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## Richard Carlyon: A Retrospective

Richard Carlyon  
*Virginia Commonwealth University*

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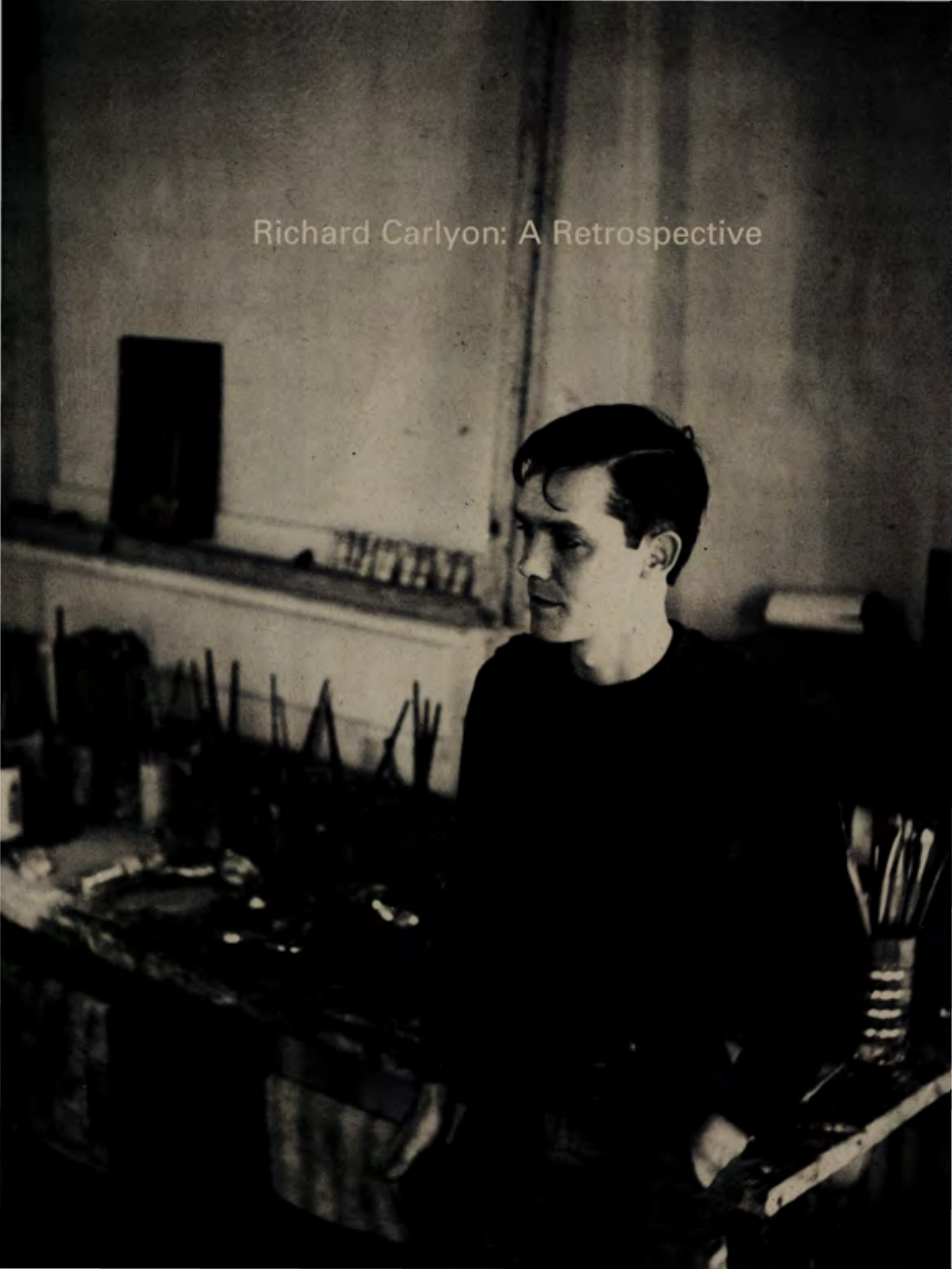
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YON

I like to think of myself as a person who pays attention to things. Some of the things I have been paying attention to for over fifty years would include the following: blank sheets of paper, blank billboards, plain flush doors, the backs of black and white photographs, skylights, outdoor movie screens, indoor movie screens, the margins around anything that is printed, flour-covered aprons, breakwalls, piers, sidewalks, stepping stones, clean blackboards, barren bulletin boards, tablecloths, sunglasses, plaster walls, gymnasium floors, empty swimming pools, graffiti, music notation, newly plowed fields, opaque window shades, close-up shots of Greta Garbo's face, platinum blonde hair, colorless maps in children's geography books, white sheets, beaches, the aisles in dark theaters, the spaces between things and the people I love.

When I am painting I like to think of myself as a painter who is paying attention to his painting; any other considerations are dismissed for being too fictional and abstract.

Richard Carlyon: A Retrospective





This catalogue was published in conjunction with the multisite exhibition **Richard Carlyon: A Retrospective**, which opened on September 11, 2009, and was organized by

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**Title Page:**

Richard Carlyon in his Richmond studio,  
1005 West Grace Street, Winter 1958–59.

**This Page:**

Richard Carlyon dancing with Lucinda Childs  
in Jewett Campbell's studio,  
second Bang Arts Festival,  
Richmond Professional Institute,  
21 April 1965.

Published by Anderson Gallery, VCU School of the Arts, in partnership with Reynolds Gallery, 1708 Gallery, and Visual Arts Center of Richmond.  
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Library of Congress Control Number: 2009906953 ISBN 9780935619334

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## Acknowledgments

When remembering Richard Carlyon, it is difficult to imagine anyone else who has had such a wide-ranging and lifelong impact on this community, creatively and educationally, except perhaps Theresa Pollak, founder of the VCU School of the Arts. Because of his sustained and influential presence, Carlyon emerges as an eminently worthy candidate among other individuals who might be cited as Pollak's successor. In an unpublished statement excerpted from a 2005 critique of a student's work, he articulated what must have been a guiding principle for his own endeavors: "One lives one's life in relation to an outside. This outside is in large measure what we are. Outside ourselves, we overlap with others... People are their environments as much as they are themselves." This is only one from a host of lessons that many of us have gleaned from his example and perspicacity.

The impressive list of more than one hundred individuals that appears on the facing page is a resounding tribute to Carlyon. We are deeply grateful to each of these contributors, for it is their generosity that has made this project possible. At a particularly crucial time, Altria Group stepped forward to become the lead sponsor, underwriting a substantial portion of the costs of producing this catalogue. We extend special thanks to Nancy Lund for her enthusiastic support and to Gordon Dixon, Scott Moore, Albert Lunsford, and Rob Pannell for their kind assistance. Richard Toscan, dean of the VCU School of the Arts, has been an essential source of encouragement and support, as has Alan Kirshner, chairman and CEO of Markel Corporation. We are indebted as well to the institutional and individual lenders also listed on the preceding page and thank them for allowing us to include their works in the exhibition.

The organization of this retrospective, on view simultaneously at four Richmond venues, depended on the ideas, insights, and eager participation of Beverly Reynolds at Reynolds Gallery, Brad Birchett and Gregg Carbo at 1708 Gallery, and Katherine Huntoon at the Visual Arts Center of Richmond (VACR). Each curator was responsible for conceiving a different thematic approach; when presented together, our hope was that these four installations would become complementary parts of a larger cohesive whole, imparting a much fuller picture of the breadth of Carlyon's artistic achievements.

Also playing important roles in the project's implementation were Tatjana Beylotte, director, 1708 Gallery; Julia Boyette, assistant director, Reynolds Gallery; Maggi Tinsley, marketing coordinator, VACR; Jayne Shaw, associate dean for development, VCU School of the Arts; Tim Bowring, who organized and moderated the artists' panel at 1708 Gallery; designer Dale VanMegroet, who contributed his time and talent to produce the exhibition invitation; and Rick Michaels at Main Art, who framed works for each venue with exceptional results. As always, the installation at the Anderson Gallery simply wouldn't have materialized without the input and hard work of Exhibition Manager Michael Lease and Gallery Coordinator Traci Flores.

Preparations for this retrospective began in January 2007. Over the next year and a half, thanks to Jenna Kowalke-Jones' perseverance and Nancy Millet's early contribution, an inventory was completed that documents nearly 2,000 paintings, drawings, collages, constructions, and videos made by Carlyon over half a century. Lending his assistance on numerous fronts, Jason Carlyon





undertook the photographic documentation of his father's studio so that it could be reassembled for this exhibition. Bev Reynolds, unstinting in her support through the years, graciously offered to host a benefit exhibition at the Reynolds Gallery in May 2008, with proceeds from sales donated to the project. We are also indebted to Sheila Gray, who from the start has tirelessly helped organize, pack, and move works.

We are immensely grateful to Howard Risatti, VCU emeritus professor in the Department of Art History and a close friend of the artist, for everything he has done on behalf of this retrospective. He has served as an invaluable advisor to the project from the beginning. While Carlyon's reputation as an influential teacher is legendary, his prolific activities as an artist have been less consistently visible and closely examined and deserve wider exposure. Dr. Risatti's in-depth essay illuminates a complex, multifaceted career and establishes a balance between these two spheres. Author Wesley Gibson has also previously written with great insight about Carlyon's work. His essay on the

artist's videos is a most welcome inclusion, and we thank him for tackling this assignment in the midst of a hectic teaching schedule.

A singular pleasure afforded by the project was the opportunity to work once again with John Malinoski, associate professor in the VCU Department of Graphic Design, who took on the job of designing this book as a personal commitment. He applied such inventiveness, intelligence, integrity, and precision to this challenge that the resulting design is itself an impeccable tribute to an esteemed colleague. We extend to him our sincere gratitude and boundless admiration. Thanks go also to Susan Higgins and Elizabeth Bolka of Worth Higgins & Associates for the special care they lavished on the printing of the catalogue; Jerry Bates of the VCU Graphics Lab for so readily addressing our prepress-production needs; Travis Fullerton for photographing the artworks reproduced here; and William Simeone, Sr. for his editorial help.

That Carlyon was an inspiration to so many, on so many different levels, becomes abundantly clear in the eloquent tributes appearing in this book by Chris Burnside, Emmet Gowin, Ray Kass, Elizabeth King, Bernard Martin, and Lester Van Winkle. Chris Burnside also enhanced this project immeasurably with the performance he created in honor of Carlyon, presented in conjunction with the exhibition by the VCU Department of Dance & Choreography. Choreographer Laura Schandelmeier, Carlyon's niece, opened the program with a dance inspired by one of her uncle's videos. We greatly appreciate the support of James Frazier, Dance Department chair, and Drs. Erica Mindes and Ken Zaslav, who generously underwrote the post-performance reception.

We have enlisted Eleanor Ruffy Carlyon's help and consultation in countless ways throughout the development of this project. Her steady perspective and unceasing inspiration have been instrumental in keeping us on track. This book is dedicated to her.

Ashley Kistler  
Director  
Anderson Gallery  
VCU School of the Arts





# Richard Carlyon: A Life in Art

Howard Risatti

At one time, becoming an artist meant engaging in a cultural dialogue with tradition while confronting a continuously unfolding present. Engaging in such a dialogue was no easy matter for it meant venturing into uncharted territory that often was inhospitable as well as unrewarding in a material sense. This is the life that Richard Carlyon chose when he became an artist.

Richard Carlyon was born on 1 October 1930 in Dunkirk, New York, a small fishing and steel town in Chautauqua County on Lake Erie. He was the second of three children and the only son. His father ran a heating and plumbing business, while his mother ran the household. She was an accomplished musician and professional pianist who frequently played the family piano for her children, even encouraging them to learn to play. It may have been her interest in music that helped cultivate her son's interest in the arts — something his father remained skeptical of throughout his life, even after his son had established himself as a successful artist.

Looking back, this may not seem like a very enlightened attitude on the part of Carlyon's father, but theirs was not an age of affluence like ours; money was short and times were desperate. Carlyon, it should be remembered, was born one year after the terrible stock-market crash of 1929, and his early years growing up were during the heart of the Great Depression of the 1930s — he would recall many years later how his mother fed meals to the hungry on their back porch.<sup>1</sup> The decades that followed the Depression were not much better as the crisis of World War II was soon followed by that of the Berlin Blockade, which signaled the beginning of the Cold War, and the Korean War. In such an environment, the arts, which were not as celebrated as they are today, must have seemed a risky and inconsequential endeavor at best.<sup>2</sup>

In the fall of 1948, the year the blockade began, Carlyon entered the University of Buffalo where he stayed until May 1950. The University of Buffalo was a logical choice; it was in-state and literally up the road a piece, about an hour from Dunkirk. As Carlyon recalled, at the time he was 18 years old and didn't know what he wanted to do. Most of his classmates at the university were male and WWII veterans who had experienced combat; they were, he remembered, very serious about their studies, asked hard questions, and were skeptical, if not outright cynical.<sup>3</sup>

One day during the two years he spent at the university as a Liberal Arts major in the College of Arts and Sciences, he had what amounted to an epiphany and decided to become an artist. There are various versions of how this happened. In one version, as told in a 1996 interview, it occurred when he happened upon two paintings in the Buffalo Museum — a Chaim Soutine and a Joan Miró:

I kept looking at those paintings and thinking about the experience that the artists must have had — the image and handling of the material was very complicated.... The Soutine had a man with his hand against his head. It looked like the paint had pressed the head against the hand. On another wall, the Miró was little squiggles of no determined space with cerulean blue. The figure of the ringmaster was reduced to a line that went into a huge boot. There was humor in it. Here were these two opposite works, but they knocked me out. It's still vivid to this day.<sup>4</sup>

In another version, it was while he was taking an art history class. He found the course's textbook dull, but he liked the professor who, he felt, made the material come alive by relating the past to the present. Students were assigned to go to the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, choose three twentieth-century works, and write a term paper about them. The three works Carlyon chose were by artists who could not have been more different: Miró, Soutine, and Piet Mondrian. The professor's reaction to his paper was to say, "Your naiveté is appalling but your... enthusiasm, and curiosity are commendable." Regardless of which version of the story is more accurate, it is at this time that Carlyon began thinking about becoming an artist.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Ed Slipek, Jr., "Contrast, Context, and Continuity," *Style Weekly*, (30 April 1996), p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> World War II ended in 1945, and the Cold War began on 24 June 1948 when the Soviets blockaded the city of Berlin. The blockade, which lasted until 11 May 1949, was eventually broken as the Allies airlifted supplies into the beleaguered city. The Korean War began on 25 June 1950, when North Korea invaded the South; the conflict ended three years later.

