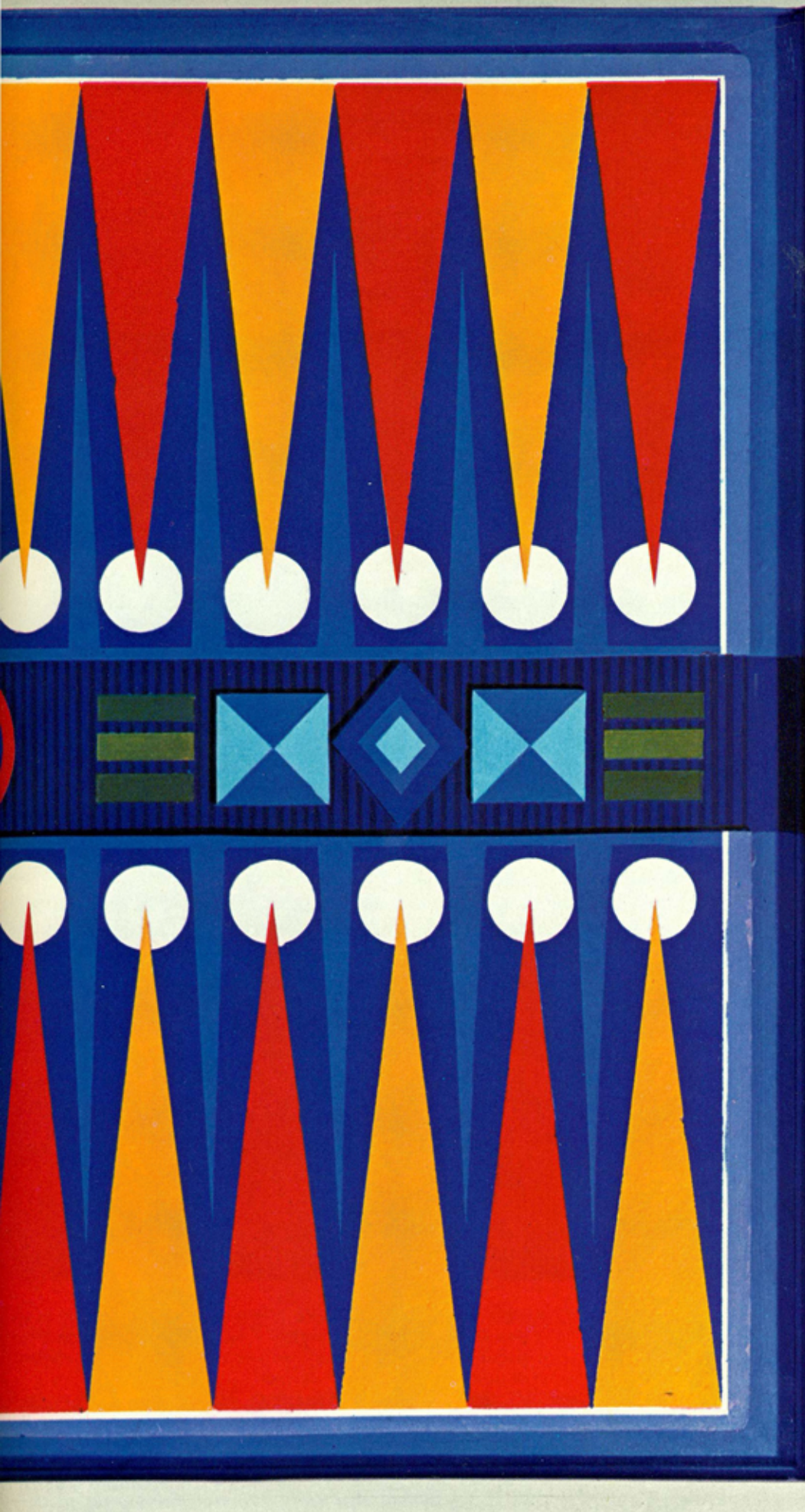
George Ortman, whose painted low-relief constructions often suggest the formal patterns of classic gameboards, has for a long time been interested in the possibilities of designing and redesigning popular games. (illustrations continue through page 77)

