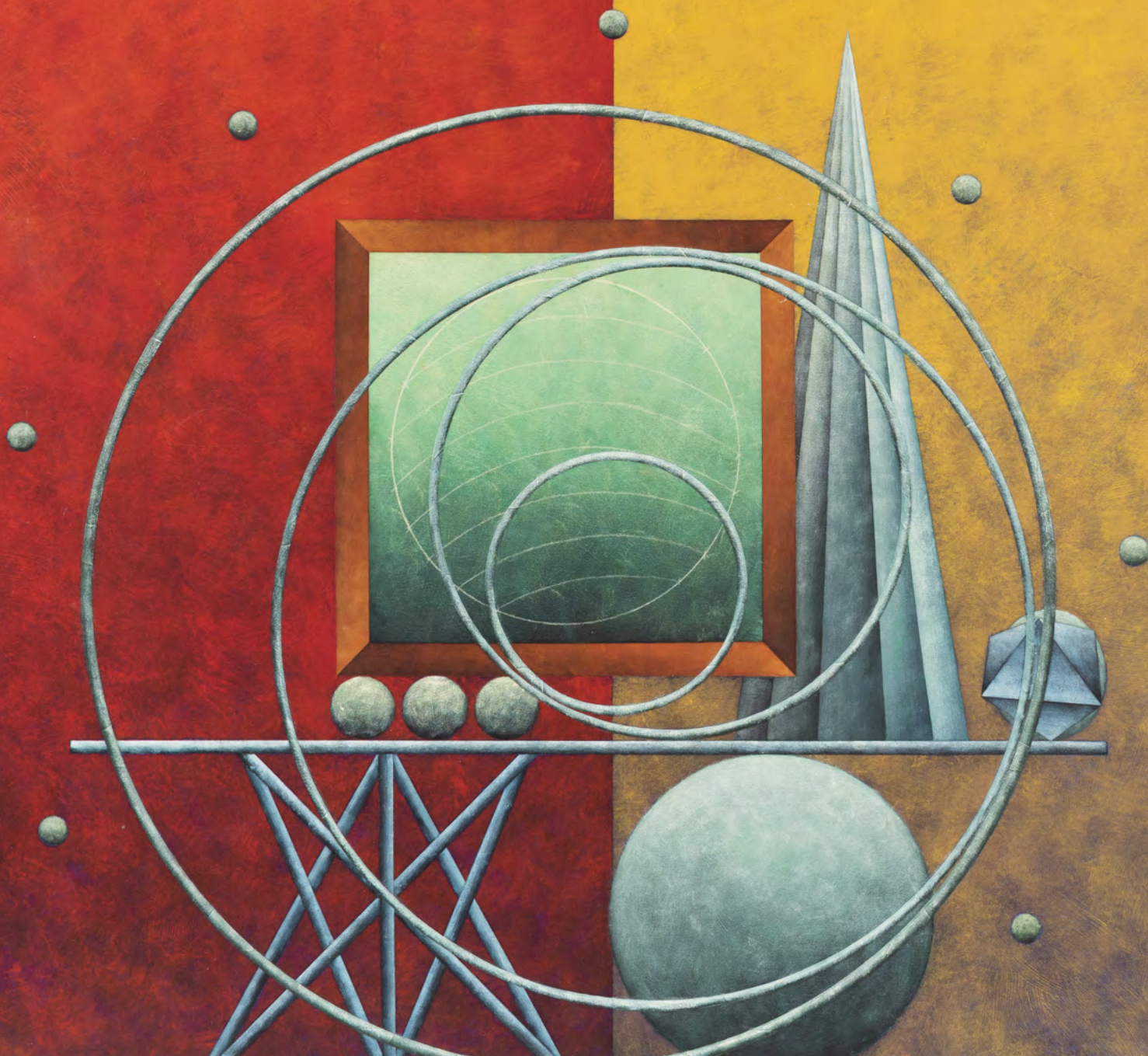


RICHARD
CARTER

THE
IMAGINED
STILL-LIFE





RICHARD
CARTER

THE
IMAGINED
STILL-LIFE

LEGACY PAINTINGS





RICHARD CARTER

ARTIST STATEMENT

I painted this body of work between 1998 and 2002 at my studio in Santa Monica, California. Like the many series that had come before, this one incorporated geometry and Constructivist thinking as sources and as a visual vocabulary. My deep interest in all things scientific and mathematical have always been the central to whatever series of paintings I was working on.

So it was a stretch for me at that time to diverge from my non-objective compositions and explore my passion for geometry and science through the traditional, time- tested format of the still-life, or as the French termed it, the *nature morte*.

Still-life has been around for millennia, appearing in early Egyptian tomb paintings. It is a genre that has had its moments in Greek, Roman, Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque, the golden age of Dutch painting, Impressionism, Cubism, and all through the multitude of styles of the modern age. Generally, still-life includes the arrangement of inanimate objects set on a table or a shelf and inhabiting a shallow space. Lit by an unseen light source, more often than not these objects and their placement include objects that can serve as allegories of mortality, or nature's cycles, or themes that provoke introspection and reflection.

What attracted me most were objects and arrangements that implied the importance and ascendance of science and mathematics. Artists since the Renaissance have depicted globes, astrolabes, telescopes, musical instruments, books, and scientific tools in still-life compositions.



EDWAERT COLLIER

These paintings often were meant to emphasize the rise of rationalism and the enlightenment and the importance of science as it separated as a field of study on its own. In the modern era, the still-life has more often been used as another format for an artist to explore their particular style without much importance assigned to the subject matter.

Works by Constructivist painters like Malevich, El Lissitzky, and Kandinsky have usually consisted of geometric compositions floating in an indeterminate space. They are often comprised of separate and adjoined groupings, suspended in space and possibly waiting for a surface on which to settle. I was now giving them that place. Each of these paintings is in its own way a small well-lit cabinet of curiosities. And in doing so the work took on a subtle narrative nature. Something is being intimated.

This seems to be the essence of still-life.

I began to examine the work of the nineteenth-century American artist William Harnett whose paintings encompassed all the “rules” of the still-life genre. While his work tended strongly to the illusionistic, which I did not find very interesting, I did find intriguing his compositions and grounds. And I was struck but his color palette that was mostly devoid of the primary and secondary colors I had usually favored in my work.



KASIMIR MALEVICH

Likewise, Giorgio Morandi's paintings were influential through his use of a limited language of images and his subtle tones in the basic forms of his subjects: jars, vases, bowls and the like.

In fact, I did not at first fully recognize that I was adopting the still-life format per se. I never identified these painting as such. But as I began assembling assorted geometric forms and figures into structured compositions in what were usually spaces of a very shallow depth and imbuing these compositions with a directional light source, the association became obvious. The principles of still-life emerged as a convenient means to assemble and examine the great variety of dimensional geometric forms in which I was interested. The paintings are like a corner or cabinet in the studio or laboratory of an alchemist or an artist-philosopher whose objectives are unclear, but engaging.



WILLIAM HARNETT

I produced a large body of work in this period, which allowed me to explore unlimited relationships and compositions of my geometric vocabulary. I had the alphabet and was now building sentences, paragraphs and stories. It was becoming its own language. But what was it saying?

I believe it was expressing its abstract nature and saying make of me what you will, I am abstraction on a stage.

DC
BASALT, COLORADO
AUGUST 2019



THE IMAGINED STILL-LIFE

In that fickle way of the artistic process, a set of influences and innovations coalesced in Richard Carter's work in 1998 that led to a highly generative three-year period. The result was *The Imagined Still-Life*, a body of paintings and works on paper that explore this genre. Then, as now, Carter ranged widely through the history of art, and so was primed for the tradition of the still-life to coax him into experimenting with three-dimensional solids in an interior space, resting on a surface. None of Cezanne's pears or apricots or rustic furniture appear here, nor do any of the lobsters and oysters and flowers of a Dutch seventeenth-century work. Instead, this is a thoroughly modernist take on the still-life that links to other, more esoteric twentieth-century schools of painting.

If traditional still-life takes the everyday for its subject matter, Carter's objects remain idealized forms: circles, spheres, spirals, and cubes. This same vocabulary of geometric shapes runs through the decades of his painting, and represents an elemental, irreducible understanding of the physical world. They are Platonic archetypes to the particularity of Cezanne's pears and apples. And unlike those prosaic objects, Carter's forms are unconstrained by the conventions of the everyday, and only sometimes obey its laws. They might sit obediently on a surface or defy gravity by hanging in mid-air. Suspended objects, along with those that are finely balanced, convey the feeling that the whole ensemble might become weightless and start to rotate like the elements of a Calder mobile, or the celestial bodies in a solar system, which does in fact happen in these paintings. Carter gets closest to representing objects belonging to the real world in the planetary spheres that orbit the picture space.

These orbiting bodies set up one of a number of contradictions that characterize this series. The paintings take the viewer into a room, perhaps a kind of laboratory where a Ptolemy or a Descartes has set up elements for contemplation. The still-life traditionally captures a moment of quiet in an intimate interior. Carter's objects, however, defy that convention. What ought to be still is instead set into motion, and what is a glimpse into a private scene becomes cosmically vast. His weightless spheres moving within an infinity of space jump the scale of the painting from inches to lightyears.

The works also conflate two different orders of pictorial dimension. They suggest depth, again in that room with solid objects, their three-dimensionality confirmed by a light source that creates highlight and shadow, while at the same time other elements insist on the flatness of the picture plane. What is the far wall behind the foregrounded objects also pushes to the surface as fields of color. Carter has it both ways: the wall is there but it also reads as brushstrokes sitting on a panel. The same effect is achieved in the narrow-banded circles and spirals that recur throughout the series. They are present both within and on top of picture. Two pictorial logics sit side by side.

What, after all, are these subversions of the genre about? At least since the Renaissance, the practice of still-life painting has been closely aligned with the scientific emphasis on close observation as a means to understanding the natural world, as opposed to viewing it through the lens of a metaphysical doctrine such as divine creationism. The meticulous rendering of insects and flowers and fowl in Dutch art reflect the relatively new exploration of nature as meaningful data to be gathered, catalogued, and classified. Carter affirms this empiricist worldview and the power of scientific observation. Many of the paintings contain insets of a drawing tablet on which an unseen thinker has mapped his observations of the night skies. However, Carter also wants to register in these paintings the possibility of a separate artistic logic, that of the

surreal, of the Platonic absolute, of the confounding of time and space that is possible in the language of painting. The rules of scientific observation coexists with the alchemical magic of artistic creativity.