<sup>3</sup> Carlyon Archive folder titled "Gallery Talks 'Sightings' (Bio. Notes)."

<sup>4</sup> Ed Slipek, Jr., p. 22. Susana Tejada, Head of Research Resources at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, found no paintings in the museum collection that fit this description, though there is a similar painting by Miró titled *Harlequin's Carnival* (1924–35); it entered the collection in 1940. Carlyon did have a catalogue in his library from a 1965 Tate Gallery exhibition of the work of Soutine that illustrates a painting titled *Man Praying*; this painting, which fits exactly his description, was borrowed by the Tate from the Perls Gallery in New York for the exhibition.





The professor who inspired Carlyon was William Seitz, who later became a curator in the Department of Painting and Sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Seitz was a native of Buffalo and began studying fine art at the Albright Art School in Buffalo. In 1948, he received his BFA degree in painting from the University of Buffalo and began teaching there. He remained until 1949, the year Carlyon must have been in his art history survey class. What should be noted about Seitz is that, because he was an artist, he brought both an interest in modernism and a painter's knowledge to the teaching of art history — something that was to characterize Carlyon's own approach to art making and to the teaching of art history.<sup>6</sup>

During the summer of 1949, Carlyon attended Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh where he studied art in the College of Fine Arts. But Carnegie Institute was very expensive, so he returned to the University of Buffalo for the next academic year (September 1949–May 1950), after which he went home to Dunkirk for the summer. Around this time, he happened upon a catalogue for Richmond Professional Institute (RPI); he liked the simplicity of its program and courses, so he decided to enroll to study art. His father, who did not approve of his son studying art, agreed to support him financially by paying tuition. One reason he may have agreed is that RPI was so inexpensive, especially compared to Carnegie Institute.

<sup>5</sup> Carlyon Archive folder titled "Gallery Talks 'Sightings' (Bio. Notes)." The Mondrian in question probably was *Composition No. 11, 1940–42—London, with Blue, Red, and Yellow*; it entered the Albright-Knox collection in 1944.

<sup>6</sup> In 1950–51, Seitz entered the MFA program at Princeton University but soon petitioned to enter the PhD program to write a dissertation on Abstract Expressionism, then a contemporary movement still in its emerging stages; no one had yet done anything like this. After consultation with Alfred Barr, MoMA Director and a Princeton alumnus, the Art Department chair allowed Seitz into the PhD program where he completed a dissertation on Abstract Expressionism in 1955. Carlyon was an excellent teacher — he was awarded the Distinguished Teaching of Art Award from the College Art Association in 1993 — because of his concern for students and his ability to infuse the history of art with an artist's knowledge of the creative and practical aspects of making art.



Top: Rome, Italy, 19 August 1954.

Bottom: Hanau, Germany, 5 July 1954.

<sup>7</sup> Mary Flinn, "An Interview with Richard Carlyon," *Blackbird*, vol.1, no.1 (Spring 2002), p. 2 of transcript.

<sup>8</sup> *The Common Glory* is a symphonic drama with music and dance set in Colonial times with Thomas Jefferson as a central figure. It was written by Paul Green in 1947 and, since then, has been performed annually during summers at Colonial Williamsburg.

### Richmond Professional Institute

In the fall of 1950, Carlyon moved to Richmond and began his undergraduate art studies, remaining until 1953 when he graduated with a BFA. He concentrated on both painting and dance — something he got interested in rather by accident. Physical education was required and the options included, among other things, horseback riding and modern dance taught by Martha Ganzart. He chose modern dance, thinking it was ballroom dancing of the type Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers did in the movies; to his surprise, it turned out to be modern dance in the manner of Martha Graham, which he liked and also was very good at. He soon became aware of modern movements in music as well, when he came across the work of John Cage at McCorley's, a music shop on West Grace Street near the RPI campus. Looking through the bins of on-sale records, he discovered *John Cage Prepared Piano*, a two LP recording of Cage's *Music for Prepared Piano*, which he purchased for 50¢.<sup>7</sup> During the summers, he earned money dancing in the symphonic pageant *The Common Glory* in historic Colonial Williamsburg, which is located near Richmond.<sup>8</sup>

Among the faculty he studied with at RPI were Theresa Pollak, Maurice Bonds, and German-American artist Wolfgang Biehl, who was noted for his drawing classes. Carlyon's student work from these years shows their varied influences, including the patterning of Matisse, an expressionist color palette, and a firm sense of compositional structure. An interesting example is *Interior* (1951); while clearly a student work, it shows an uncanny ability to simplify form and manipulate space through the use of color. Two especially noteworthy and more precocious paintings from this period are *Tree* (April 1952, p. 80) and *Still Life No. 2* (February–April 1953). *Tree* features an "all over" compositional field, a German Expressionist palette with color laid down in patches, and the complicated, angular rhythm of a leafless tree, all folded into the ground of the canvas to create a highly individualistic and flattened spatial field reminiscent of late Cubism. Though *Still Life No. 2* has a less complicated compositional structure, it still relates to late Cubist ideas; moreover, its color scheme and tonal shifts manipulate space in a subtle manner reminiscent of Matisse.



While concentrating on painting, Carlyon also was very active in modern dance and choreography. In fact, his heavily impastoed painting, *Night Journey* (1952–53), is titled after a Martha Graham dance piece. As a result of his ability as a dancer, he received a fellowship for the fall of 1953 to study at the Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance in New York City.

### Military Service and New York

After graduating from RPI in May of 1953, and before going to New York to study dance with Martha Graham, Carlyon spent the summer at his parents' home in Dunkirk. Unfortunately, he was never able to study with Graham because in August he was drafted into the U.S. military and sent to Fort Dix and then to Camp Kilmer, both in New Jersey. While this gave him the opportunity to visit museums and galleries in nearby New York City, the Korean conflict was still smoldering, and he was sure he would be sent there even though an armistice had been signed between North and South Korea on 27 July 1953. Instead, he was sent to Germany as part of the Allied Occupying Forces in Europe.<sup>9</sup> He made very little art during these years, having been deeply depressed by the devastations that he saw in Germany, which included concentration camps and a roofless Cologne Cathedral.<sup>10</sup> Near the end of his tour of duty, he used his accumulated leave to go on a two-week grand tour to Venice and France; he visited the French Mediterranean coast where he saw Matisse's Chapel in Vence near Nice, and he also went to Paris. When he returned to Germany, he began to think about art and culture again and used his weekends to visit Mozart's and Wagner's haunts.<sup>11</sup>

Apparently this tour also revived his spirits, and perhaps even his faith in humanity, for sometime in 1954, he wrote to Hans Hofmann inquiring about admission to The Hans Hofmann School of Fine Arts in New York City after his discharge from the military. A handwritten letter from Hofmann, dated 14 November 1954, states in a somewhat broken English, that "we regrette [sic] to inform you that our school handels [sic] never GI students. Sincerely, Hans Hofmann."<sup>12</sup> Carlyon had been sent to Fort Dix to await his military discharge, and it may have been from there that he wrote the letter to Hofmann. Whatever the case, while at Fort Dix he again visited New York City — this time to see how much things had changed during his two-year absence.

When his discharge finally came through on 7 June 1955, he returned to Colonial Williamsburg to once again dance in the pageant *The Common Glory*. After the summer, he probably went to his parents' home in Dunkirk with the intention of attending the graduate program at Hunter College in New York City. Somewhere around this time, he applied to Hunter and was accepted, though it is not known exactly when he sent in his application. Unfortunately, graduate studies at Hunter College didn't work out — this time for financial reasons. As he wrote in a letter from 1958, "... I didn't have \$150.00 down payment on tuition; it is needed in order to enroll."<sup>13</sup> He did, however, do some painting and printmaking after his discharge. An untitled oil painting (December 1955) shows the influence of Arshile Gorky's work from the late 1930s and early 40s in its severe color scheme and in the way the original ground has been over-painted in white, leaving visible a stark black armature.

### Richmond Again

In late December 1955, Carlyon traveled to Richmond to attend a friend's wedding. While he was on campus waiting for a ride back to Dunkirk, Dr. Henry Hibbs, who was head of RPI and still remembered a dance Carlyon had choreographed as an undergraduate student, offered him a part-time position as an adjunct instructor teaching dance and choreography in the Department of Physical Education for the 1956 spring term.<sup>14</sup> Carlyon took the position and moved back to Richmond, where he lived on West Grace Street near campus.

His stay in Richmond, though for only one semester, proved very fruitful for his work. He not only had money to buy materials but also time to paint. He completed at least 16 major oil paintings during this period that included a group of landscapes and the start of a series called Kali. This title refers to the Hindu deity associated with death and destruction, who is also the goddess of time and change and the consort of Shiva. The physical format of *Kali No. 2* (May 1956, p. 42), an oil on canvas with collage elements, reflects the viewer's body in its vertical orientation — something that Carlyon would remain attuned to even in his later abstractions. The collage elements in Kali are strips of canvas that suggest body parts — a thigh, a breast — as do gestural brushstrokes in red and black. Whites, yellows, and oranges dominate the painting, and the overall effect is of a fire-storm of swirling energy. One can't help but wonder if the artist's choice of subject, his color scheme, and his manner of execution, which is somewhat reminiscent of Willem DeKooning's paintings from the same period, were inspired by the devastation he saw while stationed in Germany. One even wonders if this series has something to do with the German city of Dresden, which had been fire-bombed by the Allies during the war.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>9</sup> At Fort Dix, Carlyon spent eight weeks in basic training, followed by eight weeks of radio school. He was sent to Camp Kilmer before embarking for Germany, where he was stationed at Hanau, a town in the Main-Kinzig-Kreis area in Hesse, about 11 miles from the city of Frankfurt am Main. The military base at Hanau was closed on 30 September 2008.

<sup>10</sup> In 1983, he did a series of five mixed-media collages with red drops on white that are named after the concentration camps at Treblinka, Dachau, Belzac, Buchenwald, and Auschwitz.

<sup>11</sup> Ed Slipek Jr., "Contrast, Context, & Continuity," p. 23.

<sup>12</sup> Hofmann letter in the Carlyon Archive folder titled "Bang Arts Festival." Hofmann was a very highly regarded teacher by faculty at RPI, especially by Theresa Pollak. In 1943, she encouraged her student Nell Blaine to go to New York and study with Hofmann; she studied with Hofmann in Provincetown during the summer of 1958.

<sup>13</sup> Letter of 14 January 1958 to Judith (Judy) Joy, one of his undergraduate classmates from RPI with whom he kept up a correspondence for many years until he returned to Richmond. All letters are in the Carlyon Archive folder titled "letters."

<sup>14</sup> Carlyon Archive folder titled "Gallery talk: 'Sightings.'"

<sup>15</sup> Examples of DeKooning paintings that are similar include *Woman and Bicycle* (1952–53), *Gotham News*, and *Easter Monday* (both 1955–56).



<sup>16</sup> In a typed letter of 8–28–56, James Gahagan, Registrar of The Hofmann School, which was located on 52 West 8th Street, informed Carlyon that the school was closing “this coming year 1956–57. This will not affect the summer session of 1957 which will open as usual in Provincetown, Mass.” The address on the letter indicates that Carlyon was living at 925 West Grace Street in Richmond. Carlyon Archive folder titled “Bang Arts Festival.”

<sup>17</sup> Letter to Judy (Judith) Joy, 30 Sept 1956; Joy and James Bumgardner, who would eventually marry, were fellow undergraduate art students with Carlyon at RPI.

<sup>18</sup> Letter to Judy Joy, 1 November 1956 (underline is Carlyon’s). The opening at Knoedler’s was on October 30.

<sup>19</sup> The first letter seems to be dated 3 November 1956, while the second is dated 26 November 1956; both are to Judy Joy in Richmond.

<sup>20</sup> See Pete Humes, “Leader of the Pack,” *Richmond Times Dispatch*, Arts & Entertainment, section H (Sunday, December 18, 2005), p. 1.