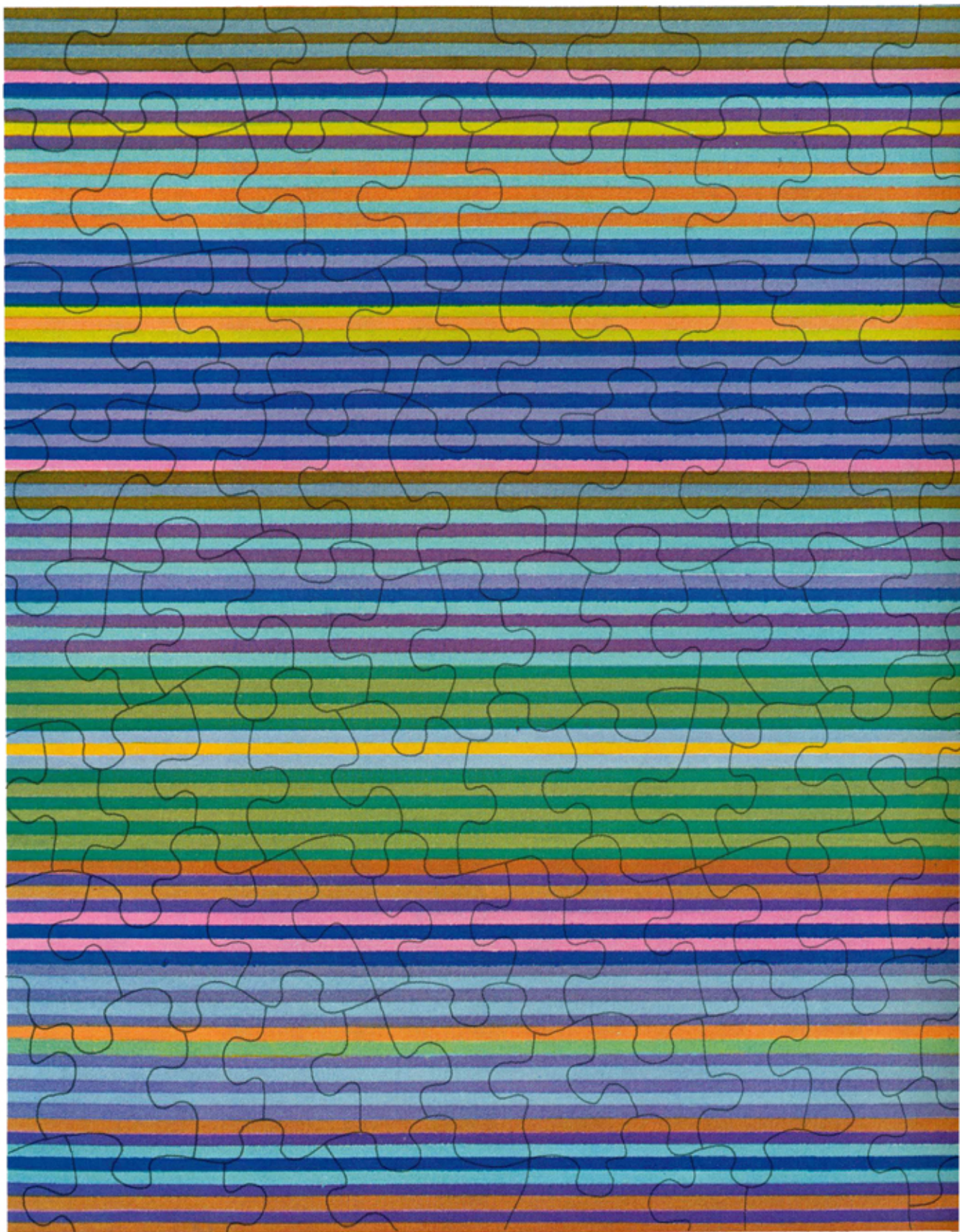
The backgammon game created by George Ortman is planned to be used either as a gameboard or as a table.