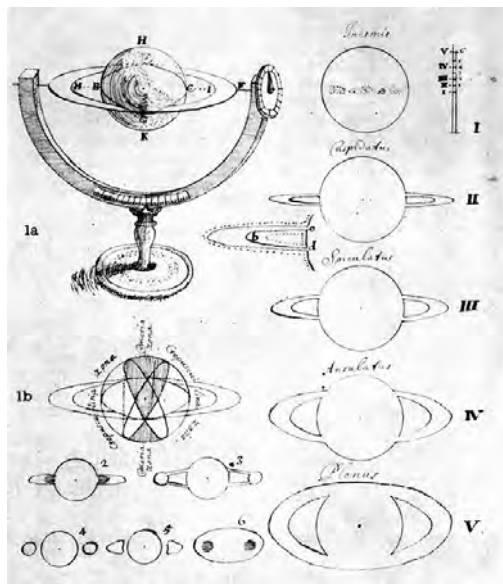
This alternative order of meaning in Carter's paintings parallels another aspect of the Renaissance still-life. Even as those artists became fascinated with the power of observation, enhanced in this period by the new art of grinding lens for the magnification of both near and far worlds, they also continued to freight their paintings with symbolic content. A skull, a burning candle, a worm despoiling a delicate rose bud: these were recognized as reminders of the passage of time, of the inevitability of death, of the fading of youthful beauty and virtue into the decrepitude of old age. Those allegorical lessons answered to that society's preoccupations. Carter's paintings also transcend the objective world, and while they are not morally prescriptive, they remind us of the relative insignificance of the human project within the big picture. It's an update of the old admonishment of the *memento mori*, the reminder that no amount of achievement or wealth or physical beauty staves off death and that only certain universal truths are immortal.

Rather than using worms and roses and such, it's with a modernist, non-objective vernacular that Carter gets his message across. This is where he invites into his reimagining of the still-life the artistic innovations from other traditions. The Constructivists—painters such as László Moholy-Nagy and El Lissitzky—are relevant to nearly all of Carter's work where geometric forms appear, and here too their presence is felt. Carter is also in dialogue with those painters such as



EL LISSITZKY

Charles Sheeler who extracted from the severe angles of early twentieth-century industrial architecture abstract compositions. We might multiply other pertinent art historical references, so aware is Carter of his antecedents. The nineteenth-century trompe l'oeil works of William Harnett, a reproduction of which Carter has kept in his studio over the years, suggests the spatial toggling between depth and flatness which is fully realized in Carter's painting. While we are at it, we also have to mention the representation of the night sky through the centuries, from Galileo's illustrations of the moons of Jupiter to the mapping of constellations in Enlightenment works at a time when astronomy and astrology were not yet distinct ways of thinking. Celestial cartography becomes in Carter's paintings a kind of still-life writ large. The regular appearance in this series of Carter's own astronomical diagrams is another means by which he simultaneously references the studious work of the artist/scientist and an extraterrestrial universe where human affairs count for nothing.



GALILEO

This last point brings up an enigmatic aspect of Carter's still-lives: the question of what, or who, is the implied maker of these complex systems. In taking in a traditional still-life, the viewer has the sense that the artist's hand was in the picture moments before, adjusting the fruit or the skull or the roses just so, and has hurried back to his easel before the flowers start to wilt. The artist poses the objects in a still-life; they are his assemblage. The Carter still-life is different. The elements are at once conceptual and concrete, heavy and weightless, two and three dimensional, micro and macro. Because they don't reference actual objects and because they behave according to their own laws of



JOHANNES VERMEER

space-time within a multiverse, it's not clear what has set them up and put them in motion. While Vermeer's astronomer, in his painting by that name, reaches out with his hand to spin the globe in its stand, acting as a kind of prime mover for the rotation of the earth, such signs of causation in Carter's painting are more subtle. We can see one in the star maps, where the drawing evinces the hand of the artist/scientist. There is also a record of him in those passages where the scumbling of paint reads more as paint than it does as atmosphere or interior surface. But it's a low-key presence. If there is a watch maker at work here, he is responsible for only a portion of what is going on, while the rest whirs along on its own, other-worldly terms.

Carter's process helps explain this effect. The intricacy of the designs would suggest that he makes preparatory studies for his paintings. This is not the case. These compositions are not premeditated machines; they organically emerge as Carter lets the painting tell him at each step what is needed and how to proceed. How he manages the technical challenge of getting all the parts in their proper relationships to one another is cause for wonder. But in doing so Carter allows the still-life to encompass and synthesize different orders of reality,



GIORGIO MORANDI

some from the pre-modernism of painters like Vermeer and some from twentieth-century abstraction.

This description thus far makes the experience of viewing these works sound more cerebral than it really is, in part because Carter's strengths as a colorist and paint handler has not yet been mentioned. All the talk of drawing and design and composition must be balanced by a recognition of Carter's choreography of color and its application. If the drawn component is disciplined and precise, Carter's handling of his hues is warm and tactile, recalling the subdued palette of a Giorgio Morandi painting. The paint is rich in its saturation and in texture; it is appetizing to the visual sense, in the way that a soft wool appeals to the skin. Harsh primary colors are rare in this work, with red coming up most often, while the predominate secondary and tertiary browns and grays and creams and grey-greens impart the feeling that however we understand these compositions of objects, they are of a natural world, of wood, stone, and iron, not of plastics synthesized in a chemical laboratory. For all their headiness, there is a comfortable sensuality to these paintings owing to the intuition that these scenes belong to an older, pre-industrial world, for which they perhaps inspire a twinge of nostalgia. The quality of beauty is not much in fashion in contemporary art these days, but nothing is compromised in these paintings by the pleasure they give to the senses.

In retrospect, this series of the late 1990s shows Carter evolving away from work that was more non-representational to paintings that began to grapple with space and objects and narrative. From this quasi-abstract still-life series, Carter would later expound on the star maps that make their first appearance here. But the still-life series stands out as an especially fertile period of creativity and innovation in Carter's long career. So much of the complexity of his thinking, art historical, scientific, and aesthetic, converge in these works. The result is a particularly rich experience for the mind and the senses.