<sup>21</sup> The postcard is dated 31 January 1957; Chaim Fleischman and his wife Mary owned and ran the gallery located at 227 East Tenth Street in New York. Carlyon Archive folder titled “letters from the Fleischman Gallery.”

Carlyon’s Kali Series and his landscapes seem to develop out of several earlier works that are related in their linear compositional structure and their shallow, late Cubist space. An untitled abstract oil (March 1956), painted primarily in black, olive green, and white, relates most clearly to late Cubism. Developmentally, it seems to be followed by another untitled canvas (April 1956) that perhaps depicts an abstracted interior scene, painted predominantly in yellow, black, green, and red; and by a pair of red paintings, *All Red No. 1 and All Red No. 2* (both April 1956). These latter two paintings are the least Cubist in their structure and flattened space, and the most original.

The landscapes, which generally have a vertical orientation, begin at least as early as May 1956 with *Summer Foliage* and extend through July and August with *Field No. 6 (Summer River)*, *Field No. 2 (Summer Night)*, *Field No. 4 (Noon Rain)*, and *Landscape: Night Rain*. These works begin to show Carlyon’s sensitivities as a colorist; they characteristically have a high horizon and brushwork that is less aggressive than in his earlier paintings, with softer edges that tend to dissolve form into an atmospheric haze.

### New York City

What is significant about the time Carlyon spent in Richmond teaching dance is that, by the end of the summer of 1956, he could be considered no longer a student but an artist. This is certainly evident from the quality of the paintings he produced in a mere seven-month period. However, either the teaching position was only for one semester, or he was still determined to go to New York to continue his studies, for sometime during that semester he applied once again to the Hofmann School. This time he was informed by the registrar that the school was closing.<sup>16</sup> He stayed in Richmond for the summer, probably because he had a studio, but by mid-September he was in New York and living at 523 Hudson Street, in apartment #5RS. His finances remained precarious — a consistent theme in his letters to his close friends back in Richmond. In a letter dated September 30, he wrote that he had very little money left, about \$14.00.<sup>17</sup>

Despite continuing financial difficulties, he spent his time working, painting, and going to exhibitions. In a letter to Judy Joy written at the beginning of November, he described going to an opening of Rufino Tamayo’s work at the “posh-posh chic-chic” Knoedler Gallery. He was not impressed with the work or with Tamayo, who attended his opening looking “way too elegant for words.” Also at the opening were the Japanese-American artists Isamu Naguchi and Kenzo Okada and Okada’s wife. Carlyon and the Okadas, who also didn’t like the show, went out to dinner afterwards, and Carlyon was impressed with Okada. In his letter, he wrote, “Now he is a real painter and a fine, honest, warm person.” Carlyon goes on to write that he was laid off from his job after one week and must pay the landlord \$63.00 but has only \$4.10 to his name. “I’m afraid I’ll have to hock my beautiful new typewriter in order to settle the debt. I haven’t any paint or canvas.... I hate to say it but I don’t know just how much longer I can hold out....” He felt desperate and totally unprepared for the struggle of New York, and wondered if he shouldn’t have stayed in Richmond.<sup>18</sup> However, he wrote two more letters in November to Joy, one of which enthusiastically describes all the shows he has seen and includes mention of works by DeKooning, Jackson Pollock, Larry Rivers, Marca-Relli, Bernard Buffet, and Hofmann. In the second letter, because of financial difficulties, he wrote that he probably will leave “New York lock, stock, and barrel by this week sat. nite.”<sup>19</sup>

Clearly, these were financially desperate times for Carlyon. He was living in an \$18-a-month apartment but still was often unable to find work and pay the rent as he struggled to eke out an existence as an artist. On the other hand, he was learning from his experiences. Many years later in an interview, he recalled being fired from his job on the first day because he was late: the traffic in Columbus Circle was jammed as an enormous dead whale on a flat-bed truck was being taken downtown. He was oblivious to this incredible spectacle, however, as he rushed to get to work on time. This experience, he concluded, was a lesson on paying attention to things around you.<sup>20</sup> Paying attention to the overlooked became an increasingly important motivation in his work beginning in the 1980s, and remained so until the end of his life.

By the end of January 1957, perhaps due to financial difficulties, Carlyon had moved from Hudson Street to apartment #7 at 407 East 5th Street. As he settled into this new apartment, where he would live for the next year, things did begin to look up. He received a postcard from Chaim Fleischman of the Fleischman Gallery inviting him to be in a group show in March. Moreover, from the tone and familiarity of Fleischman's postcard, which was addressed to "Dic Carlyon" and began "Dear Dic," it is clear that Carlyon had been to the gallery before and Fleischman, the director, liked him and was impressed with his work.<sup>21</sup>

Carlyon continued to work in the studio and to keep in contact with friends in Richmond through Judy Joy who, like himself, was having trouble convincing her family that a life in art was something worth pursuing. In May, he wrote to her wishing that "your parents could see the 'light' so you could spend at least part of the summer in Provincetown [at Hofmann's summer school]. (I wish mine could too!)...." He goes on to say, "I think Rothko is 'out of my system.' I'm sort of glad.... I love Rothko's painting but my name is Carlyon. You know what I mean." And, as he often did, he recounted the shows he had seen: "The Motherwell show is very handsome. Paintings and collages — mostly black, ochre, and white... they recall some of those magnificent Matisse paintings when he was 'touched' by Cubism." At the end of the letter, he mentioned that he is thinking of going to Dunkirk for the summer (July to September) to paint out of doors.<sup>22</sup>

Carlyon continued the Kali Series that he had begun in Richmond and, at the same time, initiated a new series of important works that feature birds, in particular owls, as in an untitled canvas from October 1957 (p. 44). These works, done with paint that is thinned so it readily drips, have something of the mystery of Morris Graves' bird paintings about them, especially with their large, staring eyes. Carlyon's birds, however, are presented frontally in a formal manner so they loom large and are more totemic, somewhat in the manner of Northwest Coast Native American art. Moreover, because the birds are rendered as little more than sketches, quickly drawn with the brush in dark colors over a brighter yellow-orange ground, the paintings appear backlit, and the birds look like apparitional figures coalescing out of a dark brooding field.<sup>23</sup>

In July 1957, Carlyon had a solo exhibition of drawings and collages from the Kali Series and the Bird Series at the University of Rochester Fine Arts Gallery. For his career as an artist, this event marked an important milestone. He felt that the gallery respected him as a genuine artist; they matted and framed every piece and hung the show beautifully. By August, 11 of the 21 works were sold. The gallery brochure noted that Carlyon had previously had one-man exhibitions at the Steinberg Gallery in Richmond and the Fleischman Gallery in New York City; it also noted that he was represented in more than 35 private collections.<sup>24</sup>

During the late summer and fall of 1957, a steady stream of correspondence flowed to Richmond in which Carlyon recounted his activities in New York. On October 16, he wrote, "Sure did like your friend Eleanor Rufti [sic] — really a beautiful girl. Is she attached to Charlie S.? I was sorta [sic] high and hope I didn't offend her as [or ?] Charles." On November 4, he mentioned a German Expressionist show, a Mondrian Retrospective, a Pollock drawing show, and the Whitney Annual. On December 31, he wrote, "The Gorky show was a stunner! Ditto for Piet's stuff! L. Rivers' show was just downright baffling! ...This tonite's new year's eve will be spent quietly in the apt. No dough or desire to tear my insides to pieces, (Did a fine job of that in Peyton Place — oops! — I mean Dunkirk)." In an undated letter, possibly from mid-December, he wrote that he was "heading for the tundras about Dunkirk on Dec. 17th and visit through Christmas. Will be good to get away from NY for a little while. Dunkirk's a drag but I do love Lake Erie and the surrounding landscape — especially in the winter. Will probably get back to NY on the 28th...."<sup>25</sup>

By January 1958, financial troubles were once again looming large in Carlyon's life. In fact, they had reached a critical stage. In a letter written to Judy Joy, he lamented, "Austere times have set in again (when did they ever stop?). I'm down to exactly 2¢ (which a "Reader's Digest" advertisement sent me) and am besieged [sic] by a pile of yellowing bills. The cupboard is bare (even the roaches are beginning to bitch) and the stretch in my credit has finally worn out. Tra! La! La!" His solution to this financial crisis was to write to Maurice Bonds, chair of Fine Arts at RPI, asking if he could begin MFA work there in February. His intention was to use his G.I. Bill, which would

<sup>22</sup> Letter to Judy Joy, 18 May 1957 (underline is Carlyon's). Joy was living at the Ritter-Hickok Dormitory on the RPI campus. In view of Carlyon's comments about Rothko, it is interesting to note that at least two of his untitled paintings from the next year are painted on the back of paintings he did in the manner of Mark Rothko; they are *Untitled* (June 1958) and *Interior Landscape No. 1* (July 1958).

<sup>23</sup> Carlyon probably saw Graves' work at the Whitney Museum of American Art, where the "Morris Graves Retrospective Exhibition" was on view from 28 February to 28 April 1957. For this and other information on Graves, see Ray Kass, *Morris Graves: Vision of the Inner Eye* (New York and Washington, DC: George Braziller, Inc. and the Phillips Collection, 1983), p. 165.

<sup>24</sup> His comments about the show are in a letter to Judy Joy of 5 August 1957. A copy of the University of Rochester Fine Arts Gallery brochure for Carlyon's exhibition is in the Carlyon Archive folder titled "letters."

<sup>25</sup> All three letters are to Judy Joy. I have tentatively dated one letter to mid-December of 1957 because it appears to be on the same inexpensive, yellowing paper as the letter dated 31 December 1957. The Rufty meeting occurred when Jewett Campbell, a painting professor at RPI, took a group of students to New York City; they visited Carlyon's apartment-studio, which was a one-room, cold-water flat with a toilet down the



hall; the defunct bathtub in the middle of the apartment had been made into a drawing table. Afterwards, they went to the renowned Five Spot bar where jazz pianist Thelonious Monk was performing. Personal conversation with Eleanor Rufty, 8 February 2009.

<sup>26</sup> Letter to Judy Joy, dated 14 January 1958, New York City.

<sup>27</sup> Personal conversations with Eleanor Rufty, 26 January and 1 February 2009.

<sup>28</sup> The exhibition was called *Virginia Artists, 1959* and was on display from March 13 to April 19; jurors were painter-illustrator Bernard Perlin, sculptor-furniture designer Harry Bertoia, and Cleveland Museum Director Sherman E. Lee. *Pink Olympia* was painted on the back of one of Carlyon's earlier "Bird" paintings.

pay him \$110 per month for school. He resented the idea of having to become a student again but, as he continued in his letter, "It was a humiliating request to be sure but one cannot be proud when it comes to the responsibilities that go hand-in-glove when one had maintained that painting comes first above all else... no matter the price that must be paid."

Carlyon's belief in the importance of art is indicative of several generations of mid-century American modernists. They looked upon art not as some romantic adventure represented in Hollywood movies like *Lust for Life* or *The Agony and the Ecstasy*; nor did they imagine themselves becoming celebrities, feted by opulent galleries and expensive biennials in an ever-expanding world of contemporary art. To them, art was a calling that was almost religious in nature, for which real-world hardships, deprivations, and even humiliations were to be endured. Consequently, as humiliating as it was to return to RPI as a student, in his determination to continue his pursuit of art, Carlyon saw no other alternative. He was so desperate financially that his G.I. Bill, which would soon lapse if he did not use it, was his only way out, though even this wasn't easy.<sup>26</sup> There was some question about his admittance to RPI because it was not clear if the school would accept his G.I. Bill. Bonds evidently got RPI to agree (unlike the Hofmann School), and Carlyon returned to Richmond to become a special graduate student in art at RPI — the only graduate student in a newly begun program. He did, however, keep his New York apartment for some time afterwards.

Before he left for Richmond, Carlyon completed a beautiful painting of flowers that continues something of the mood and character of his bird paintings. This untitled oil (January 1958, p. 45) has the same dusty, subdued palette as the owl paintings, though it is perhaps not as nocturnal in feeling. In its center, a large bouquet of flowers in a coffee or paint can seems to float, locked into the painting's field. The flowers themselves, executed in a calligraphic technique of quick deft brushstrokes, are a delicate swirl of energy, far removed from the thick paint he used in his Kali Series and his landscapes. Nonetheless, the mood is somber and dark with little hint of the joys of spring flowers suggested by its subject matter.

### Graduate School at RPI

To be considered a mere student again, despite the fact that by this time Carlyon was already a recognized artist who had exhibited in New York and elsewhere, must have made his return to RPI humiliating. Nonetheless, in February 1958, he began the graduate program at RPI, concentrating on painting. He didn't resume studying dance because his military service had taken two years away from these studies, and he now felt that he was too old to pursue dance in a serious, professional way.<sup>27</sup> However, his interest in dance never disappeared; instead it resurfaced as a sense of movement, and rhythm became a feature of many of his later works, especially beginning in the mid-1980s.

