

MODERN PAINTERS

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Reviews

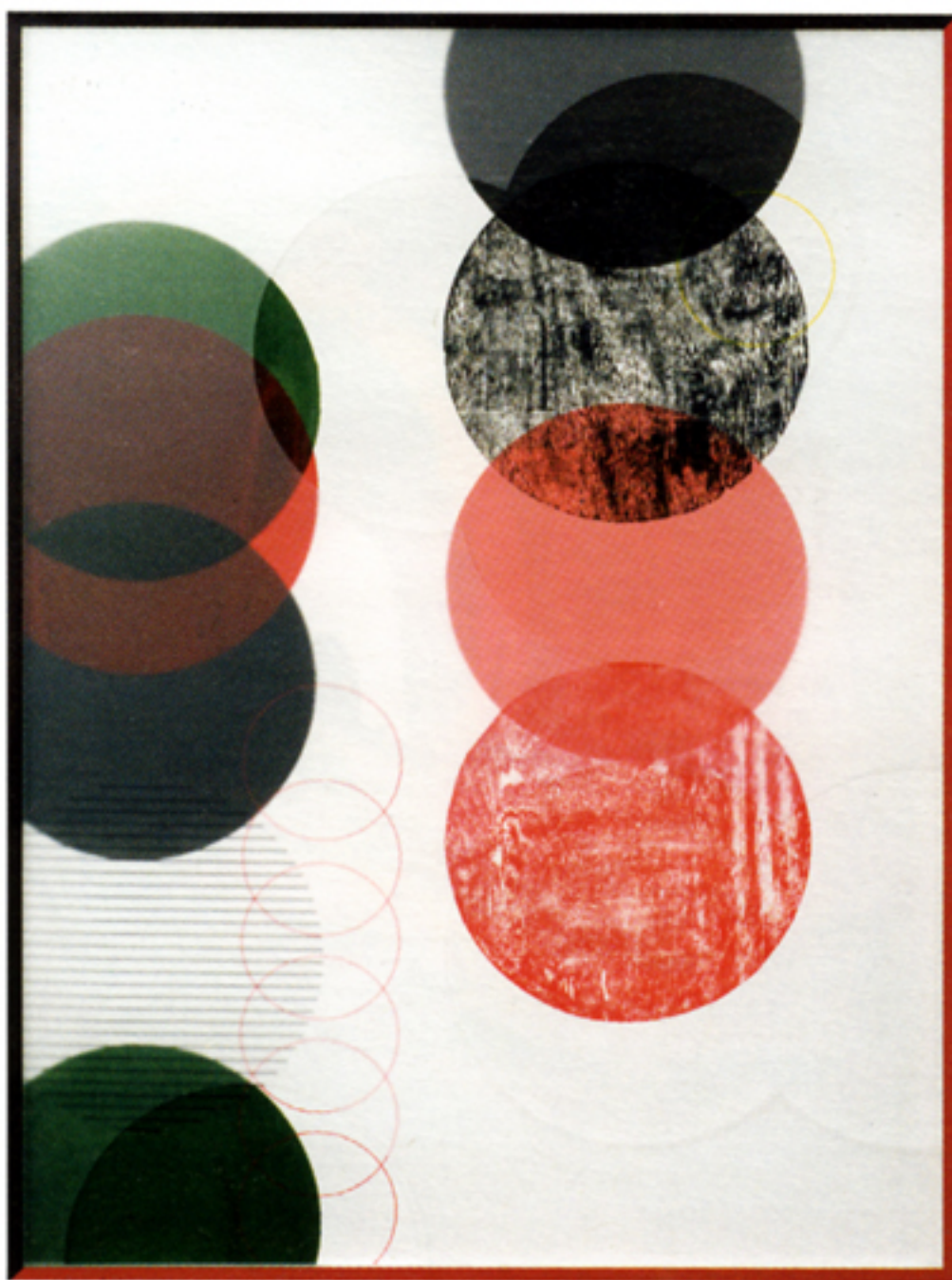
MIAMI BEACH

MIKA TAJIMA

KEVIN BRUK GALLERY

A 1969 *New York Times* article reported on a debate between the United States and the Vietcong about, of all things, the proposed dimensions of the diplomatic round table that was being built for the singular purpose of having peace talks in Paris. Focusing on the diplomatic table that we hear about but never see, Mika Tajima's exhibition, titled "Deal or No Deal," embraces this odd circumstance as the conceptual departure point for a strictly formal installation composed of large slatted wooden panels interspersed with bright geometric shapes. Some of the panels are reflective, creating optically rich surfaces that play with the eye, while smaller wall constructions layer graphic prints with black and white plastic translucent circular cutouts that are mounted flawlessly into painted frames. These objects possess the seamless finesse of the factory-made, even though Tajima makes each piece personally with the assistance of master woodworkers.

The Bauhaus's utopian expectation that the merging of form and function would heighten and "save" civilization went awry during quibbling over the specs of the Vietnam peace talks table. While acknowledging that art plays an important role in society, Tajima uses this failed experiment as an opportunity to ask, albeit in a slyly oblique fashion, whether ideals can productively translate into a form that is both practical and beautiful. —LARA TAUBMAN



Mika Tajima, *Soft and Dry*, 2008. Silk screen, woodcut, cotton rag, CNC Plexiglas, wood, and paint, 61 x 46 in.