TIMOTHY BROWN
SNOWMASS COLORADO
AUGUST 2019

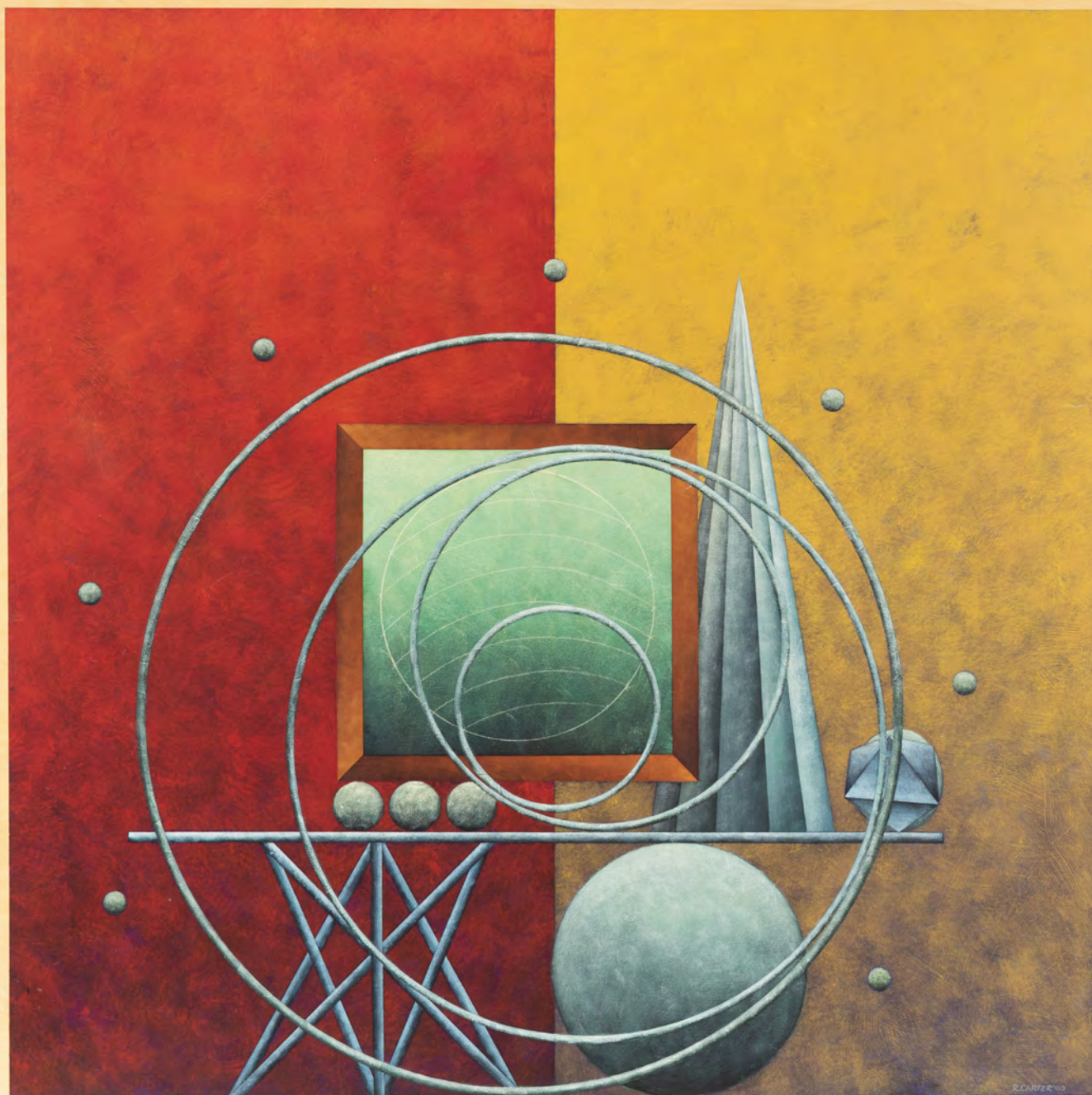








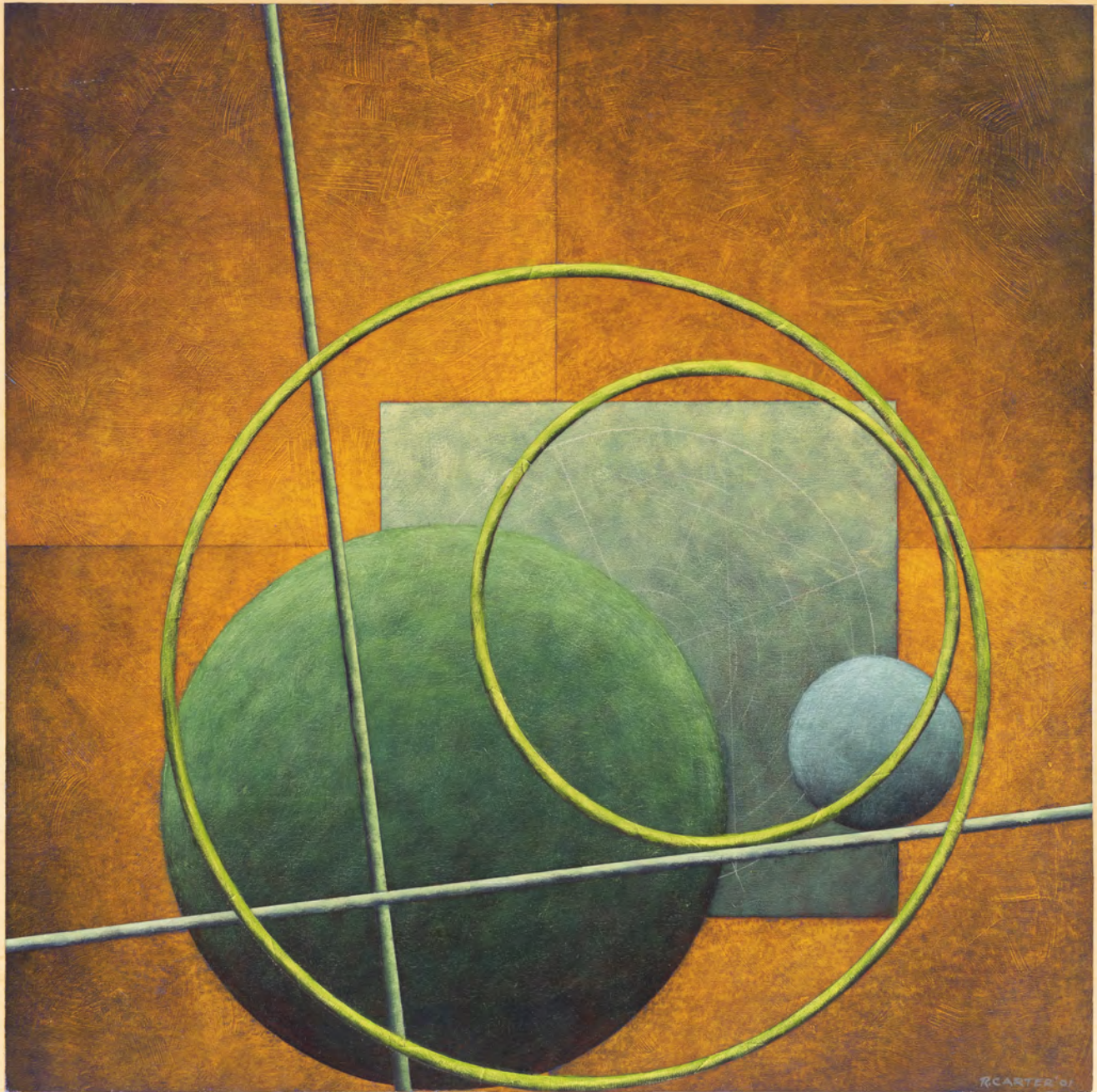


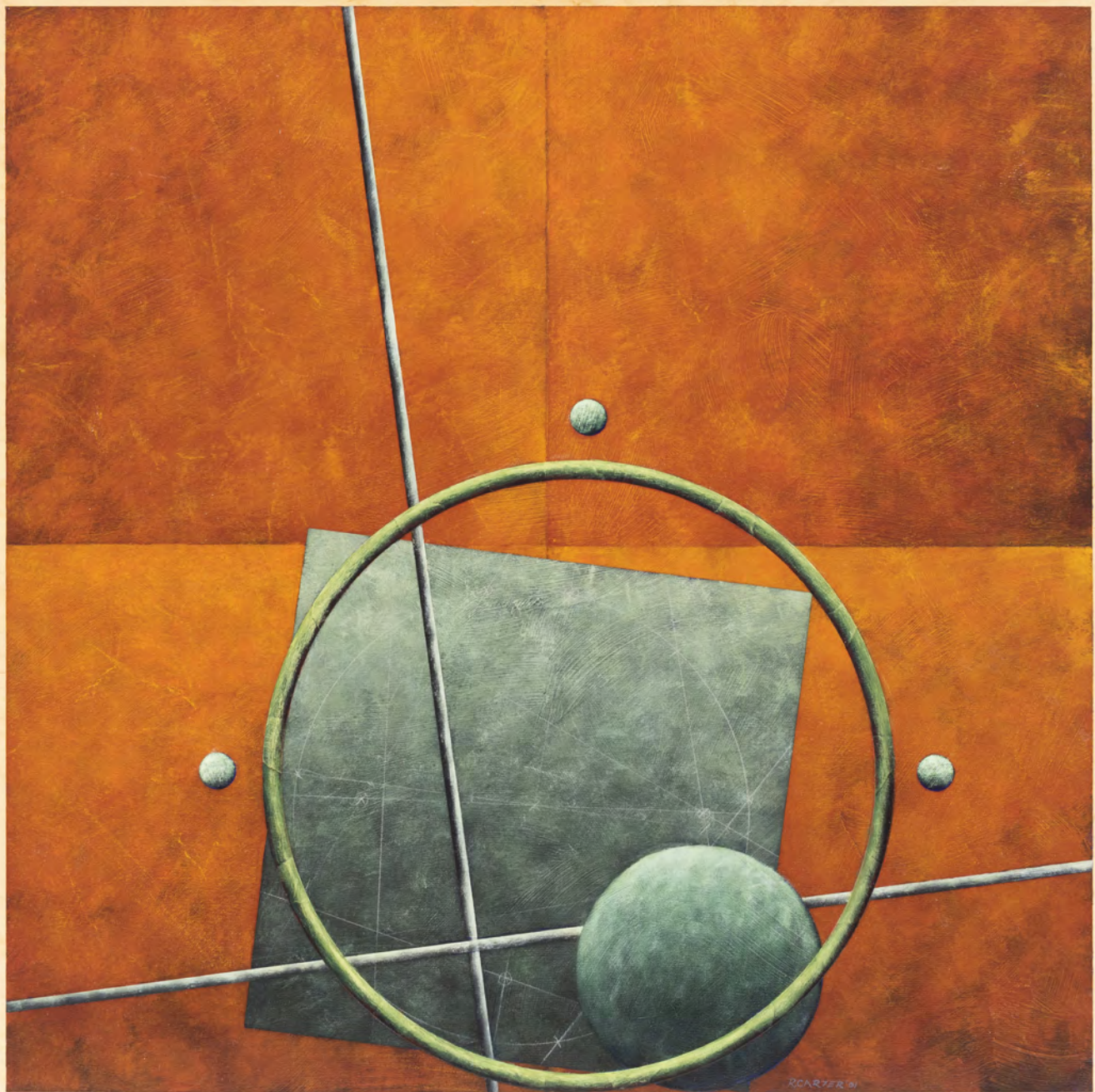


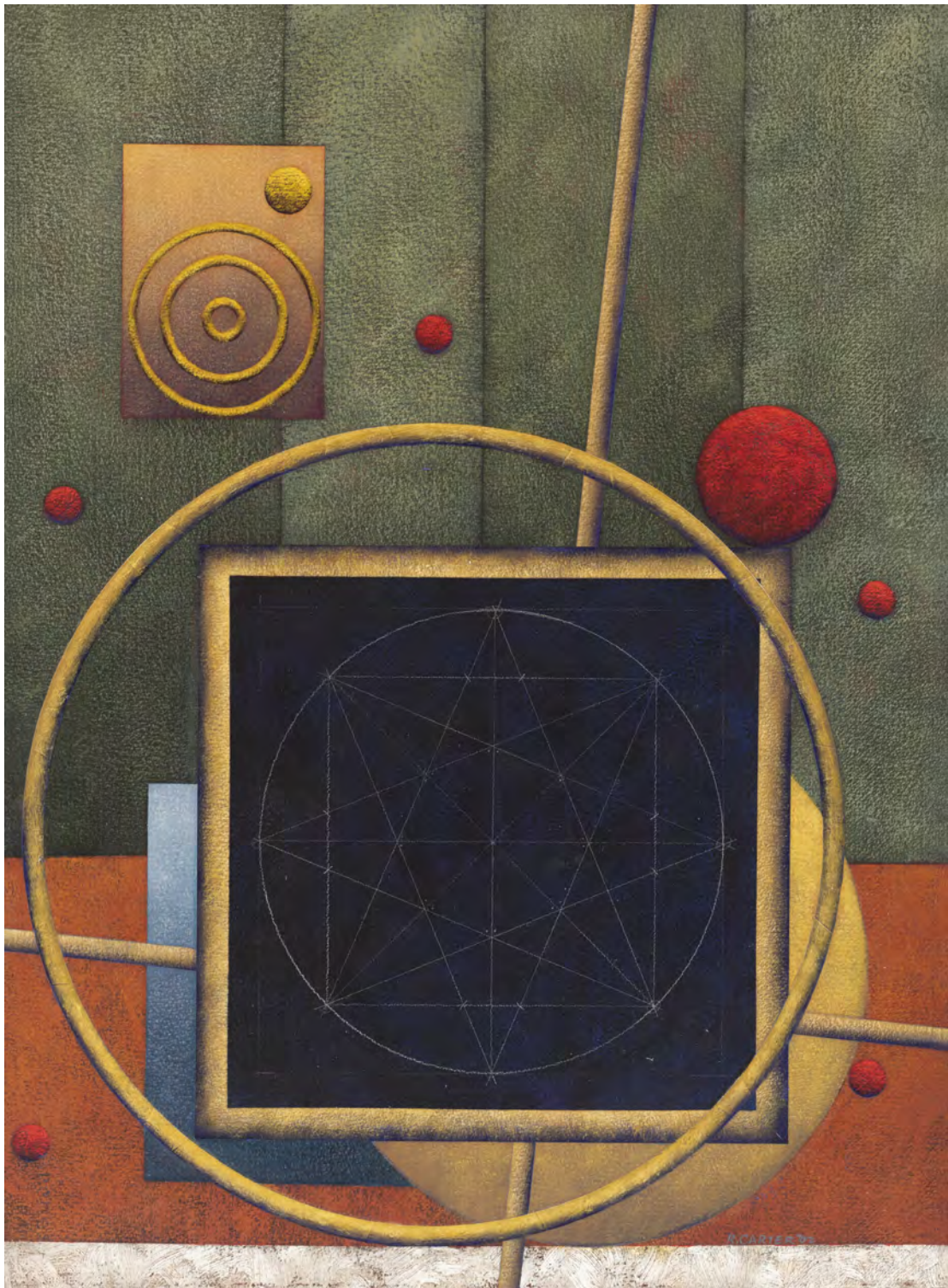


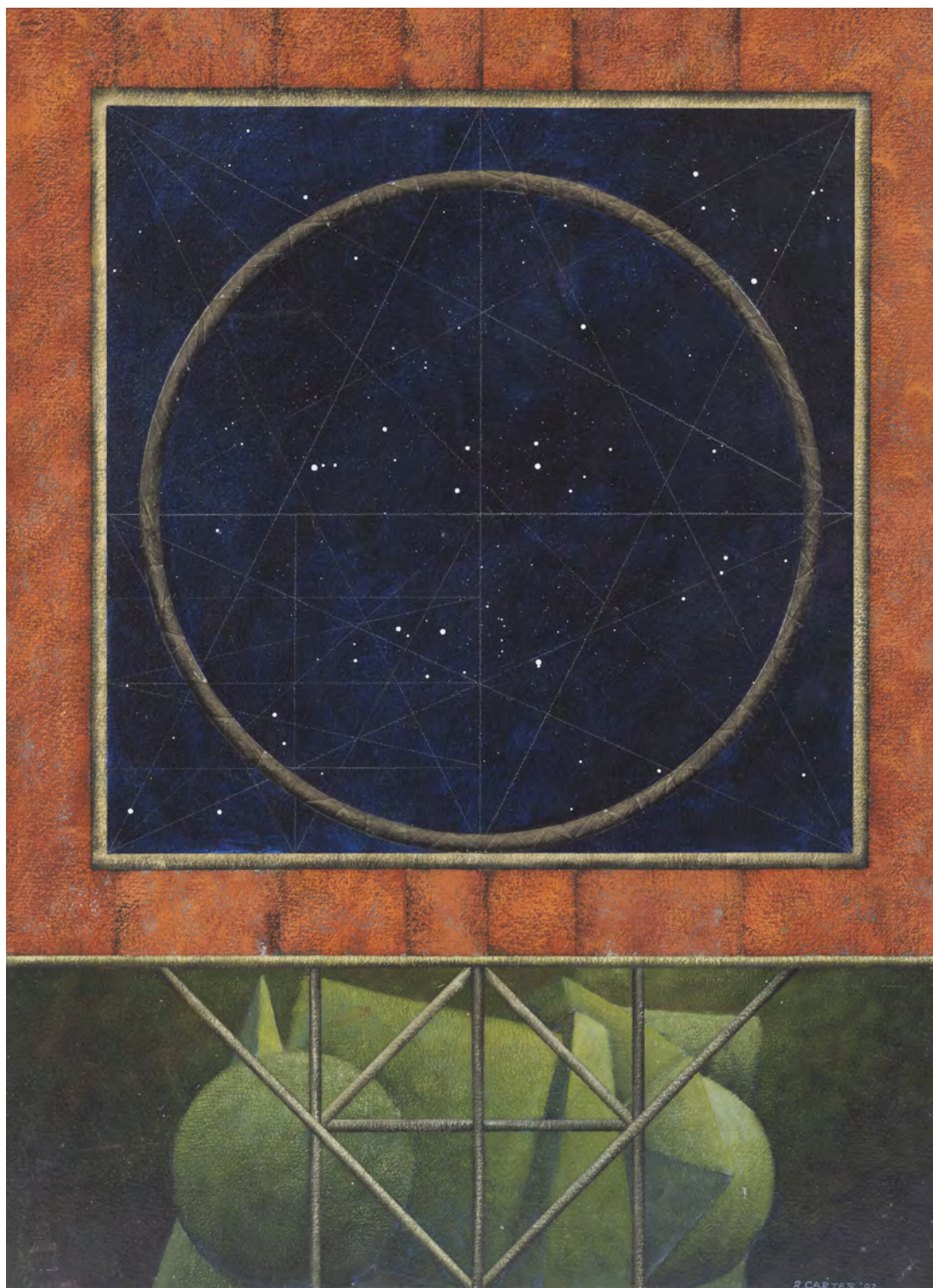


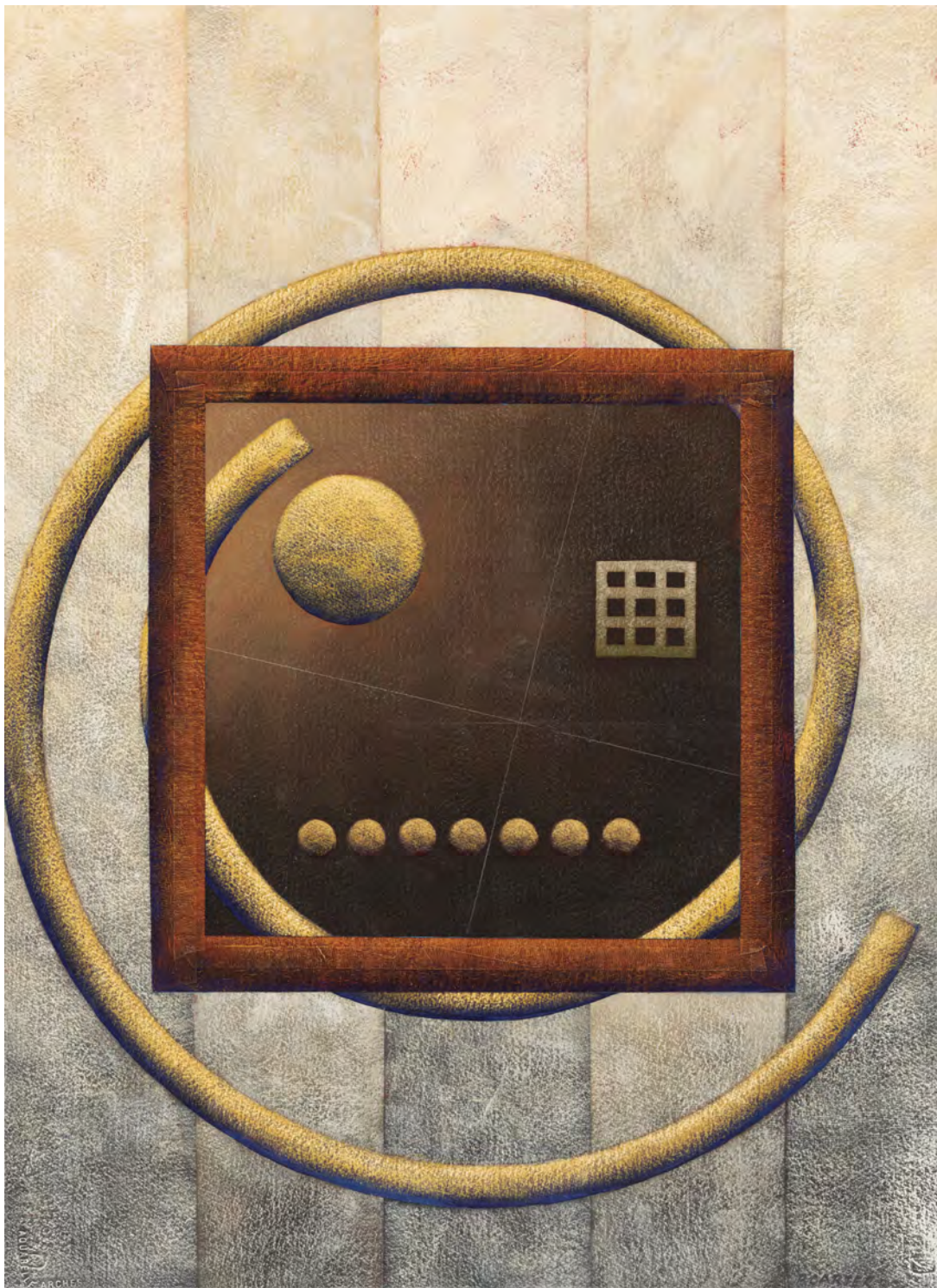






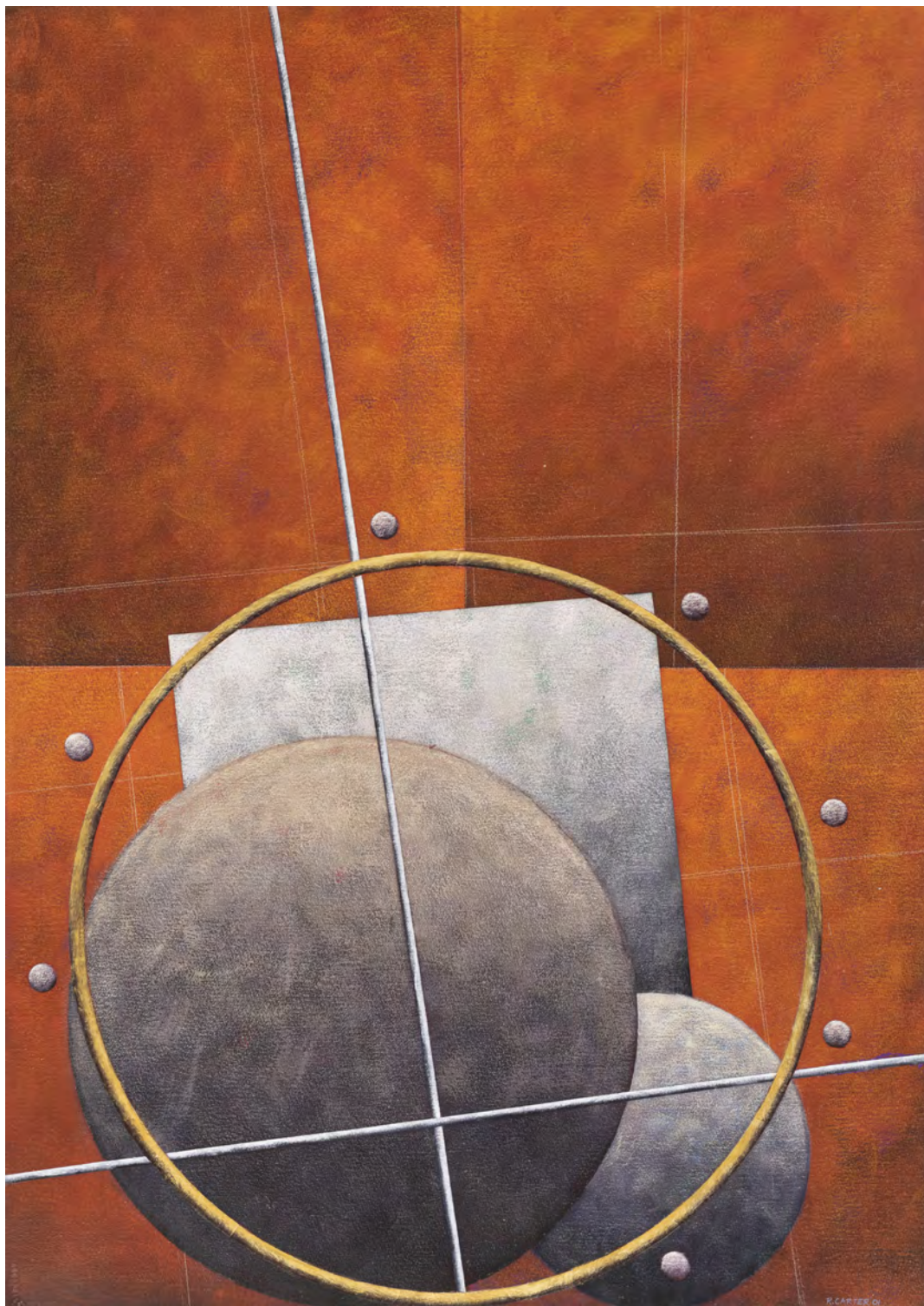


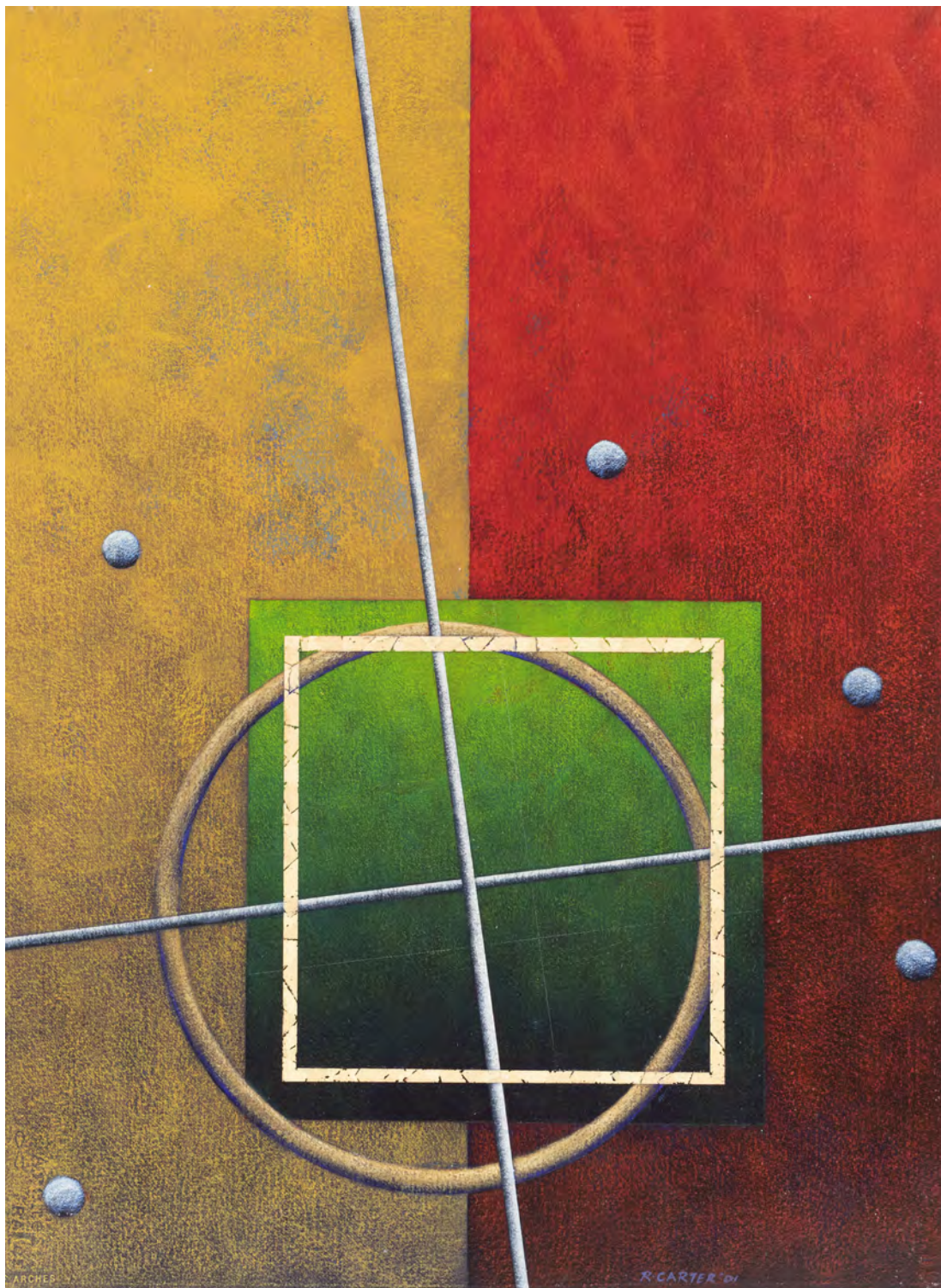


















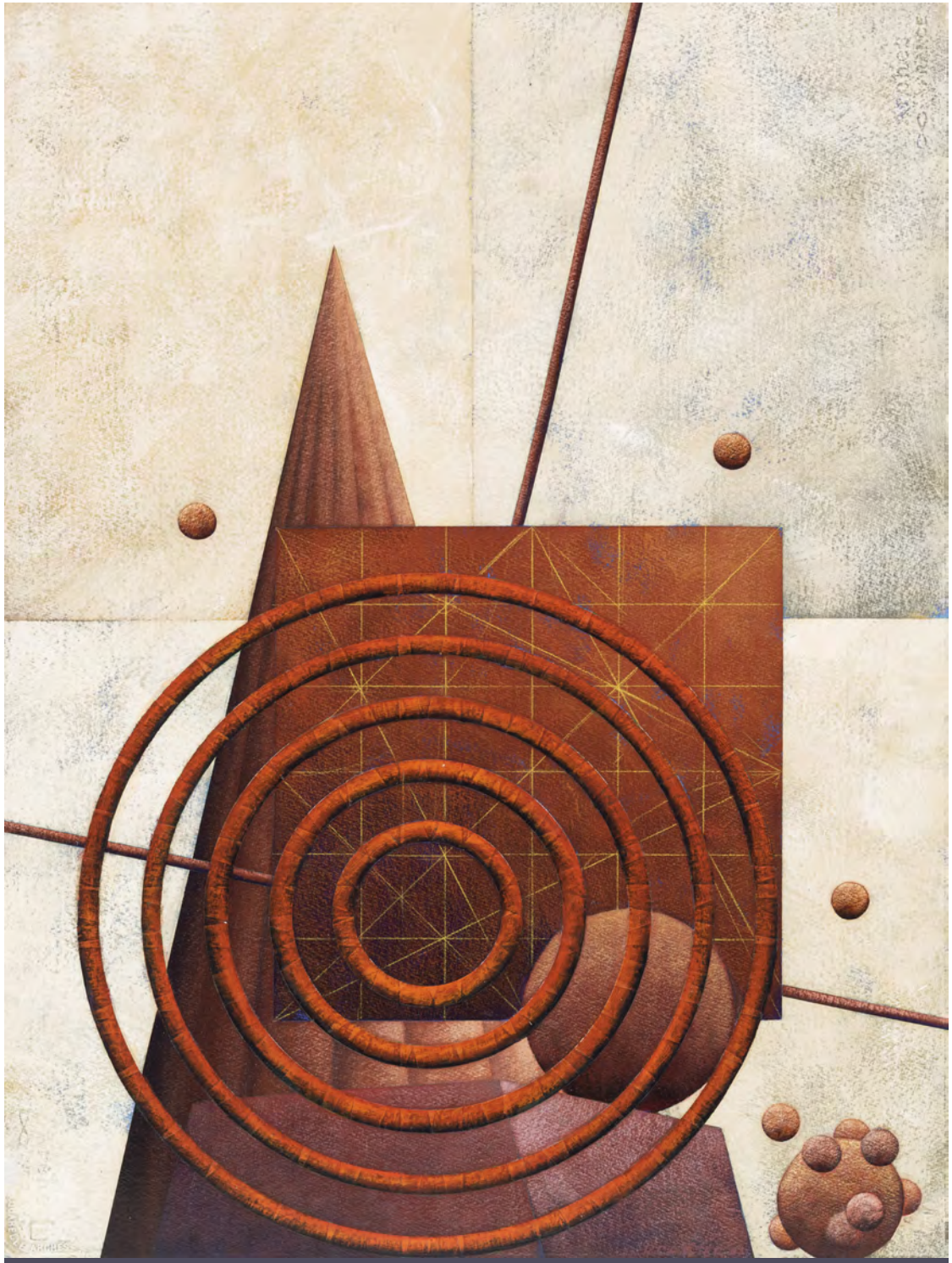


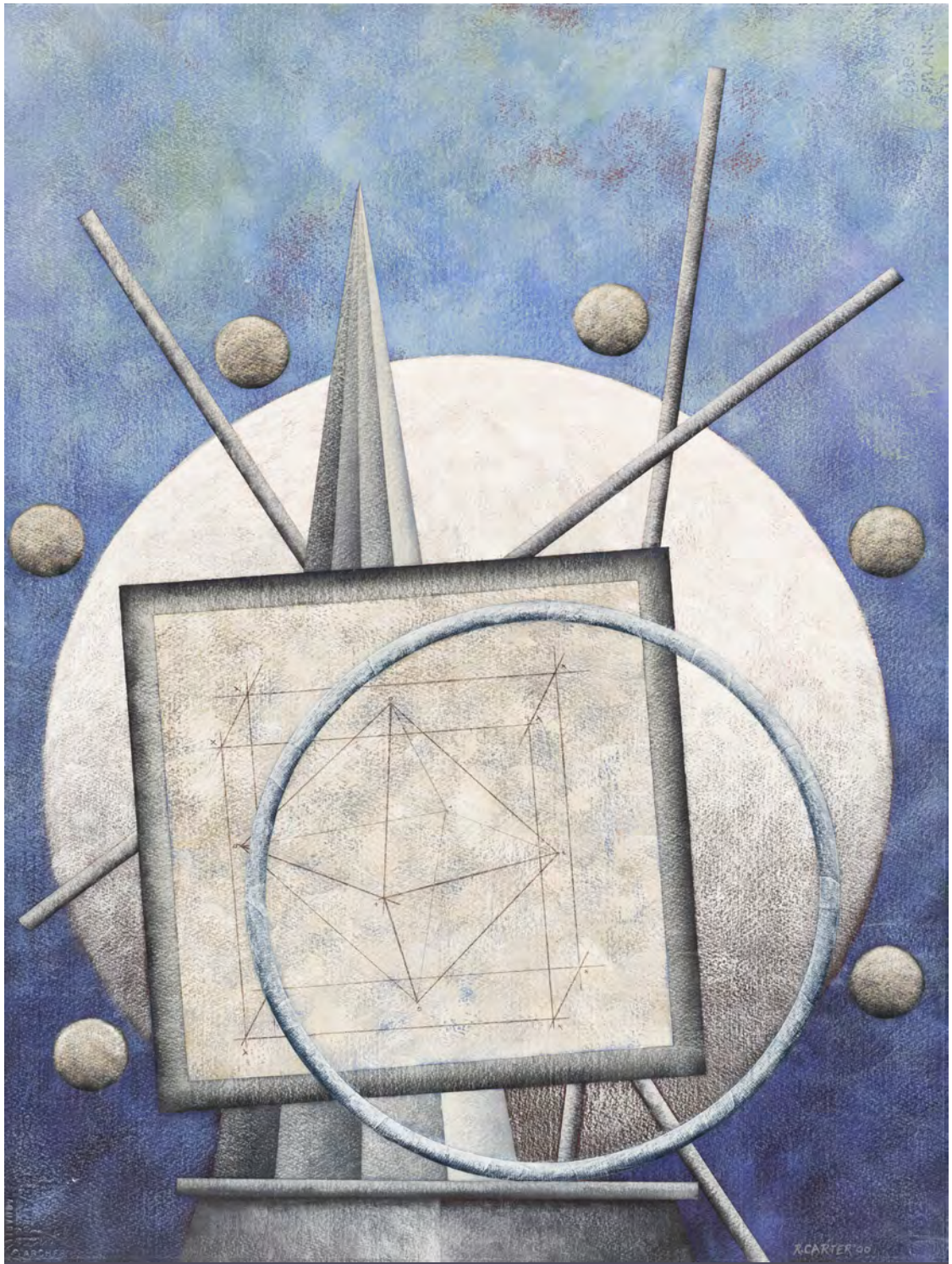




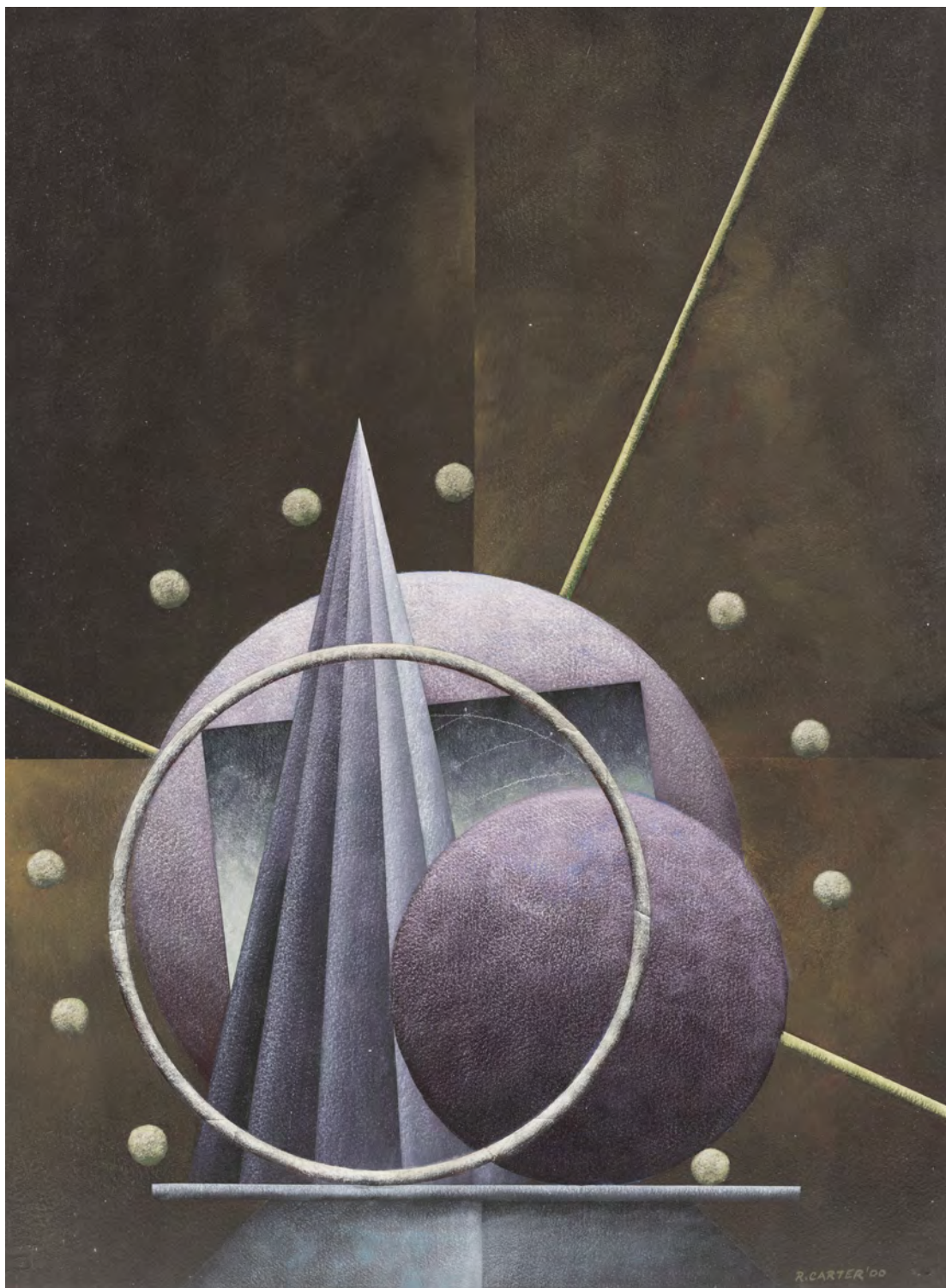


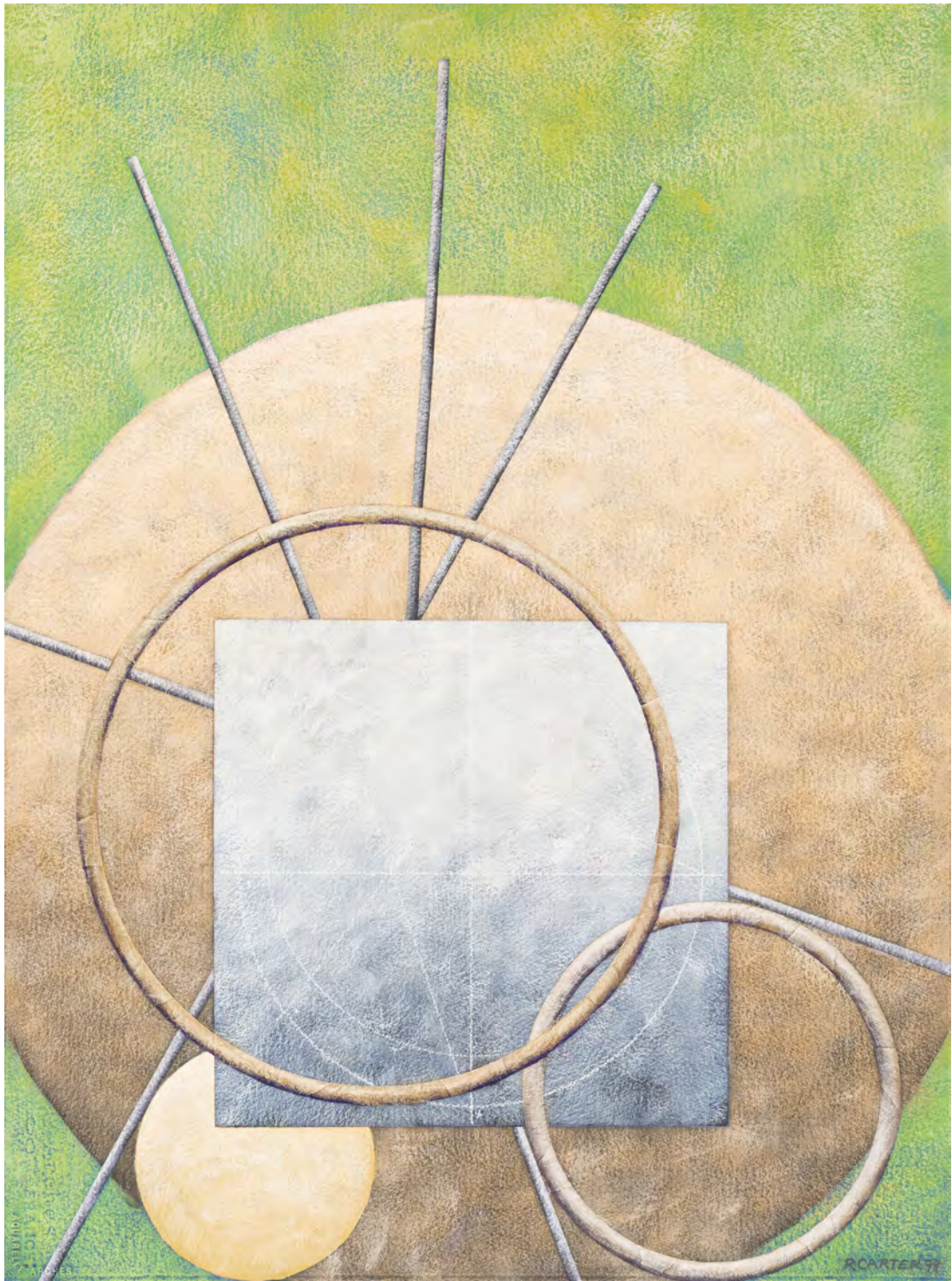




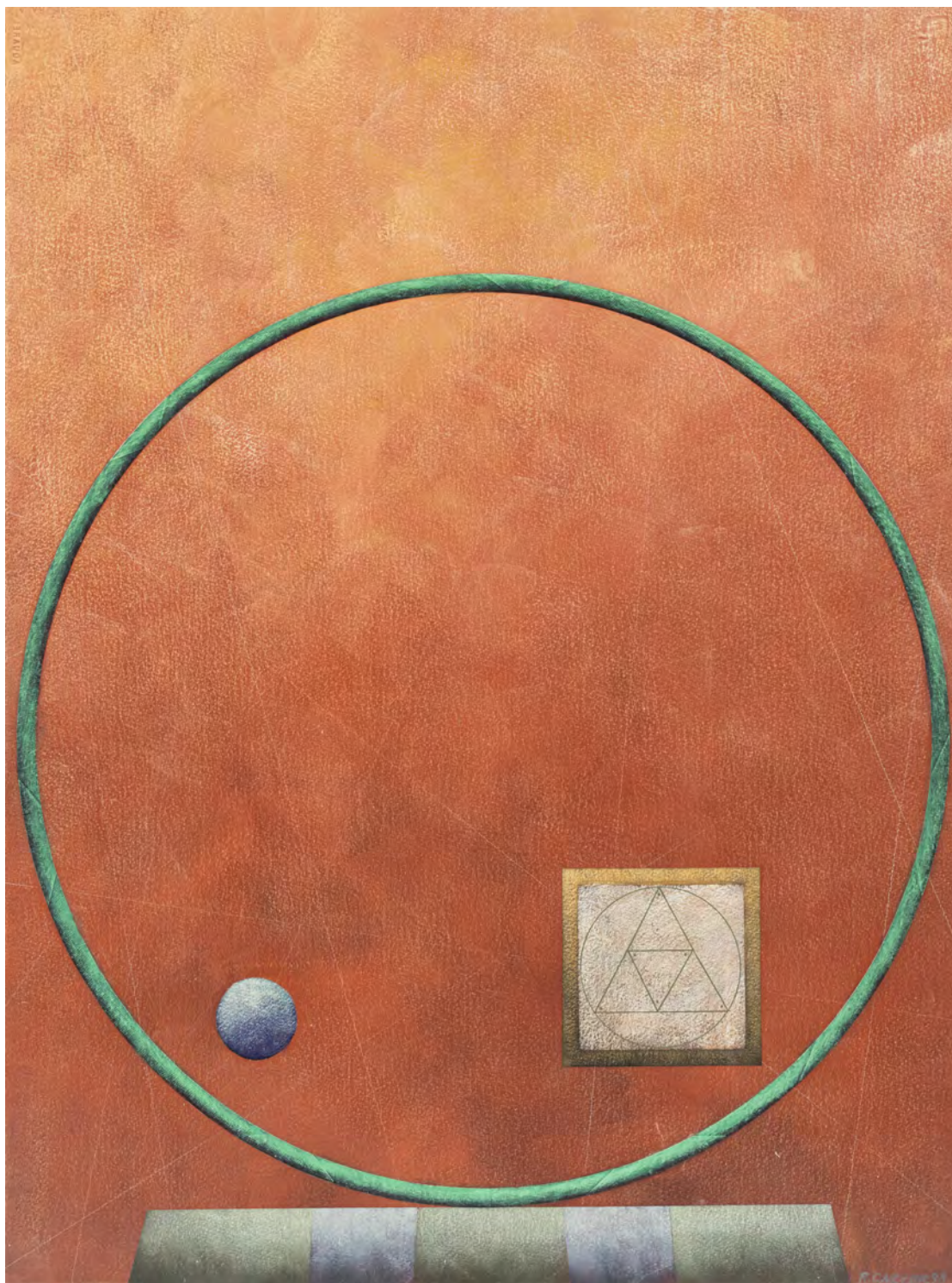
















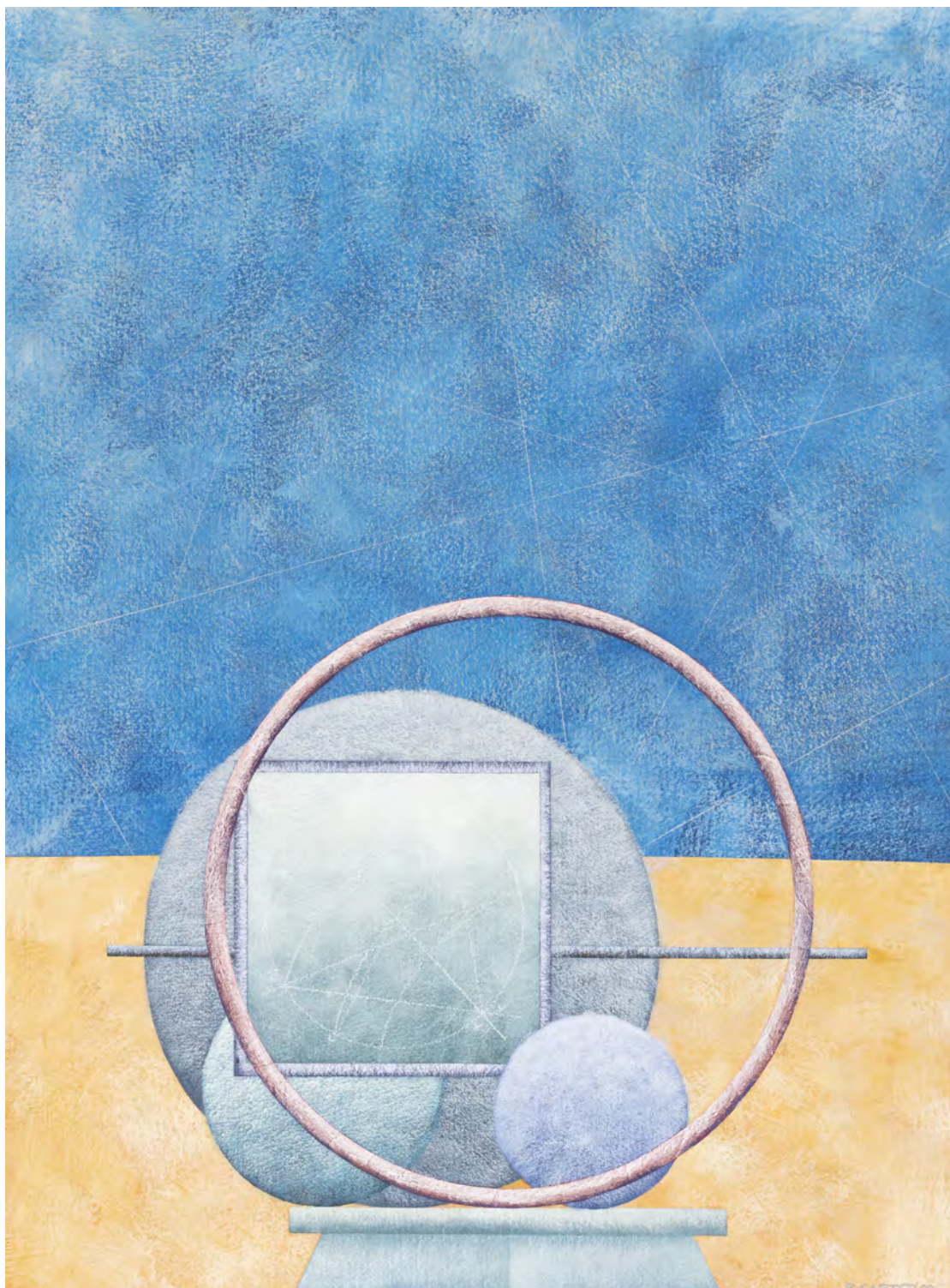


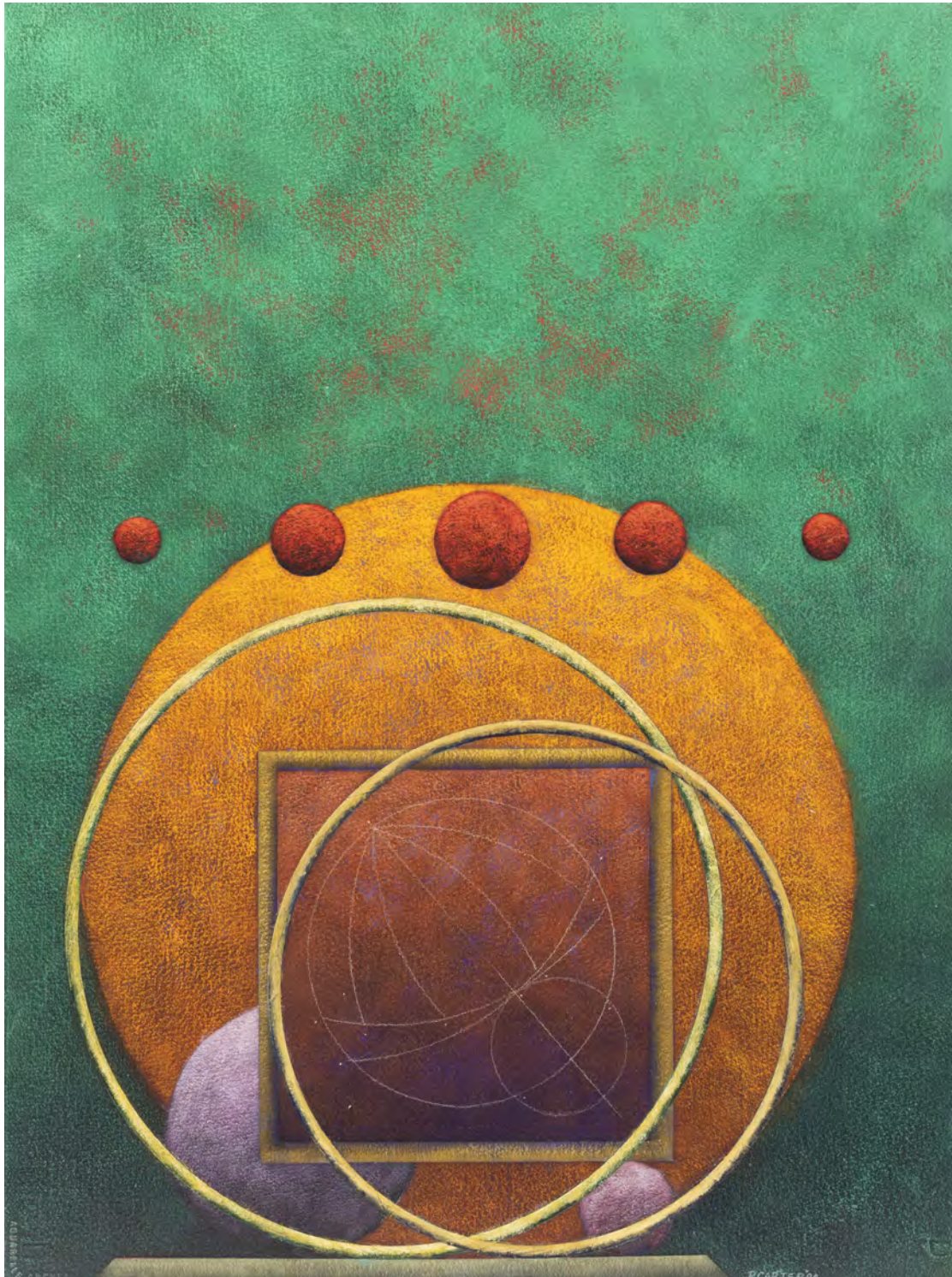




















VITAE

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2019 R. CARTER GALLERY, ASPEN COLO. "THE IMAGINED STILL-LIFE"
2019 R. CARTER GALLERY, ASPEN COLO. "MASKS + MANDALAS"
2019 R. CARTER GALLERY, ASPEN COLO. "THE ERRATIC SERIES"
2019 BUELL THEATRE GALLERY, DENVER COLO.
2016 WILLIAM HAVU GALLERY, DENVER CO. "NEW PAINTING"
2016 CARBONDALE COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS & HUMANITES,
"NEW PAINTINGS:MANDALAS CONSIDERED"