In Richmond, Carlyon quickly renewed his acquaintance with his former classmates and with Eleanor Rufty, who posed for the paintings *Eleanor 1* (p. 46) and *Eleanor 2* (both 1958). Artistically, this was the beginning of a very productive period. By the end of the year, he had produced over twenty paintings of significant size, including a so-called Garden Series and a series that revolves around the darker themes of death and religion. The paintings of the Garden Series are generally large and characterized by a brighter palette than Carlyon had used in New York, with more intense colors befitting their subject matter; brushwork is more painterly and less calligraphic than in the bird paintings, and there is little modeling of forms in space. In *Family in a Yellow Wind* (July 1958), a group of seven figures in white stand silhouetted in a field of bright yellow grass that sways gently in the breeze; the high horizon line is punctuated by two trees painted green with traces of vermilion. The whole image is animated not by calligraphic brushwork, but by short, straight strokes that resemble a print-maker's method of cross-hatching. In *Summer Garden: Garden No. 1* (August 1958), the figures in the landscape are prominently depicted; while the overall palette is cool (mostly blue), Carlyon uses a wider range of hues laid down in sections, thereby compartmentalizing the compositional space. He goes on to do a very large, ambitious painting after Edouard Manet's *Olympia* of 1863 that he titles *Pink Olympia*, rendering the almost life-sized female figure in a shocking bubble-gum pink. The painting was included in an exhibition at the Virginia Museum of Fine Art the following year.<sup>28</sup>

Top: Richard Carlyon and Eleanor Ruffy with his painting, *Guardians of the Hedge*, 1959.  
Left: Their wedding, 3 June 1961.  
Right: With son Jason, September 1974.



The death of Pope Pius XII on 9 October 1958 affected Carlyon, who was raised Roman Catholic but would probably be considered in the “lapsed” category. He did a series of figural works exploring the related themes of religion and death that include *Requiem for Pope Pius XII*, *Cardinal*, *Tomb of Angels*, *Night Sentinels*, and *Chamber of Poets* (p. 43). They were painted on cardboard and incorporated collage elements because, at this point, Carlyon was so poor he couldn’t afford to buy canvas.<sup>29</sup> He continued these themes into the winter and spring of the following year with paintings on canvas such as *Guardians of the Tomb*, *Crypt of Angels*, *Sentinels*, and *Guardians of the Hedge*. All of the collage-paintings from 1958 and the paintings on canvas from 1959 are darker in mood than the previous landscapes. They also reveal Carlyon’s broad knowledge of the history of art and his belief that the past can be used to inform the present for these works suggest the influence of Late Roman and Early Christian tomb sculpture and Byzantine mosaics; the figures are always frontal, placed close to the picture plane, and generally cropped at the upper torso. Also, some of the figures in *Sentinels* and *Crypt of Angels* are upside-down; it is as if they are peering down on the viewer from above, a clear indication that Carlyon was studying Early Christian and Byzantine ceiling mosaics as well. This helps explain the eerie, otherworldly light glowing in these two works and the subtly disorientating sensation felt by the viewer. With upside-down figures and no horizon line, either depicted or implied, these paintings would be much more comfortably viewed if they were hung overhead. But because that are intended to be hung on a wall and viewed frontally rather than from below, the viewer’s relative position in space remains unsettled, and an optimum viewing position is difficult to locate. This is not something that happens by accident. Carlyon was always sensitive to how his work related to the viewer, both physically and psychically. To these ends, the size and the internal elements of his work were carefully gauged in relation to the viewer’s body and position in space, to how the work would be seen by the viewer as both an object and an image. Clearly, the configuration of elements and the upside-down figures were intentionally arranged by Carlyon to try to make physically palpable something of the psychic space existing between the living and the dead.

Carlyon’s personal life took on a new dimension around 1960. He had completed his course work by then and was employed full-time as an adjunct instructor in the Department of Commercial Art. This provided some financial security and, in 1961, he and Eleanor Ruffy — that “really beautiful girl” from RPI he first met in New York in 1957 — were married in Richmond’s Sacred Heart Cathedral. Ruffy, an undergraduate student from North Carolina who had come to RPI to study painting, would go on to establish a career of her own as an artist.

Carlyon did numerous drawings during these years, including some that suggest figural studies for class assignments. Doing such class assignments must have been especially demeaning for someone at his stage in his artistic career. After all, he had been exhibiting with the Fleischman Gallery in New York City for several years and had received some critical recognition in the New York art world. In an undated letter from this period, Chaim Fleischman not only mentions Carlyon’s upcoming show scheduled for spring 1960; he also notes that he has been showing Carlyon’s *Bird on the Edge of a Maze* to gallery visitors and that art critic Dore Ashton, who was an advocate of the New York School, liked it when she saw it in a group show at the gallery in December. Ashton wrote about this work in *The New York Times* in December 1957. His solo show that year had already been reviewed in two major art publications, *Arts Magazine* and *ARTnews*.<sup>30</sup>

During these years, Carlyon continued to study both old and new masters, including Piero della Francesca, Motherwell, Matisse, and Picasso. Several of his works from 1959 show the influence of Motherwell’s collages from the early 1940s — especially *Poncho Villa*, *Dead and Alive* (1943) — and his paintings from the series *Elegies to the Spanish Republic*, with their black-and-white color scheme and large ovals suspended between vertical bars. Motherwell’s influence is also evident in an interesting untitled abstract collage (1963) made with oil and pasted paper on cardboard, and in a black-and-white collage with ink titled *Portrait* (1962). Carlyon also did many drawing studies during these years of nudes from paintings by various modern artists including Matisse (*The Dance*, 1909–10, and *Music*, 1910), Cézanne (*The Large Bathers*, 1906), Amedeo Modigliani (*Crouching Female Nude*, 1917), and Picasso (*La Vie*, 1903).





### On the Faculty at RPI

Though Carlyon had been teaching at RPI since 1960, he didn't officially complete his degree requirements and receive his MFA until 1963, when he finished his thesis, "The Philosophical Implications of Surrealism."<sup>31</sup> During this time, he began a major series of works based on male mannequins dressed in jackets and hats that show his awareness of the work of painters John Graham, Arshile Gorky, and Marsden Hartley. The rigid, angular figural poses Hartley used in his fishermen paintings done in Nova Scotia in the early 1940s seem like an especially important influence on Carlyon's figural types. Graham's influence surfaces most clearly in a delicate ink-and-pencil drawing that Carlyon did of his wife Eleanor; in this drawing, she is depicted with transfixed or crossed eyes in the manner of Graham's figures. While working on the mannequins, Carlyon also began a series of collages that are very reductive, featuring two or three simple geometric forms in each; it is a kind of theme-and-variation approach that will be repeated again and again in his work.

For the next couple of years, the Mannequin Series and the Geometric Collage Series not only continued but also began to influence each other in a kind of cross-fertilization process. *Window View No. 1* (p. 83), a collage done in ink on pasted color paper, and two untitled charcoal and ink drawings are examples. All three works, dating from 1965, offer reductive visions of hats and jacket sleeves seen in profile, arranged so they appear to be stand-ins for mannequins. In many of these works, Carlyon seems to be deconstructing the jackets, tearing them apart like dress-maker's patterns and isolating the pieces so that lapels read as both lapels and simple geometric shapes against a plain ground; the same is true of sleeves and vests. He also went on to do several large paintings on the mannequin theme in the synthetic, garish colors associated with Pop Art. Two striking examples include an untitled painting (p. 48), which he worked on from July 1964 to 21 February 1965, and *Nursery Rhyme*, which he worked on from September 1964 to August 1965. The untitled painting is a large oil on canvas with charcoal that

<sup>29</sup> Personal conversation with Eleanor Rufty, 1 February 2009.

<sup>30</sup> Fleischman Gallery correspondence, Carlyon Archive folder titled "Letters from Chaim Fleischman." Dore Ashton was a critic who chronicled the Abstract Expressionists in her book *The New York School* (New York: Viking Press, 1973); for reviews of Carlyon's exhibition, see Ashton, "Art: Mutual Assistance," *The New York Times* (11 December 1957); James Mellow, "Richard Carlyon," *Arts Magazine* (April 1957); and Herbert D. Hale, "Richard Carlyon," *ARTnews* (April 1957), p. 59.

<sup>31</sup> Carlyon was promoted to Instructor in 1960 and to Assistant Professor in 1966.



<sup>32</sup> That Carlyon was aware of Lindner's work is evident from a collage he did in 2000 that pairs a reproduction of one of Lindner's paintings with an image that appeared in *Artforum* magazine in 1974 of sculptor Robert Morris dressed in sadomasochistic Nazi drag. The collage in question is *Collage No. 11*, part of an eleven-part ensemble, each 11 x 14 inches.

<sup>33</sup> Various details about the festival's organization came from Bernard Martin, in an interview with the author on 30 January 2009. For festival aims, see "Information sheet, Richmond Professional Institute," Carlyon Archive folder titled "Bang Arts Festival."

<sup>34</sup> Randolph Goode, "Arts Festival Ends Monday," *Proscript* (RPI Newspaper), (23 Ap, 1965), p. 1. For more on the festivals, see Carlyon Archive folder titled "Bang Arts Festivals." The festival also sponsored the Second Richmond Film Festival, which showed about 45 experimental films during the festival on April 23–24; many of these were short films. Bernard Martin, who was a member of the faculty, sponsored the Richmond Film Society, which showed about 20 experimental films during the academic year. This society organized the Film Festival during the Bang Festival. Author interview with Martin, 30 January 2009.

showcases a pair of mannequins in a kind of store-window setting. *Nursery Rhyme*, also a rather large oil on canvas with charcoal, features brightly colored vest shapes flattened and stacked vertically against a ground of geometric forms; the words "red road" are written in charcoal on the upper left. This work foreshadows Carlyon's later interest in the use of text and his eventual move to abstraction.

In the way both works treat form, fracture space, or splice spatial units together, they show strong affinities with the works of artist-illustrator Richard Lindner. Two of Lindner's works come to mind, *Ice* (1966) and *119th Division* (1963). In these works, Lindner employs words and text, flattened and compartmentalized spatial units, garish commercial color, abstract designs, and stylized figural forms to create vibrant iconic images that resemble advertisements.<sup>32</sup>

In both series, Carlyon seems to be using clothes, especially jackets, as tokens of identity ("the clothes make the man"), but also as metaphors for the individual's fragmentation and isolation in mass society — something that continued through 1972 with a series of ink drawings on the subject. At the same time, he did works that capture the atmospheric quality of Motherwell's collages and the paintings of his *Open Series* — as evident, for instance, in an untitled collage (1965, p. 87) by Carlyon, which has a large centralized black oval. Motherwell's influence is also combined with that of Matisse — especially Matisse of the cut-outs and *The Dance* mural at the Barnes Foundation. There are gently colored works by Carlyon and the more boldly colored collages, *Cut Paper Sketch for an Uncommissioned Mural – Mobile* and *Cut Paper Sketch for an Uncommissioned Mural – Gulfport*. Both are from 1966 and feature colored paper cut into erotic shapes. The *Mobile* collage has an abstracted view of a female nude's raised and spread legs, while the *Gulfport* collage repeats the mannequin format but with a pair of facing male and female nudes in a sexually excited state.



Erotic themes of an even more explicit nature increasingly become the subject matter of Carlyon's collages beginning in the 1980s. But in the 1960s, he was much subtler about how he incorporated such themes into his work. In 1967, for example, he made a series of beautiful cut-paper collages, including several with biomorphic forms that allude to the human body through the use of flesh tones against pink. He did other collages using bold, vibrant colors against black, and still others that even incorporate cancelled envelopes and other found materials. Typically, these works tend to be fairly sparse but very elegant, with a degree of French finesse that shows how much Carlyon gained from studying the work of Matisse and Motherwell, who was himself strongly influenced by French art.

### Bang, Bang, Bang Arts Festivals

In an effort to be part of the larger world of contemporary art, various faculty members at RPI, Carlyon included, decided to bring the contemporary art scene to campus. To do this, they organized a series of festivals that they called the Bang, Bang, Bang Arts Festival. These festivals occurred in the spring, beginning in 1964 and continuing through 1967. Carlyon, James Bumgardner, Jon Bowie, Bernard Martin, and Willard Pilchard, who were all in the Department of Commercial Art and Design except for Martin, were the directors and organizers. Bowie, according to Martin, was the main force behind the Bang Festivals. These events were quite daring and cutting-edge, especially for a sleepy Southern city like Richmond. They were essentially self-funded through ticket revenue and,

consequently, the RPI administration was less in control than it would otherwise have been. According to an information sheet, the aims of the festival were “to bring to Richmond contemporary music, drama, choreography, film, painting and graphics, as well as promote discussion and contact with active creative artists from outside the immediate community.”<sup>33</sup>

These festivals are worth discussing because their aims fit perfectly with Carlyon’s own views and attitudes. Carlyon was an intellectual artist: that is to say, rather than believing that art depended solely on basic, “primitive” instincts, and that the artist should ignore the wider world of current events, he was convinced that the artist must be part of the world and part of the great artistic traditions of the past. He believed that the artist should be an educated, learned individual. In view of this, it is not surprising that he was interested in a wide variety of subjects, including modern music, dance, and even the cognitive sciences.

It is difficult to imagine what an exciting place RPI must have been during the Bang Festivals and how this excitement helped shape the faculty’s and students’ attitudes toward art and the creative process. Those faculty who were the driving force behind the festivals had an acute interest in avant-garde art and culture, as well as current political issues, including the Vietnam War. All in all, these were heady days filled with a sense of possibility and promise. As Martin recalled, “We did all of these things, including going to New York to see what was going on in the art world because, simply put, *‘We were looking for the future!’*” Carlyon, not surprisingly, was in the midst of these activities because of his personal interest in contemporary dance and his experiences living and exhibiting as an artist in New York City. All of these factors came together to make each festival a moment of radical, avant-garde culture in the middle of an otherwise traditional, staid Southern city that was focused more on the past than on the future.