"The possibilities of working with dimensional ideas presented by a backgammon game were a challenge. To put in the many details and still retain the simplicity, I spread the board to allow more space and I worked with more colors. The game (picture) changes with each roll of the dice—a game of chance."

Ortman, whose painted canvas-and-wood constructions were featured in *Art in America's* 1961 "New Talent" issue, has had 24 one-man shows since that time. He has been exhibited and collected extensively both here and abroad, is represented by the Howard Wise Gallery in New York.

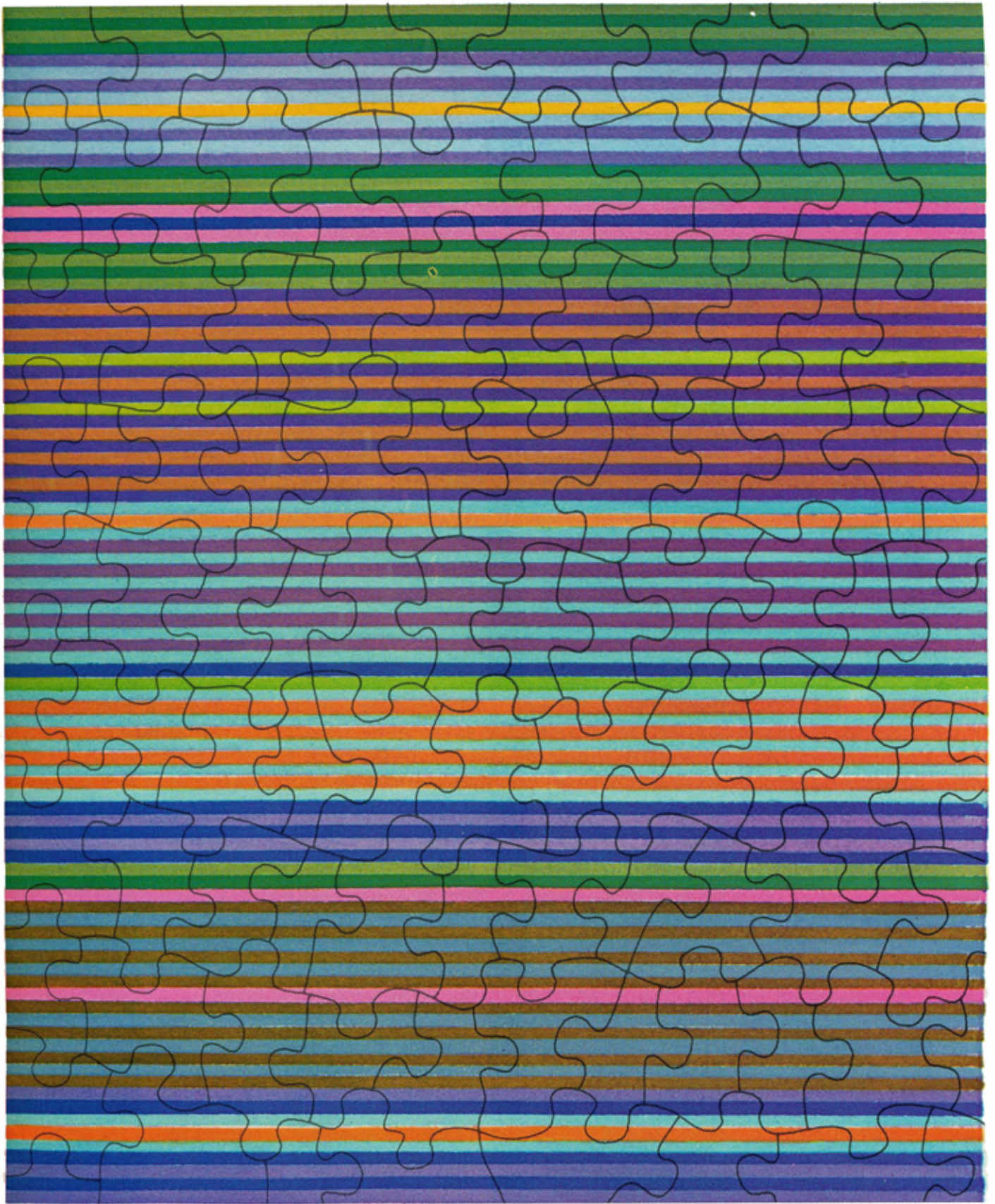






Gene Davis' Double Puzzle (featured on our cover) is a striking innovation. It consists of two separate paintings. When they are jumbled, the gamesman is confronted with one of the most challenging puzzles ever devised.

"I have tried in this puzzle to create special problems (and pleasures) for the player by adding a second dimension to the image. A stripe painting is reproduced on both sides of the puzzle. They are different paintings, but both use essentially the same colors in the stripes except that they are in a different alignment in each painting; thus the difficulty of working the puzzle is greatly increased." Davis, a leading color painter since 1958, is shown at the Jefferson Place Gallery in Washington, D.C., where he has exhibited, and at the Fischbach Gallery in New York.