2013 ARTWORKS GALLERY BASALT COLO. " NEW PAINTINGS"
2013 ART WORKS GALLERY, BASALT COLO. "ROAD WORKS"
2010 DAVID FL ORIA GALLERY, ASPEN, COLO.
"FUTURE BEAUTY-FIRE"
2010 BASALT REGIONAL LIBRARY, BASALT, COLO. "DRAWINGS"
2009 DAVID FLORIA GALLERY, ASPEN, COLO.
"LIGHTNING DRAWINGS"
2007 SANTA MONICA MUSEUM OF ART, SANTA MONICA, CA.
"ICEBERGS"
2004 KATHLEEN EWING GALLERY, WASHINGTON DC " ICEBERGS"
2006 OFF MAIN GALLERY, SANTA MONICA, CA "THE NIGHT SKY"
2003 MAGIDSON GALLERY, ASPEN, COLO. "COSMIC VISIONS "
2001 MARY BELL GALLERY, CHICAGO, ILL.
2000 MAGIDSON GALLERY, ASPEN, COLO.
1998 MAGIDSON GALLERY, ASPEN COLO.
1998 MARY BELL GALLERY, CHICAGO, ILL.
1997 DAVID FLORIA GALLERY, WOODY CREEK, COLO.
1995 DAVID FLORIA GALLERY, WOODY CREEK, COLO.
1993 MARY BELL GALLERY, CHICAGO, ILL.
1993 MILL STREET GALLERY, ASPEN COLO.
1990 SANDY CARSON GALLERY, DENVER, COLO.
1990 MARY BELL GALLERY, CHICAGO, ILL.
1987 MILL STREET GALLERY, ASPEN, COLO.
1984 MILL STREET GALLERY, ASPEN, COLO.
1984 NIMBUS GALLERY, DALLAS, TEXAS
1984 VIRGINIA MILLER ART SPACE, CORAL GABLES, FLA.
1983 ASPEN INSTITUTE FOR HUMANISTIC STUDIES, ASPEN, COLO.
1983 IMAGE SOUTH GALLERY, ATLANTA, GA.
1982 COLORADO SPRINGS FINE ART CENTER,