While there is little documentation of the first Bang Arts Festival, the later festivals are well documented. The second was held in April 1965 and lasted eight days. It included symposia, music and dance concerts, a happening/performance, and the production of two one-act plays from the Theater of the Absurd, Jean Genet’s *Deathwatch* and Eugène Ionesco’s *Maid to Marry*.

The happening/performance, which Carlyon choreographed and participated in, was about the horrors of war. It involved people riding bicycles, images flashing on the gym walls, airplanes suspended from the ceiling, and an “army” of marching soldiers wearing sunglasses, white outfits, helmets, and carrying fixed bayonets; there was a mass-murder scene and a parade of coeds in swim suits. It ended with five televisions being brought in, turned on, and left in the middle of the gym floor.<sup>34</sup>

Another important event was a panel on the “Crisis in Painting Today,” with a line-up of New York art-world luminaries that included painters Larry Rivers and Roy Lichtenstein; Thomas Hess, editor of *ARTnews*; and Allen Solomon, Pop Art proponent, curator, and author of *New York: The New Art Scene*. The festival also presented a Concert of Dance featuring contemporary dancers Yvonne Rainer and Lucinda Childs and dancer/sculptor Robert Morris, with production by Jill Johnston. Carlyon had a great deal to do with this event because he, among the organizers, was the person most interested in modern dance. It took place on April 21 and included *Waterman Switch*, a dance in which Morris and Rainer, both nude and locked in a tight embrace, inched their way across two parallel beams while Childs circled the stage. Because of this dance, with its “shocking” nudity, the organizers nearly got fired by the president of RPI.<sup>35</sup>

The third festival ran from 21–25 March, 1966. The first night featured John Cage and David Tudor in concert, performing the premier of *Variations VI (six short inventions for seven instruments)*.<sup>36</sup> This event was of great significance for Carlyon, who had been familiar with Cage’s music since his undergraduate days when he had purchased an LP of Cage’s *Music for Prepared Piano*. Carlyon often described how Cage, upon entering the performance site, a former church on RPI’s campus, heard a whistling sound. When Cage finally tracked down its source, he had it amplified with a contact microphone and used it as part of the evening’s performance. His idea was that all things can be interesting if one simply paid attention. Also on the program was Cage’s *(2) Solo(s) for Voice II*. The Cage performance, as noted in the concert program, included “the basic electronic complex of tape recorders, amplifiers, transistor radios, short wave radios, photo-electric cells, mixers, microphones, speakers, etc....” An RPI crew, under Cage’s supervision, assisted in the setup of all the equipment.<sup>37</sup>

On the day following the new music concert, Carlyon was involved in a happening titled *Bird Park Lake: A Vue-Gram*. Besides Carlyon, the other performers were Bernard Martin, Bill Livingston, Willard Pilchard, Jon Bowie, and James Bumgardner. According to Alberta Lindsey of the *Richmond News Leader*, it began with “the audi-

<sup>35</sup> See Carlyon Archive folder titled “Bangs Arts Festival.” According to Martin, Dr. George J. Oliver, President of RPI, called them into his office the following day and was about to fire them (there was no such thing as tenure in those days) when Theresa Pollak, the petite gray-haired doyenne of the art school, came into the office and rhapsodized enthusiastically about how beautiful the dance was and how unfortunate that Mr. Oliver hadn’t seen it. “She saved our jobs,” Martin said in an interview with the author on 30 January 2009. Ironically, the premier of *Waterman Switch* had taken place a month earlier at the Judson Church in New York City, and its nudity almost caused the church to be rejected from the American Baptist Convention. See Sally Banes, *Democracy’s Body: Judson Dance Theater, 1962–1964* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 213.

<sup>36</sup> For more on John Cage and *Variation VI*, see James Pritchett, *The Music of John Cage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), especially p. 154.

<sup>37</sup> John Cage and David Tudor concert program notes. Carlyon Archive folder titled “Bang Arts Festival.”



<sup>38</sup> Alberta Lindsey, "It's Confused, It's Zany - It 'Happened' at RPI," *Richmond News Leader*, (23 March 1966), *Area News*, p. 13. Also see Tom Robbins' description of the event in "Stage," *Richmond Times Dispatch* (23 March 1966), p. 23. According to Martin, the festival organizers had access to film and processing — there was no video in those days — through William (Bill) Livingston who worked for Commonwealth Films in Richmond. For more on this, including the attitudes and aims of the participants, see the invitation packet to the event in the Carlyon Archive folder titled "Bang Arts Festival."

<sup>39</sup> See Festival Program, Carlyon Archive folder titled "Bang Arts Festival."

<sup>40</sup> Howard Smith, "Scenes," *The Village Voice* (4 May 1967), p. 18–19. Carlyon Archive folder titled "Bang Arts Festival." Smith began as a photographer before writing for *The Village Voice*; he also hosted a popular radio show on WPLJ-FM in New York, and in 1972 won an Oscar for directing *Marjoe*, a documentary film about evangelist Marjoe Gortner.

ence staring at four large white screens on stage and listening to strange noises that sounded like an amplifying system that wasn't working." The six performers, coming down the center aisle, went on stage carrying folding chairs, a fan, a vacuum cleaner, and other items. They did various antics, smoked cigarettes, disappeared and returned; then sounds like machine guns were heard. All the while their "antics," which had been previously filmed, were shown continuously on four different-sized screens. When the performers left the theater by going back down the center aisle, a man came on stage and began reading the dimensions of the theater. The lights came on, and the audience left.<sup>38</sup> In a sense, the audience was watching an event that was about its own creation. In other words, the creation of the event was the content and was happening, basically, in real time before the audience's eyes. There was a feeling that past, present, and future existed (or were existing) simultaneously. The cooperative nature of such ventures and their multi-media components foreshadow Carlyon's later work and his concern with the viewer's participation in "making" the work of art come into being through the thoughtful contemplation of it. Such contemplation was intended to be a self-reflexive act that expanded the consciousness of viewers about events happening around them.

Other events at the 1966 festival included Judith Dunn's *Ground Speed: An Evening of 'New Dance'* with musicians Bill Dixon and Alan Silva that took place on March 23. *Synthesis II: At Least the Cut Grass would Smell the Same*, a multi-level, multi-media performance conceived and performed by RPI students, occurred on the following day. And on March 25, a symposium was presented on the topic of "Art, Non-Art, Anti-Art" that was moderated by writer Tom Robbins, a former RPI student who came in from Seattle for the festival. Other panelists included art-world luminaries Dan Flavin, Donald Judd, Allan Kaprow, Barnett Newman, and Ernest Trova. The event took place in the gymnasium, and Trova answered "no comment" to all queries put to him during the panel discussion. Newman's only request when invited to the festival was to be taken to visit Monticello near Charlottesville. Two one-act English comedies, *Private Ear* and *Public Eye* by playwright Peter Shaffner, also were presented that evening.<sup>39</sup>

The fourth and final festival occurred at the end of April 1967 and was, in part, a response to students' interest in fashion and "having fun." To this end, it featured a panel on April 25 called "New York Scenes." The panelists were Howard Smith, a writer from *The Village Voice*; his wife, the jewelry designer Susan Smith; Jeff Glick of the Head Shop; and Jean Mercier of Paraphernalia, a very hip clothing store in Soho. Writing later in his "Scenes" column in *The Village Voice*, Smith described the group's arrival at the Richmond

airport, where they were met by a band and several hundred costumed students with painted faces, signs, and banners chanting "Hooray for Smith" and "Up with Glick." Policemen stood by solemnly holding people back. After the group was presented with flowers and bananas, they were brought to campus in a parade of trucks and cars, with horns blaring and streamers flying. They arrived on campus just as an outdoor rock-and-roll dance began.<sup>40</sup> Events of a more serious nature included a dance performance on April 27 by Twyla Tharp and dancers Sara Rudner, Theresa Dickinson, and Marjorie Tuppling, and a new music concert on April 29 by Robert Ashley and the Sonic Arts Group from the University of Michigan. Using electronic devices, they played music by contemporary avant-garde composers Gordon Mumma, Alvin Lucier, David Behrman, and Ashley.

### RPI becomes Virginia Commonwealth University

By the time of the last festival in 1967, Carlyon had attained the rank of Assistant Professor of Art. The following year, RPI merged with The Medical College of Virginia to form Virginia Commonwealth University, and the structure of what had been RPI was re-organized into individual departments. Carlyon then became part of the newly formed Department of Painting and Printmaking where he remained until 1976, when he joined the Department of Art History.

While he continued making colored and black-and-white ink drawings featuring disembodied shirts, vests, jackets, and hats, he also began making what look like collage studies and drawings for Minimalist paintings based on simple rectangular shapes; among these works are a series of gray-toned untitled collages (1970), done in ink, pencil, and pasted paper, and the marker-and-charcoal drawing *#2 Soft* (1973). These studies led to a very productive year in which he combined minimalist formal features with the elegant color schemes of his earlier collages.

From 6 January to 6 November 1975, Carlyon completed 16 large paintings (p. 49–53) whose titles, added after their completion, make references to various subjects including literature (*Passage to India*), historical personages (*CHARLEMAGNE*), and place (*Erie Slate* and *San Francisco Exit*). Painted with acrylic rather than with oil, these works have many layers of slightly different colors — sometimes as many as 31 layers. And because he was applying paint that is translucent or transparent, the color of the final layer is a sum total of all the preceding layers. In these works, Carlyon also used masking tape to give crisp, clean edges to his forms; in some examples — mainly the earlier ones in the group — traces of taped edges from aborted forms show through the layers of over-painting, creating a kind of shadowy counter composition to the main composition. As a result of the





sparse geometrical compositional schemes found in these works, they have some semblance to classic Minimalist paintings of the 1960s and early 70s. However, there are significant differences that indicate Carlyon's ideas were far removed from those of his Minimalist counterparts.<sup>41</sup> Some of these differences are apparent in these paintings and worth enumerating. For instance:

1. These works are not intended to be read as unitary wholes.
2. Chance is accepted so compositional structures reflect imperfections in the canvas fabric.
3. Symmetrical compositions are positive critiques of asymmetrical structures.
4. Composition acknowledges the canvas stretcher but is neither centralized nor repetitive.
5. Composition is synchronized to sumptuous, but idiosyncratic color schemes.
6. Color schemes tend to be close in value, not highly contrasting.
7. Surfaces retain traces of brush work and even of masking tape.

These differences reveal something of Carlyon's intentions, not only towards these specific works, but also towards his conception of painting in general. By using asymmetrical compositional structures instead of centralized or repetitive ones, he creates an internal dialogue in the work that concentrates viewer attention. What Carlyon was doing was avoiding the "painting as object" idea so common to Minimalist painting as seen, for example, in the hands of someone like Frank Stella. An internal dialogue occurs in Carlyon's work despite the fact that his asymmetrical compositional structures echo the painting's stretcher bars, something typical of Minimalist painting. Moreover, because the brushwork is intentionally left visible, the hand-madeness of his paintings is stressed, just as the traces of masking tape underscore the intuitive nature of his working methods. Such features signify human input and human presence in the work. Carlyon's intent is to assure that the works are understood by the viewer as unique, one-of-a-kind creations that stem from the hand of the artist; there are to be no allusions to the marklessness of industrial-machine production and computer-generated imagery.<sup>42</sup> Though Minimalist in their stylistic affinities and frontal

<sup>41</sup> Some of these paintings are reminiscent of Third Style Pompeian painting found in the Metropolitan Museum in New York, especially in the way structural forms gravitate to the edges of the canvas, leaving most of the canvas a field of color.

<sup>42</sup> See Ed Slipek, Jr., "Contrast, Context, & Continuity," p. 23.

Richard Carlyon with his painting, *Marker III: Point Gratiot*, in his studio, 711-A West Broad Street, Spring 1980.





appearance, his paintings are in no way intended to be seen as gestalts. Carlyon doesn't want them to be read as unitary objects, as emblematic wholes suspended in some hermetic utopian world outside of time and space. He is insisting, however gently, that they be understood as the creations of a singular human being, anchored in a specific historical moment, and capable of communicating with other human beings similarly situated.

Carlyon wrote notes about this series in 1976 that he reiterated in a talk on the occasion of their exhibition at the Hunt Gallery of Mary Baldwin College in 1999. These notes provide additional insight into his artistic philosophy:

1. I always work against the shape of the canvas itself, because I am against the notion of the canvas as a "window" or "container" of space.
2. I do not want a referential image; I am not interested in depicting or alluding to objects, nature, or someone else's painting. I want each painting to be seen and experienced for what it is.
3. I work to establish a spatial structure that in a sense "locates" the viewer, wherein the viewer becomes a kind of "vanishing point"... the painting, if "successful," should "read as a whole, open and expanding image."
4. I work for a frontal, direct, visually austere abstract image that initially seems fixed, set, perhaps static, in appearance. Simultaneously, I also work for a structure that initiates a visual collapse or breakdown of the image causing the viewer to "relocate" his reading of the painting; the viewer is invited to pull the image back together.<sup>43</sup>

These principles lead to works with almost imperceptible changes in surface texture and subtle shifts in tonalities and hue. The result encourages the committed viewer to locate a place in front of the work that is not too close or too far away — a place that allows for both seeing the work in its entirety and carefully scrutinizing its details. As Carlyon noted in an interview, "Some artists like to get back from their work, but I like to work within my immediate field of vision.... When people see my work, it is seen the way it was actually done."<sup>44</sup> Thus, the reason for the large size of these 1975 paintings is not to overwhelm the viewer, or to allow the works to be seen from across the room; their size is scaled so that they come face-to-face with the viewer as a sentient physical body in space. To this end, and unlike certain earlier paintings with their reliance on brash Pop Art colors, such paintings as *First Song (for Eleanor)* (p. 49) and *MAGELLAN* (both 1975) reveal themselves only upon close scrutiny. *First Song*, for example, has subtle shifts in texture and barely perceptible pink-orange bands at top and bottom. Besides the orange and red-orange bands in *MAGELLAN*, there also appear to be bands that are simply the result of paint thickness and paint application methods.