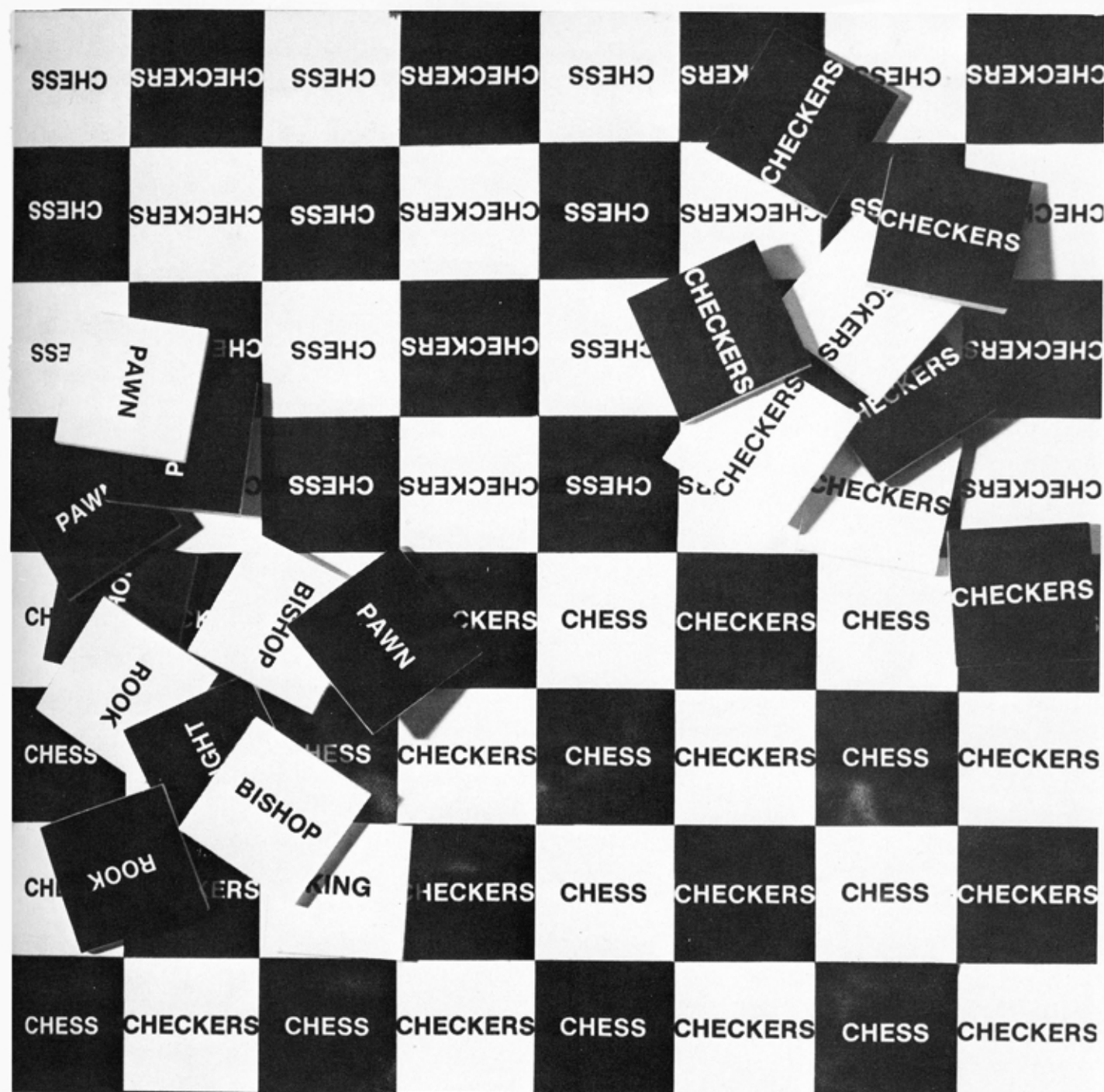


William King's Rompers—"a sack-race for the seventies"—provide either a parlor or out-of-doors game. Here they are modeled by the artist and his wife, Anne.

"The Rompers are self-explanatory; universal interest is what I had in mind."

King, born in Florida, has lived in New York since 1945. He mentions "Europe ½ dozen times, three marriages, two children, lots of sculpture, some teaching, four galleries." His work is now handled by the Terry Dintenfass Gallery in New York.