COLO. SPRINGS, COLO.

1981 ANDERSON RANCH ART CENTER, SNOWMASS, COLO.
1980 CARSON-SAPIRO GALLERY, DENVER, COLO.
1980 IMAGE SOUTH GALLERY, ATLANTA, GA.
1980 PUTNEY GALLERY, ASPEN, COLO.
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1974 BRENA GALLERY, DENVER COLO.
1972 GARGOYLE GALLERY, ASPEN, COLO.
1969 GARGOYLE GALLERY, ASPEN, COLO.
1968 GALLERY 267, LEONIA, NJ.
1968 VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY, UNIVERSITY GALLERY,
VILLANOVA, PA

TWO-PERSON AND GROUP EXHIBITIONS

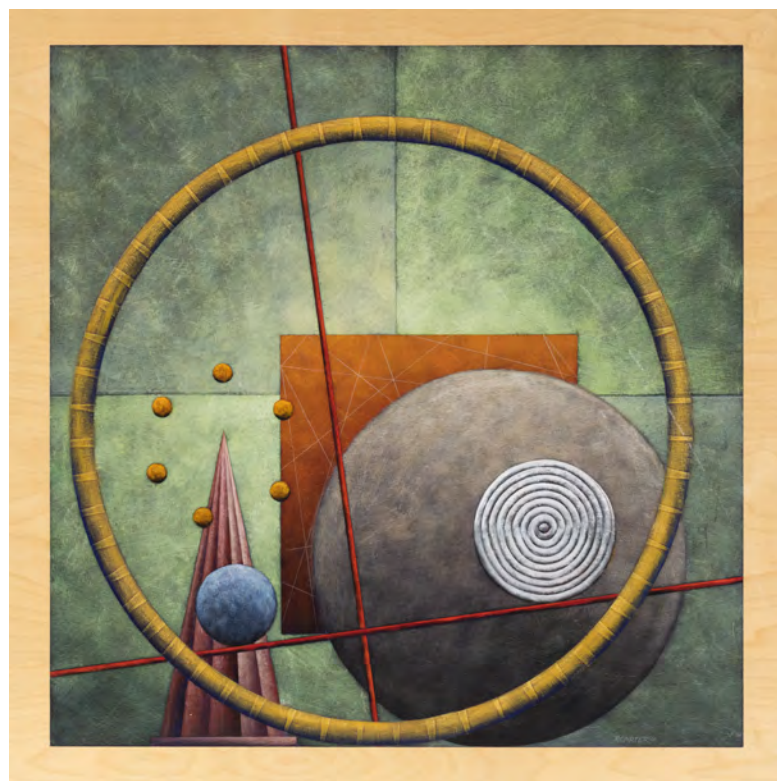
2019 "BAUHAUS SEEN" R2 GALLERY CARBONDALE ARTS,
CARBONDALE CO.
2018 INCOGNITO, INSTITUTE OF ART LA LA,CA.
2016 "DRAWINGS X4" ARTBASE, BASALT CO.
2015 "COLLECTIONS: DRAWINGS" DENVER ART MUSEUM,
DENVER CO
2014 INCOGNITO, SANTA MONICA MUSEUM OF ART,
SANTA MONICA CA
2013 BLACK & WHITE RED BRICK ART CENTER ASPEN CO.
2013 INCOGNITO, SANTA MONICA MUSEUM OF ART,
SANTA MONICA CA
2012 INCOGNITO, SANTA MONICA MUSEUM OF ART,
SANTA MONICA CA
2011 RFO, ASPEN ART MUSEUM , ASPEN CO.
2011 INCOGNITO, SANTA MONICA MUSEUM OF ART,
SANTA MONICA CA

2010 970.ORG, ASPEN ART MUSEUM, ASPEN CO.
 2010 INCOGNITO, SANTA MONICA MUSEUM OF ART,
 SANTA MONICA CA.