### Polyptychal and Multi-Canvas Formats

In 1976, Carlyon began working with a palette limited mostly to grays, whites, and blacks; these colors, however, are organically rich in tonal subtleties, never just plain gray or simple black or stark white. He also turned to simpler compositional structures based on bars, stripes, and rectangles, often in polyptychal formats; this is something he would continue to experiment with throughout the rest of his career. *Monitor I: In Memorium, F. D. Cossitt, Jr.* (1978) is a simple diptych featuring two vertical white stripes against black.<sup>45</sup> *Marker III: Point Gratiot* (1979, p. 54) is a more complicated painting named for the Dunkirk Light, the early nineteenth-century lighthouse located at Point Gratiot on Lake Erie near Carlyon's childhood home. This triptych features a central square with smaller side panels attached in a way that suggests the painting's corners have been notched, similar in effect to Frank Stella's shaped and notched canvases from the mid-1960s. Works in the Marker Series, including *Marker I: Erie* (1979), are referred to by Carlyon as *stele* and *dolman*, after ancient markers and burials. In doing so, he suggests the idea of painting as place, as a site in relation to the viewer, as well as part of a historical tradition of artistic creation that goes back to prehistoric times. Something similar is found in *Painting in Ten Parts* (1984, p. 61), a work that has a sense of dance-like movement in the way its various combinations of vertical, horizontal, and angled black lines are set against a white ground; each part is named after a town in New York State and is meant to be hung in a double row, in a specific order.<sup>46</sup>

Polyptychs and multi-canvas works continued to occupy Carlyon at this time. Paintings in the Vox Series (1979–80), subtitled after the ranges of the human voice (soprano, contralto, tenor, baritone, and bass), follow more traditional polyptychal formats in that equal-sized panels are used. The ten works in the Signal Series (1979, 1982–83, p. 55) are much more complex. Here, Carlyon uses monochromatic panels, usually of different sizes and not always attached together, as compositional elements by arranging them choreographically on the wall — some horizontally, some vertically, and some even in triangles. This is especially evident in the last five paintings of the series, *Signals VI–X* (p. 58, 77), which are each dedicated to a modern dancer-choreographer.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Carlyon Archive folder titled "'Citings: Recent Drawings,' Gallery Talk Notes, Hunt Gallery, Mary Baldwin College."

<sup>44</sup> Ed Slipek, Jr., "Contrast, Context, & Continuity," p. 18.

<sup>45</sup> Cossitt, who died in a car accident, wrote for the *Richmond Times Dispatch* and was a supporter of contemporary art and the Bang Arts Festivals. The painting was exhibited in the *Members Exhibition* at 1708 Gallery, a non-profit artist space that Carlyon and other local artists had founded that year. Besides the memoria for Cossitt and Pope Pius XII, Carlyon did memoria for others including Adlai Stevenson, Hans Hofmann, VCU sculpture professor Jose Puig, critic Harold Rosenberg, and his grandfather, P. H. C.

<sup>46</sup> *Painting in Ten Parts* is to be hung as follows: top row, l-r: Angelica, Lackawanna, Palmyra, Henrietta, Attica; bottom row, l-r: Batavia, Elmira, Tonawanda, Ithaca, Chatauqua. Carlyon Archive folder titled "'R-notes on Paintings.'" Carlyon also did numerous "uncommissioned" mural studies that he named after cities such as Biloxi and Gulfport.

<sup>47</sup> Of the Vox Series, Carlyon wrote: the "sound of voice 'creates' space/ no center, no margins, no container." *Signals VI–X* are tributes to Lucinda Childs, Yvonne Rainer, Kenneth King, David Gordon, and Trisha Brown, some of whom Carlyon worked with years earlier during the Bang Arts Festivals.



<sup>48</sup> There are two other “mythology” series, *Pelasgian Slate* and *Orphic Slate*. According to Robert Merritt in an interview, Carlyon came upon a book on mythology and decided to organize his 15 paintings into three categories, Olympian, Pelasgian, and Orphic, and to name each painting after one of the 15 myths in the book. Robert Merritt, “Art,” *Richmond Times Dispatch*, section B-6, (January 9, 1982), p. 1.

<sup>49</sup> Carlyon Archive folder titled “Notes on Paintings.”

<sup>50</sup> For Karl Pribrim, see his *Language of the Brain: Experimental Paradoxes and Principles in Neuropsychology* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1971); for Jaynes, see *The Origin of Consciousness in the Break-down of the Bicameral Mind* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1976). For “reception aesthetics” see, for example, Hans Robert Jauss, *Towards an Aesthetics of Reception* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982) and Jane P. Tompkins, *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).

<sup>51</sup> The work calls to mind Cage’s 1952 silent musical composition, “4’ 33””, in which no sounds are made by the pianist during the 4 minutes and 33 seconds duration of the work.

While Carlyon continued doing abstract paintings with a very limited color palette, not all are constructed around stark value contrasts such as black and white. Paintings in the Olympian Slate Series (1981), for instance, use solid reds, oranges, greens, and blues, but seldom in combinations as in his earlier works, like the pink and orange used in *First Song (for Eleanor)* (1975). Moreover, these new compositions feature a single central form (usually square or rectangular) in one color against a simple neutral-colored ground. After these works were finished, Carlyon titled them after various ancient Greek gods associated with creation myths — for example, Olympian Slate II: Gaea and *Olympian Slate IV-A: Briareus* (p. 57).<sup>48</sup> The size of these works and their internal elements, as already noted with many of his earlier works, are carefully scaled to the human body to encourage the attentive viewer to seek that special place in front of the work where shape and form come forward to confront the viewer in a “body-to-body” relationship. To this end, Carlyon insisted these works be hung low so that nothing would come between them and the viewer.

Carlyon did a group of paintings in 1982–83 that he titled Screen Series. These works are important for several reasons aside from their artistic merits. While their compositional elements — basically rectangular bars — tend to be simple arrangements whose formal logic relates to recent works like the Vox Series from two years earlier, chromatically they seem to look back to the color strategies he used years earlier in his 1975 abstractions, especially in the way they are painted in barely perceptible shifts in value and tonalities. This apparent anomaly is explained by the fact that these paintings, according to Carlyon, were inspired by the reflection of a rectangle of nocturnal light from a TV seen in a Fan District house in Richmond while riding his bike at night.<sup>49</sup> This explanation is significant because it indicates just how much Carlyon was responding to John Cage’s dictum about opening oneself up to the world and to chance encounters — that is to say: pay attention to the surrounding world for you just might see a whale on a flat-bed truck going down a city street. The result of Carlyon’s encounter, as in *Screen IV: for Julian Jaynes* (1983), is an acrylic painting featuring seven barely distinguishable vertical bars in a rectangular field. The idea is that these works will not give themselves up readily to the viewer. Like his works from the mid-1970s, this work and the others in the series demand careful, intense looking before the internal elements will coalesce out of the ground and reveal themselves to the viewer.

This series indicates that Carlyon had no intention of allowing his works to be taken in with a quick, fleeting glance, a strategy that Pop Art cultivated by drawing upon imagery from popular culture and that Hollywood increasingly exploited with the cinematic jump-cut in its movies. The effortlessness that epitomizes popular culture was not what Carlyon was about or interested in; his intentions were much more serious. As if to emphasize this point, works in the Screen Series are dedicated to a variety of intellectuals, including Buckminster Fuller, John Cage, Marshall McLuhan, Julian Jaynes, and Karl Pribrim, in that order. McLuhan, of course, was important because he discussed the impact of the media on the recipient’s conceptions and perceptions of form and content (“the medium is the message”); the many collage works with media-derived imagery that Carlyon produced in the last two decades of his life attest to his interest in the issue. One suspects that both Pribrim and Jaynes, though more obscure figures, are nonetheless important for Carlyon. Pribrim was a neuroscientist who wrote about the brain and consciousness. Jaynes also wrote about consciousness, analyzing evidence of its developmental origins in works of art, music, and literature that range across the historical spectrum; to Jaynes, texts of all types harbor the keys to the origin of consciousness. These topics relate directly to Carlyon’s interest in the subject-object dynamic that occurs when viewing works of art — what today would be called “reception aesthetics.”<sup>50</sup> According to reception aesthetics, the viewer is never a passive spectator in front of the work of art; the viewer always brings his or her own personal biases, as well as cultural understandings about art, to the viewing process. Thus, viewing is an active rather than a passive process, set in motion by the artist through the work of art, something of which Carlyon was very much aware.

Looking ahead a decade or so to work Carlyon did in the 1990s, it is apparent that ideas relating to reception aesthetics and viewer consciousness were still a concern. He explored them at great length in a three-piece construction (1992–93) that features three wood panels simply painted white.<sup>51</sup> The starkness of the panels is only relieved by the pairs of chrome-plated hardware screwed to their wooden sides. The obvious strength of the hardware, bright and shiny against the bare wood of the panel sides, not only calls attention to how the works are attached to the gallery wall, but also implies serious things are afoot. However, it is the titles of the individual parts that are the most crucial elements in opening the work to the viewer and vice versa. *Utilities I: A Surface For Sounds*, *Utilities II: A Surface For Words*, and *Utilities III: A Surface For Images* inform the viewer of what is expected and how the works are to be engaged: the viewer is to project mental images, words, and sounds onto the white surfaces, thereby filling

Top: Richard Carlyon with his paintings, *UP(SIDE)/DOWN*, *That*, and *Vox II: Soprano*, February 1987.  
Bottom: Installing work at 1708 East Main Gallery, December 1980.





<sup>52</sup> Carlyon Archive folder titled "Dick's Notes on Constructions."

<sup>53</sup> The others writers named in the Relic Series are Céline, Apollinaire, Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Lautréamont, Camus, Zola, Rimbaud, Kafka, and Genet. Titles of works in the Easel Series reflect various Chinese concepts: *Ch'ien* (firmness); *K'un* (submission); *Shih* (multitude); *Ching* (source); *Wei Chi* (not yet accomplished).

and activating them. In doing so, viewer and object are fused together in a moment of consciousness that is neither self-centered nor self-referential, but that is focused beyond the self to the surrounding world, opening and expanding the viewer's sense of self as a member of a community.

### John Cage and Chance Operations

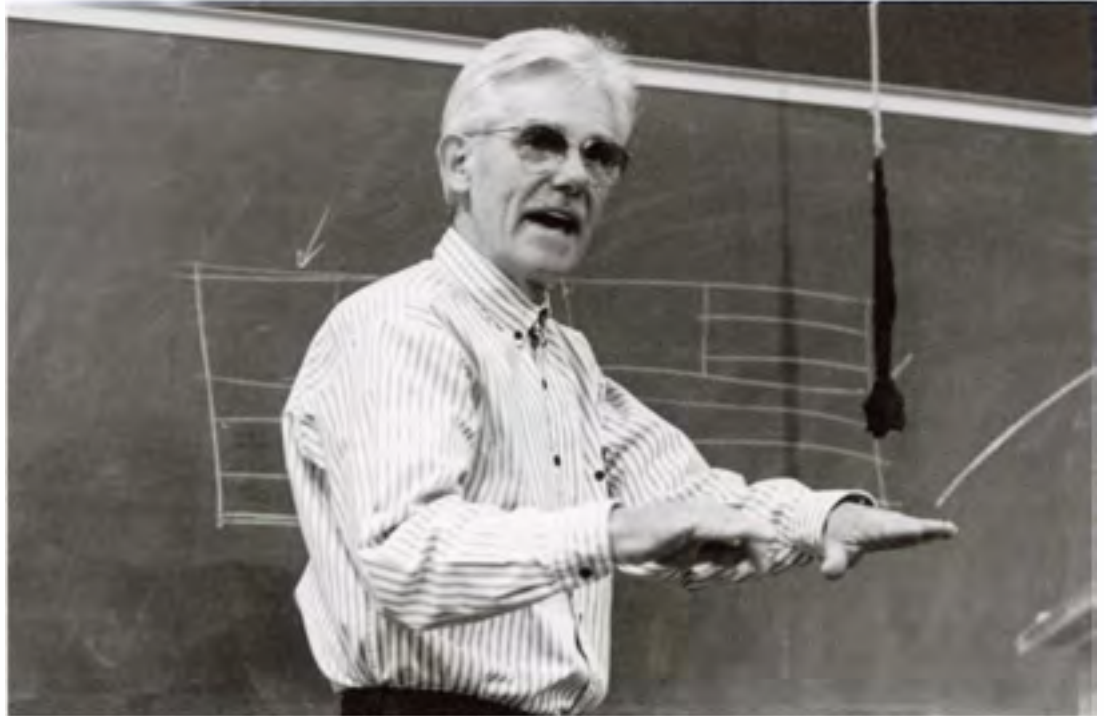
Making works of art that encourage viewers to open themselves to that wider world outside the self places a burden of its own on the artist. For the work of art to have any validity at all in such circumstances, the artist also must be attuned to the surrounding world; the artist cannot exempt him or herself from the situation by continuing traditional studio practices. The artist is required, as an act of good faith, to re-conceptualize his or her own role in the creative process; anything less would be tantamount to a betrayal. Considering this, it is hardly surprising that Cage's ideas about experiencing the world became increasingly important to Carlyon and also changed the way he worked. Not only was Cage a topic of discussion in Carlyon's art history classes; as early as 1982, Carlyon had created a 45-minute performance with visuals and audio titled *Site Re(mov)al* that is heavily influenced by Cage's ideas. Cage, for his part, was strongly influenced by the anti-establishment antics of Dada and by Marcel Duchamp's notion of the non-aesthetic object, especially in the form of the readymade and the assisted readymade. Cage knew Duchamp personally and often spoke about the importance of allowing oneself to be open to the possibility of new, unplanned experiences through chance encounters.