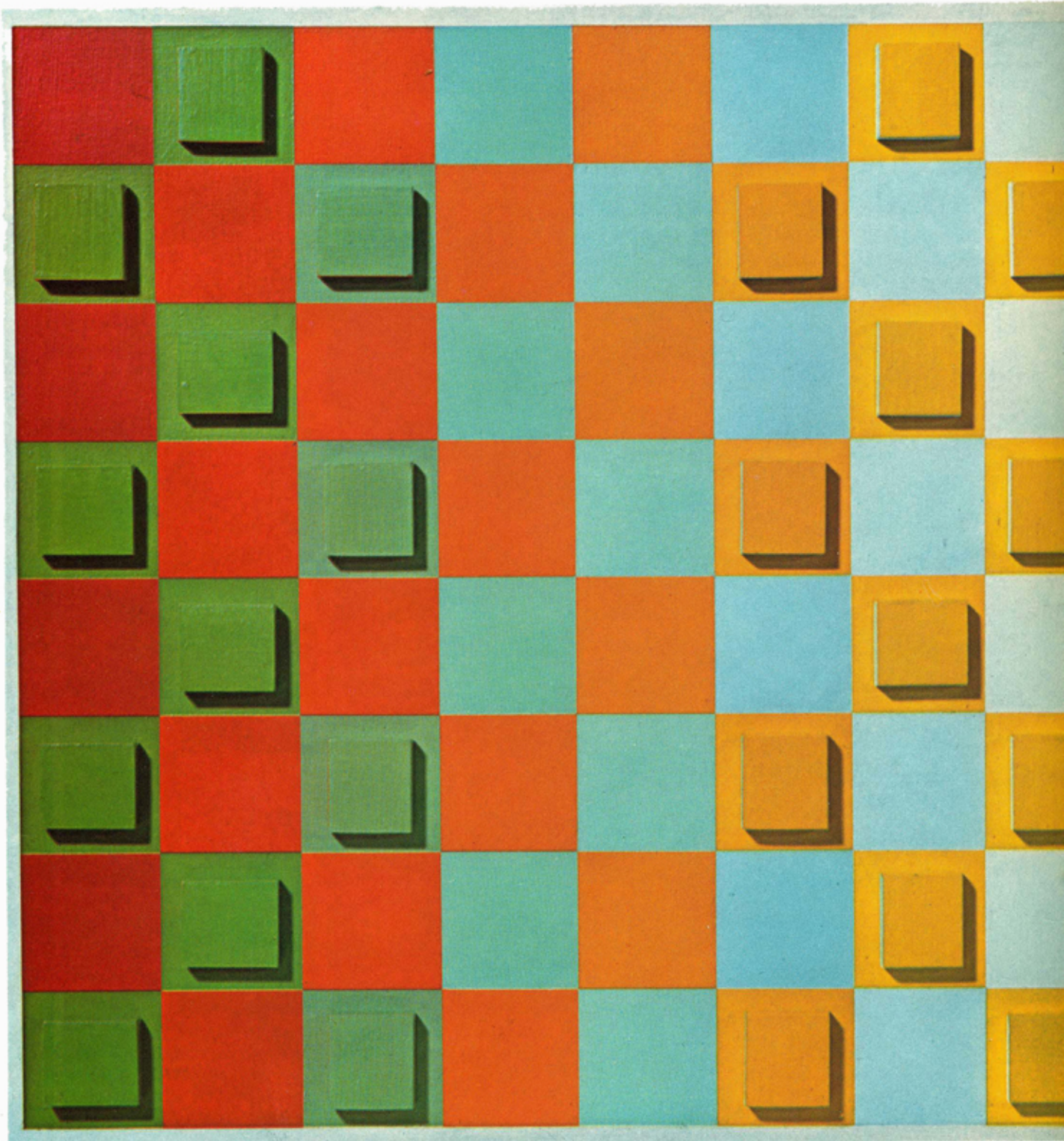


Les Levine made a statement about his chess game only. One can assume, however, that the "software," "subroutines," "image systems," "neuro inputs," "flow charts," "brain architecture"—with which the artist provocatively entangles our approach to his chess game—would equally "explain" his game of checkers.

"With the use of words instead of images in the chess game the software is considerably recoded. The game is pretty much the same as before. However, the subroutines connected with the activity of playing the game are very definitely changed. An image system is

considerably different from a literal system. The neuro inputs are no longer coded in the same manner. Therefore the flow charts call for a different use of brain architecture rendering the result of the new chess game similar to the result of the old chess game. However, the process and mental activity required for arriving at that result are totally different."

Levine's complex concepts about art, and his conceptual work, can be explored in depth in the interview by Thelma R. Newman in this issue. He exhibits regularly in Ottawa and Toronto and at the Fischbach Gallery in New York.



Richard Anuszkiewicz' Checker Game is a brilliant exercise in color. The simplicity is deceptive. Only when the game is in play can you enjoy all of its beauty, and that's the way it should be.