 2010 SUBLIME TRANSIENCE, ICEBERG DRAWINGS,
 UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA, ANCHORAGE
 2009 "MELTING POINT", (ICEBERGS,) EL CAMINO COLLEGE, LA CA.
 2009 INCOGNITO, SANTA MONICA MUSEUM OF ART,
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 2007 DAVID FLORIA GALLERY, ASPEN COLO.
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 2003 MAGIDSON FINE ART , ASPEN, CO.
 2000 CARSON GALLERY, DENVER, COLO.
 1999 RUTH BACHOFNER GALLERY, LA, CA.
 1999 RUTH BACHOFNER GALLERY, LA, CA.
 1997 MARGOT JACOBSEN GALLERY, PORTLAND, ORE.
 1996 DAVID FLORIA GALLERY, ASPEN, COLO.
 1995 "ART AND POLITICS" OBERE GALERIE, BERLIN, GERMANY
 1994 MARGOT JACOBSEN GALLERY, PORTLAND, ORE.
 1993 MILL STREET GALLERY, ASPEN, COLO.
 1992 EVELYN SIEGAL GALLERY, FORT WORTH, TEXAS
 1992 MILL STREET GALLERY, ASPEN, COLO.
 1990 SANDY CARSON GALLERY, DENVER, COLO.
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 1988 RICHARD CARTER- GEORGE KOZMAN,
 MARY BELL GALLERY, CHICAGO, ILL.
 1987 RICHARD CARTER-JESUS MORALES,
 VIRGINIA MILLER ART SPACE, CORAL GABLES, FLA,
 1989 "ART AND THE WEST; TRADITION AND INNOVATION",
 UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING ART MUSEUM, LARAMIE, WY.