To some extent, Carlyon already did this when he responded to the illumination of a TV screen while biking at night, for example, or when he allowed the imperfections in the fabric of the canvas to influence his compositional strategies. That Cage's ideas took on greater and greater significance during this period is evident in the way Carlyon's own studio practice changed as he eventually developed more systematic approaches to the use of chance as a way to move beyond established habits, and as a way of challenging all-too-neat patterns of thinking. The effect is to underscore concern with the viewer's perspective vis-à-vis the work of art by now including the artist among

the viewers, at least in the sense that the artist, by using chance procedures, has re-conceptualized the creative process as well as his own relationship with the work. Now, the artist also becomes an observer of his own work because he doesn't know what the work will be or look like until he is done making it. Until it comes into being through the chance operations used to generate it, it remains a mystery to the artist as well. In this way, the artist is as surprised by the work as the viewer. This is not to say the artist gives up control or responsibility for the work; as Cage said, "There's choice and there's chance and I choose chance." The choice of the specific chance procedure is a fundamental decision of the artist.

Carlyon began doing a series of Dada-influenced mixed-media collages and constructions using found and readymade materials, some of which came his way, appropriately enough, by chance. An intriguing example is *Wall Albums* (1982, 1984), a series of seven mixed-media constructions in which Carlyon used Polaroid photographs that he discovered purely by chance in a motel room, apparently left by a former guest. As Carlyon recounted, they were found on "September 27, 1980 in an unmarked envelope that had been placed (and forgotten?) among stationary materials in the top middle drawer of a dresser/desk located in Room #305, DOWNTOWN MOTEL, Danville, Virginia."<sup>52</sup> There are other Dada-influenced mixed-media constructions worth noting. The Relics Series (1983–84), 14 mixed-media constructions with Polaroid photographs and metal chains, are named after prominent literary figures, including Balzac, Proust, Verlaine, and Gide, among others. The Temporary Utilities Series (1982) comprises five mixed-media constructions named after the early twentieth-century Russian artists Rodchenko, Tatlin, Pevsner, Malevich, and Gabo. In Dada fashion, the titles contain instructions for the work's dismantling, hence destruction. *Temporary Utility No. 1: Closet For Rodchenko* (p. 60) has the subtitle: *(To be disassembled in Leningrad, USSR on October 31, 2017)*. It is composed of nine small wooden boxes hinged to a horizontal piece of wood; at the appointed time (the 100th anniversary of the Russian Revolution), a screw driver chained to the work is to be used to unscrew the sealed boxes and reveal their hidden objects. Likewise, the Easels Series (1984, p. 86) features five folded-easel constructions of mixed materials that include Polaroid photographs, metal chains, and attached tools, which are apparently to be used for their destruction as well.<sup>53</sup>





Inherent in these works is the idea of grafting oneself onto the great traditions of art, literature, and culture generally — in these cases, the culturally and socially subversive traditions of Dada and Neo-Dada. For contained within these works are echoes of past works, not only in the use of chance and readymade materials, but also with regard to certain conceptual ideas. The way Carlyon collaged found images together is reminiscent of the streaming of disjunctive, non-narrative images that Robert Rauschenberg used in his Neo-Dada works from the late 1950s to signify the disconnect- edness of modern life. The idea of destruction also echoes Man Ray's *Object To Be Destroyed* (1923), which was an assisted readymade in the form of a metronome with a paper eye glued to it; according to Man Ray's instruction, at a certain moment the work was to be destroyed with a single hammer blow. The notion of tantalizingly hiding something within a visual art object so that it can't be seen echoes Duchamp's assisted readymade, *With Hidden Noise* (1916), which consists of a spool of twine bound between two metal plates held together by four long screws. Duchamp placed a secret object within the spool so it would rattle when the work was shaken; the hidden object

could be heard but not seen, hence the title. *With Hidden Noise* is of further significance because Duchamp added an inscription to both upper and lower metal plates that was, according to him, "an exercise in comparative orthography; the gaps in [the words] were to be replaced by letters from the other two lines. French and English are mixed, making no sense."<sup>54</sup> The idea of "making no sense" is an implicit affront to an overly rationalized and bureaucratized society that prized conformity and factual knowledge over intuitive or experiential knowledge. Carlyon would certainly have understood this since his MA thesis was on Surrealism and its philosophical implications.

By the late 1980s or early 90s, Carlyon was doing very little drawing; instead he was devoting himself mostly to book art and collages, though he did continue some painting as well. At this point in his career, even the influence of Duchampian wordplay became shaped more and more by Cagean ideas. Cage's working methods and even his *Mesostics* (an acrostic poem in which the hidden message reads vertically through the poem) loom as significant examples of what one can do with chance and with words. Carlyon became aware of this and

<sup>54</sup> See Dawn Ades, Neil Cox, David Hopkins, *Marcel Duchamp* (New York: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1999), pp. 162-163. In an interview, Carlyon discussed Duchamp's aesthetic ideas and his use of chance operations in music scores and *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*. See Mary Flinn, "An Interview with Richard Carlyon," p. 3 of transcript.

<sup>55</sup> The exhibition came about when curator Julia W. Boyd mentioned an opening in the museum's schedule. I suggested exhibiting Cage's watercolors, which hadn't been shown before. *John Cage / New River Watercolors* opened on October 25 in Richmond and then traveled to Radford University, the Roanoke Museum of Fine Art, and The Phillips Collection in Washington, DC. The watercolors had been painted in April 1988 at Virginia Tech's Miles C. Horton, Sr. Research Center in Giles County, Virginia. A catalogue essay by Ray Kass describes how Kass organized the studio procedures so Cage could adopt his chance methods to painting. Chance-determined numbers were used to select correspondingly numbered brushes, rocks to paint around, colors, washes, paper sizes, and grid positions on the paper.

<sup>56</sup> Carlyon as quoted in Theresa Sauer, *Notations 21* (New York: Mark Batty Publisher, 2008), p. 297, a collection of contemporary musical scores that includes some of Carlyon's own work. See Carlyon Archive folder titled "Notations 21." For an exhibition review that includes *Flight Song*, see Paul Ryan, "Richmond," *Art Papers* (July/Aug, 2002), p. 40.

<sup>57</sup> The raw footage of *Flight Song*, which features Carlyon repeatedly walking up the stairs of the former Art Foundation Building on the VCU campus, was edited down from one-half hour to 5' 33" using chance procedures. It is exactly one minute longer than Cage's 1952 silent musical composition, 4' 33". For more specific details, see Mary Flinn, "An Interview with Richard Carlyon," pp. 1-2 of transcript.

renewed his acquaintance with Cage in 1988, when the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts presented an exhibition of 30 watercolors by Cage. The watercolors, made using chance procedures, were done earlier in the year at a Mountain Lake Workshop in southwestern Virginia. Cage came to the opening of his exhibition and did a reading from *Writing Through "Finnegan's Wake"* (1977), his mesostic on James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*.<sup>55</sup> That Carlyon had great respect for Cage is evident from *Flight Song*, a looped video he completed in 2001 as a homage to Cage, who had died in 1992. In a new book titled *Notations 21*, Carlyon is quoted in the third person acknowledging that "*Flight Song* was an homage to Cage whose work and thinking — the activities with non-intended sound and chance-determined structures particularly — were an important influence on his [my] own development as an artist, as was Cage's open, fluid approach to art and life."<sup>56</sup> Featuring repeated footage of Carlyon walking up stairs, *Flight Song* was composed and edited using a chance-determined structure based on a simple arithmetical system.<sup>57</sup> The video also recalls Cage's visit to Richmond for the Bang Arts Festival in 1966 when, as Carlyon recounted years later, Cage entered the concert site and heard a faint, but continuous whistle from air rushing through a crack. "Cage thought this a 'lovely sound' and had it amplified with a contact microphone and included in his performance. Tim Anderson from the Drama Department who was working as a technical advisor, asked: 'Is that music Mr. Cage?' Cage answered, 'There are many people who have the notion that art is an improvement on life, but I find life very interesting; it's a matter of changing one's mind.'"<sup>58</sup>

Echoing these sentiments in an interview held the same year *Flight Song* was made, Carlyon said that "emphasis is on experience as opposed to understanding, I mean, if you make a kind of distinction there. The experiencing mind, according to Cage, is the mind that is delighted and enhanced when anything comes into it that isn't within the realm of its imagination. In other words, the emphasis is upon discovery." He goes on to mention Mallarmé's influence, especially in his use of language, blank spaces, intervals, and gaps: "I mean, he's [Mallarmé's] never really describing anything. He's recording the effects that things had upon his perception...."<sup>59</sup>

There are two points that should be stressed here. First of all, though Cage's ideas were well known in the world of contemporary music, they were not widely accepted. Especially those concerning chance were regarded with a degree of skepticism because the notion of giving up control, of suppressing one's ego in favor of chance procedures, was anathema to many musicians. Secondly, in the realm of visual art, Cage's ideas were hardly known at all. If they were, they probably would have been regarded as too radical for the same reasons. That Carlyon was one of the few artists to embrace such a radical approach to making visual art comes, in part, from his interest in modern dance which, of course, has connections to modern music in a way that visual art does not.<sup>60</sup> It is also an example of his wide-ranging interests and an indication of his own radically expansive view of the art-making process.

However, it would be wrong to suggest that Carlyon's work is just a conglomeration of all these various influences. He turned Cage's ideas and numerous other influences to his own ends by combining and manipulating them through various means that are both conceptual and even mechanical, including the use of a photocopier. Carlyon's use of the photocopier may help explain why he concentrated so much on bookmaking and collages, instead of on drawing or painting, from 1989 to 1997. Whatever the case, this period was a very productive time in which he created several hundred collages and books. In many of these works, it is interesting to see how Carlyon took Mallarmé's ideas about words in principle, but not in fact. This is apparent in several of his collage series. The very title of one of the series, *Between This And That Which Is Shown* (1996), suggests that there is a space between words and images in these works that can't be seen but can be understood. In *For Piet's Sake* (1996), a series of photo-collages named after Piet Mondrian, Carlyon indicates that something more than just the word-play of his title is involved. This series is comprised of 42 parts, each featuring a single image strategically placed on a rectangular white sheet. *For Piet's Sake, No. 25* is typical: it features a photo-reproduction of two nudes making love that has been teasingly cropped into a narrow horizontal band and placed near the top margin of the sheet so that the blank paper beneath it is charged with energy as the mind's eye tries to complete the scene in the space provided below the image.<sup>61</sup>





Carlyon also began using a photocopier to manipulate images, sometimes using chance procedures in a very controlled way, while at other times using uncontrolled chance to discover unintended results. An example of uncontrolled chance appears on the front cover of *Untitled Book No. 26* (1992, p. 78); the faces of two cartoon characters are stretched and distorted, an effect achieved by slightly moving the original image during the photocopying process. This cover includes the words VERBI, VOICI, VISUAL, and EXPLORATIONS, stacked one above the other, while part of Marshall McLuhan's name is visible near the middle. Another method used by Carlyon produces the effect of double exposure, much like that achieved by layering two negatives in a photographic enlarger. He created this effect by running a previously copied image through the photocopier a second time so that one image is copied over another. This method of seeking unintended consequences was also used in *Untitled Book No. 2* (1992). Here, Carlyon took the title page of *The Kid Sister: The Winner*, an adult comic, and layered it onto itself while also shifting the page during the

recopying process.<sup>62</sup> The result is something akin to looking through two unaligned transparencies in which images, dialogue, and sequences of scenes are jumbled, thus interrupting the flow of time and producing a kind of visual stutter. A more controlled, systematic use of chance was employed in the *Surge Series* (p. 68). To create this series of drawings, Carlyon attached the seven pages of a drawing book end-to-end and then carefully pulled the pages through the photocopier at a predetermined speed regulated by the tempo set on a metronome.<sup>63</sup>

### Drawing as Graphic Notation

By 1997, Carlyon had turned his attention once again to drawing, this time mainly using pigmented ink on parchment. Words also started to take on a more central role in his work, even serving as stand-ins for visual images. In the three-part series *Souvenir* (1998), the word MOUTH, printed in capital letters in a rather shaky hand, appears in each drawing. In *Souvenir I* (p. 77), MOUTH is written backwards, with the word CREAM superimposed in the same style. In *Souvenir II*, the word PLUG is

<sup>58</sup> John Cage and David Tudor concert program notes, Carlyon Archive folder titled "Bang Festival File." Carlyon recounted this story to the author on several occasions.

