Arends’ work seduces the viewer like a case of love at first sight.

Arends’ house is not all that big but, with its many windows and its immediate segue into light and space, it feels more like being on the outside than being sequestered within. And strange as it may seem, when you can tear yourself away from the views, Arends might offer you a book on the frescos of Piero della Francesca in order to explain a certain color blue that he is partial to on his painted cubes.

“...I wasn’t interested in sculpture,” he says, “I’m a painter, and I wanted to go into the painting space so I projected the canvas out. Needless to say, projecting the canvas out meant creating a painting in three dimensions—five if you include all the time spent in deliberation, in making adjustments large and small, in studying a painted object as it protruded into space and was modulated by the power of ambient light. Arends could have thought about his initial paintings as cubes in terms of an imposing scale, but he did not go in that direction. For Arends, formal issues didn’t mean achieving optical illusion at the expense of tactility or vice versa...”

For Arends, the sculpture of Donald Judd was easy by comparison—more or less referring to the master’s bedroom—which has its origins on quite another platform, that of the affluence of an Italian palazzo, with its own set of historical and aristocratic references. The La Stanza del Amore pieces are box forms set on top of one another and painted with stripes in wax and oil on wood. However, each form contains a slightly staggered set of stripes in, for example, red, bright blue, or black on white so that as one line of color meets the stripes in the loss below, the blue, for instance, is met with white. The colored stripes are not continuous vertical lines, Arends took the broken-stripes pattern from the designated field area of a coat of arms attached to a particular palazzo; the woman who lived there had commissioned the artist to do a piece for her and, in this case, he took his inspiration not from the privileges of an American Dust Bowl existence, but from the signals of European gentility and their privileged bleachers.

Arends’ work seduces the viewer like a case of love at first sight. In his essay “Arends’ work seduces the viewer like a case of love at first sight.” FEBRUARY/MARCH 2013 THE magazine 39

This feature on other artists, a fine art center, and an art history teacher at the Santa Fe Community College.