1986 ART IN CORPORATE COLLECTIONS, NORTH MIAMI MUSEUM,
 MIAMI, FLA.
 1985 KINGSLEY- CROCKER ANNUAL, CROCKER ART MUSEUM.
 SACRAMENTO, CA.
 1985 RICHARD CARTER- BRIAN BLOUNT, MILL STREET GALLERY,
 ASPEN, COLO.
 1984 COLORADO INVITATIONAL PAINTING SHOW, ARVADA
 CENTER FOR THE ARTS, ARVADA, COLO.
 1984 RICHARD CARTER- ANN CURRIER,
 CARSON-SAPIRO GALLERY, DENVER, COLO.
 1984 COLORADO STATE FAIR INVITATIONAL, PUEBLO. COLO.
 1984 LARRY BELL- SAL PECORARO- RICHARD CARTER,
 UNICORN GALLERY, ASPEN, COLO.
 1982 STATE OF THE ARTS, DENVER ART MUSEUM,
 DENVER, COLO.
 1981 HEYDT-BAIR GALLERY, SANTA, FE NM.
 "LARRY BELL-RICHARD CARTER"
 1981 COLORADO BIENNIAL, COLORADO SPRINGS ART CENTER,
 COLORADO SPRINGS, COLO.
 1979 HEYDT-BAIR GALLERY, SANTA FE, NM.
 1979 ROARING FORK VALLEY ARTS FESTIVAL, ASPEN COLO.
 1978 ANDERSON RANCH ART CENTER, SNOWMASS, COLO.
 1977 WRIGHT- INGRHAM INSTITUTE INVITATIONAL,
 PARKER, COLO.
 1977 "ASPEN COMES TO BOULDER" BOULDER CENTER
 FOR THE ARTS, BOULDER, COLO.
 1976 COLORADO CELEBRATION OF THE ARTS,
 SPREE INVITATIONAL, DENVER, COLO.
 1975 ASPEN FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS, ANNUAL ART FESTIVAL
 1974 DENVER ART MUSEUM, 2ND ALL- COLORADO,