"Instead of the traditional red versus black checker game colors, I use warm versus cool colors in a spectral range. The warm starts with a light yellow and change in each row eight times until they reach a deep red. The cools begin with a light blue and end up in a deep shade of yellow-green. The checker pieces are square rather

than round, having three sides of a warm color and three sides of a cool color, giving the players an option as to their choice. All of this makes for a very colorful game, and if one gets bored with it he can always have a 'free play' game in the juxtaposition of colors, and might even end up with a very handsome color-relief painting."

Anuszkiewicz is generally considered the leading American op artist. He shows at the Sidney Janis Gallery in New York.



Ernest Trova's last exhibit at the Pace Gallery reaffirms him as one of America's most imaginative artists. In his "space" game—or man's game with life—the player is invited to find his way.

Rules for Spinning Man Game:
 Each player gets three spins; players must rotate.
 A. To proceed, each player must acquire:

Individuality	210 points
Prudence	100 points
Rationality	300 points
	610 total

B. First one to receive 610 points outlined in "A" automatically gets twelve spins with no penalty.
 (Resume three spins per player.)
 C. To proceed further, one must acquire 1,200 points to conquer Earth, 12,000 points to conquer Alpha, 27,000 points to reach the Galaxies and the Beyond.
 First one to reach the Beyond and return wins.
 Trova has been showing his paintings and "environmental" sculpture regularly at the Pace Gallery in New York since 1963. The central theme for both is his now-famous "Falling Man."