 DENVER, COLO.
 1972 RICHARD CARTER- SALLY HENDERSON,
 GARGOYLE GALLERY ASPEN, COLO.
 1970 FAIRLIEGH DICKENSON UNIVERSITY
 METROPOLITAN SHOW, TEANECK, NJ.
 1969 ALL PHILADELPHIA REGIONAL SHOW,
 VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY, VILLANOVA, PA.

EDUCATION AND ART ADVOCACY

1984-PRESENT	PRODUCTION DESIGN AND FILM ART DIRECTION
2011-PRESENT	BOARD MEMBER, THE ART CAMPUS AT WILLITS
2017	DESIGNER OF THE TEMPORARY THEATER
2010-PRESENT	THE ARTBASE BASALT CO., BOARD AND NATIONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS
1980-1985	ANDERSON RANCH ART CENTER, BOARD OF DIRECTORS
1978	CURATOR, ROCKY MOUNTAIN INVITATIONAL, NON- FUNCTIONAL CLAY, 14 CERAMACISTS
1977	CURATOR, ROCKY MOUNTAIN INVITATIONAL, PAINTING AND DRAWING, ASPEN, COLO.
1976	CURATOR, ROCKY MOUNTAIN INVITATIONAL. PAINTING AND SCULPTURE, ASPEN COLO.
1976-1982	FOUNDER, ASPEN ART MUSEUM, BOARD OF DIRECTORS
1977-1978	GALLERY DIRECTOR, ASPEN, COLO.
1972-1978	ASSISTANT TO BAUHAUS MASTER HERBERT BAYER, PAINTING, SCULPTURE, ARCHITECTURE, DESIGN AND OTHER MEDIA
1964-1968	VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY, VILLANOVA, PA. BA., SOC. SCI.



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