<sup>59</sup> Mary Flinn, "An Interview with Richard Carlyon," pp. 3, 5.

<sup>60</sup> For the reaction of French composer Pierre Boulez to Cage's chance procedures, see Herbert Lindenberger, "Regulated Anarchy: The *Européras* and the Aesthetics of Opera," in *John Cage*, edited by Marjorie Perloff and Charles Junkerman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 156-57 and 165, n. 21. For more on Cage's radicalism in art, see my review, "John Cage," *Artforum* (September 1990), pp. 163-64.

<sup>61</sup> Carlyon did several series of erotic works; some images were taken from Donald H. Gilmore, PhD, *Sex in Comics: A History of the Eight Pagers* (San Diego: Greenleaf Classics, Inc., 1971) and from various magazine sources and sex manuals.

<sup>62</sup> *The Kid Sister, The Winner* was photocopied from Donald H. Gilmore, PhD, *Sex In Comics*, p. 28.

<sup>63</sup> See Paul Ryan, "Richmond," p. 41.



<sup>64</sup> The occasion for the interview was his exhibition *Richard Carlyon: Selected Paintings and Drawings 1981–2005* at the Reynolds Gallery in Richmond. See Pete Humes, “Leader of the Pack,” p. 1. Ironically, Cage also found the chance system a time-consuming way to generate numbers, so eventually he turned to a computer-generated list of random numbers. Carlyon described these procedures as follows: “...numerical systems are used to determine in advance of actually making a drawing the size, scale, proportions, sequence, duration, and placement of each of its visual components. The chance-derived components are then plotted and drawn on a sheet of ruled graph paper which then serves as a model for the final drawing on parchment paper. In most instances, the final drawing is many times larger than the size of its working model. In addition to chance, the processes of randomness, automatism, and improvisation play an active role in the development of a drawing....” See Carlyon Archive folder titled “‘Citings: Recent Drawings,’ Gallery Talk Notes, Hunt Gallery, Mary Baldwin College,” 1999.

<sup>65</sup> *missaid #2* and *missaid #3* are reproduced in Sauer, *Notations 21*, p. 289.

<sup>66</sup> Kennedy Center Playbill, Carlyon Archive folder titled “There Then Now.” For Carlyon’s discussion of *Their Then Now*, see Mary Flinn, “An Interview with Richard Carlyon,” p. 4 of transcript.

written over MOUTH. And in *Souvenir III*, the word CREAM is written over MOUTH, but the letters R, A, and M are written upside down, making the words “hard to bite,” as graffiti artists would say, or difficult to decipher. These manipulations result in a kind of cipher that the viewer must decode as Carlyon again compels concentrated attention on the work.

Carlyon’s drawings on parchment become more elaborate with the inclusion of sign-language symbols, narratives, and appropriated imagery. In *Citing V: guilty pleasures. As shown* (1998, p. 77), not only does the title have a strange syntax, thereby calling attention to itself, but a story about having sex with a musician also unfolds rather haltingly since the letters of words are unevenly spaced, making it difficult to read the text. To complicate matters, this text is overlaid with drawings of the lower section of Duchamp’s *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*. The literary and visual puns and innuendoes evoked by the text and these details are, of course, intentional.

In a 2005 interview, Carlyon discussed the various chance procedures he used in the five drawings that comprise the series *Citing*. According to Peter Humes, who conducted the interview, “Carlyon determined each drawing’s subject matter by chance. He organized a system of 20 boxes of image clippings and [outlined] grids on each page. Both were numbered. What went where depended on a roll of three dice. ‘It takes forever to do,’ Carlyon said, ‘I have no idea how it’s going to end up.’”<sup>64</sup> What he describes is very much like the system that Ray Kass described a decade earlier in the catalogue for the Cage watercolor exhibition at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. Yet Carlyon’s drawings look nothing like Cage’s watercolors. This is the beauty of the chance system when used by an intelligent, creative artist like Carlyon. When the right questions are asked of chance, the mind is opened to new possibilities that are then manifested in surprising ways in the work of art. Chance is a means of circumventing the artist’s own aesthetic predilections and biases in favor of something unexpected and previously unimagined.

Carlyon retired from Virginia Commonwealth University in 1996, becoming Professor Emeritus. However, he continued to work and to maintain a meticulous studio in which there was a place for everything — rows of brushes of various sizes neatly hung on nails, rows of scissors, tubes of paint carefully stacked in compartments, shelves with his favorite books, music, and movies. This setting was less an indication of a tidy mind than of an orderly mind prepared for the day’s work. Though the Korean War and military service had disrupted his hopes of a career as a dancer nearly fifty years earlier, Carlyon never lost his interest in dance. In 2000, he was awarded a grant from the Virginia Commission for the Arts to visit the Martha Graham Trust in New York City. His intent, realized in a series of 19 preliminary sketches titled *Followings: from above, so below, An Ensemble of Dance Maps* (p. 69), was to view rehearsal films in order to make drawings based on the choreographic moves of the dancers. In 2003, Carlyon completed a series of three drawings titled *missaid* (p. 70), in which he explored how language, sound, and movement relate to visual expression.<sup>65</sup> And on 31 March 2004, the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., presented the premiere of choreographer Laura Schandemeier’s dance, *Their Then Now / Doin’ The Shorty George*, which was inspired by her uncle’s video, *Their Then Now* (2002). In the video, through his editing process, Carlyon had re-choreographed the dance scene *Doin’ the Shorty George* performed by Fred Astaire and Rita Hayworth in the film *You Were Never Lovelier* (Columbia Pictures, 1942); Schandemeier based her footwork on the movement that resulted.<sup>66</sup>

Looking back over the years, one can only regret that Carlyon’s work wasn’t exhibited more often and more widely, which it certainly deserved. Hopefully, this retrospective will begin to rectify that oversight. In a sense, though, this situation is not all that surprising. Carlyon came to art at a time when artists were preoccupied more with making work than with establishing careers. This is not to suggest that he didn’t have commercial success, or that he was opposed to it; commercial success was just never a factor shaping his art or his studio practice. Carlyon was certainly aware of

Taking a bow after the performance "An Evening with Laura Schandelmeier," Kennedy Center Millennium Stage, Washington, D.C., January 2004. Left to right: Richard Carlyon, Clara Gibson Maxwell, Laura Schandelmeier, Eleanor Ruffy, and Reed Robins.



what was fashionable in the galleries, but he preferred to let his work remain in the studio rather than comply with the demands of the market. There simply was no compromising on this issue.

Such indifference may seem odd to an art world in which students are encouraged to get gallery representation even before they complete their graduate studies. Today it seems that being an artist has become another career-centered activity defined more by commercial success than by the artistic quality of the work. The notion that the artist must mature by spending time engaged with the world of real, lived experience in order to make meaningful art seems less and less relevant — even a quaint, outmoded idea in a culture preoccupied

with its own notoriety and financial success. Yet Carlyon never wavered in his commitment to art, that art came above all else, no matter what the price. His last exhibition, *Selected Paintings and Drawings, 1981–2005*, opened at the Reynolds Gallery in Richmond in November 2005 and closed in January 2006. He died shortly thereafter of cancer, concluding an extraordinary life in art. To the end, he held fast to the belief that art was of such importance that there was no substitute for trying to make the best art that he possibly could. Carlyon was sustained in this endeavor over many early years of struggle by the knowledge that art is a worthwhile endeavor of the most profound kind: able to touch something deep within the human soul, it is a reaffirmation of our basic humanity.

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Can you ever imagine the impact you have had and the multitude of lives you have changed and made better? ...I fell into a trance of remembering the year 1961 very well, and the true impact of your enthusiasm, your joy for art, is something I'll never forget. I hope you could sense it then — that I wanted to know and be a part of that joy which you so vividly expressed. You may not picture yourself this way, but in my memory, your intellectual clarity was an inspiration to us all, and I have always wanted to be, in that way, as much like you as humanly possible.

...Now, as I'm in Boston to speak in an hour, please know that my personal belief in the life of a teacher was, in many ways, a reflection of all that I admired in the way you

taught. It all seemed valuable, honorable, and in small part a balance against what one has been given and the world's indifference. So again I must speak of my gratitude to you.

...My friend, the photographer Robert Adams writes, "Away at the horizon, almost like a line of trees, are the picture makers on whom I depended." To so great an extent, you opened that world to us and it is important to me that you know what a blessing, what a living example you have been.

**Emmet Gowin**

**I was introduced to Richard Carlyon in the late 1970s, after a brilliant lecture on drawing that he gave at Virginia Tech. It was an eclectically broad historical survey that illustrated drawings from Leonardo to de Kooning — a stunning array of images accompanied by Carlyon's insightful commentary. He presented the development of drawing in Western culture as a quick-graph of our evolving humanism, an analytical interpretation of a never-ending project.**

**A year or two later, I was invited by Radford University to participate in a two-person exhibition with Carlyon. I was delighted to be invited to show with him, but because of his passion for classical drawing, I assumed his works would be figurative and realistic. When I**

**saw that his paintings were abstract, geometric and minimalist, I realized that his personal narrative of the history of drawing had led him toward a blanker canvas on which quieter, more subtle aspects of human nature might be perceived. His paintings are autonomous forms in themselves and are, in that way, essentially representational. He carefully paints rectangular forms on a flat color field so they may alternately appear as figure and ground. His work does not "buzz" the retina like Albers' paintings; they do not urge your eye to travel across and up the canvas in the manner of Newman's "zips;" and unlike Reinhardt's brooding cruciforms, they do not inhale you. They breathe in a manner that keeps you looking.**

**Carlyon's paintings can be meaningfully compared to Robert Rauschenberg's "White Paintings" (1951), which the experimental composer, writer and artist John Cage described as "airports for lights, shadows, and particles," and which inspired Cage to write his most famous composition, 4'33"(1952), his notorious "silent" piece. I**

**mention Cage because Richard Carlyon and John Cage became friends in the mid-1960s. Having known both of them, I can say that they shared a sensibility very akin to a Zen aesthetic, in which contradictory experiences must be kept in mind. Like Cage's "silent" piece, in which the indeterminate sounds produced by the audience make the piece different every time it is performed, Carlyon made meditative paintings that are simultaneously empty and full, and may always be experienced another way. Cage's time brackets in 4'33" create a theatrical moment in which any sound may be "musical." Richard's paintings create a sense of reduction of the space around you; they remove the clutter. They do not lead a viewer's eye anywhere but offer an unrestricted view of everything.**

**Ray Kass**



When Richard retired from VCU in 1996, he was cleaning out his office and found drawers-full of committee minutes and agendas. In the margins of all these documents he had drawn cascades of marks and scribbles. He had survived the thousand committee meetings by gaming his colleagues' voices into visual scores. And now instead of shredding them, he took a mass of the pages and enlarged the margins' drawings on the office Xerox machine, organized them by meeting date, and taped them together like frames of a film to make a long strip, hundreds of feet. Devising a system for rate of feed, he did a duet with that Xerox machine, keeping it

continuously in copying mode while slowly pulling the strip across the platen. The machine produced page after page of marks, the lines of the drawings made fluid by motion. And he took those fourth-power Xeroxes, enlarged them, and transcribed them by hand onto watercolor paper, the old fashioned way, with mapping grid and squared labor, ink and brush. His skill as a draftsman was superb.

But he never presented work with any description of how it was made. A Duchampian use of chance... but Richard will invent a chance-driven process and then take it through such a sheer cascade of algorithms — things done to things done to things — that one finds oneself ultimately in the presence of ideas about evolution, complexity, and the mind's experience of time. You might ask, is this an endless set of voyages into chance? Or is there a world of readable information in every moment, only needing a scribe with a powerful enough frequency of attention?

The "minutes" of those meetings he made, for they are the minutes taken by a divine secretary: it seems as if the more he invents strategies of chance to eliminate all traces of self from his actions, the more the world in all its history and bible of voices rushes in.

In a show of his work at 1708 a few years ago called *Sightings*, Richard mounted an epic selection of paintings, drawings, and video, culled from some of the major series that formed his career. There were five works for multichannel video, each of which took up one to seven banked video monitors. You walked into the gallery and some 25 televisions, all going at once, met you in a standing wave of sound and action.

One series: his upside down talking head on one screen; on another, just the left lens of his

glasses; a third trained on a blank wall of his studio with the shadows of cars and people passing on the street. From each monitor, his voice quietly speaking, a series of stories, looped and repeated from different points, like a fugue. Moving into its range, one heard first speech, then speaking, then words, and out of the words, stories. Stories written or found, each no longer than 10 or 20 seconds. I remember them now as a sequence of short whispered passages or dreams, emerging and disappearing in a chorus of voices.

Moving through the show, parsing out one piece from the other, an astonishing second order of happening began. Two different pieces suddenly articulate the same sentence in unison. A written

word on one screen is heard spoken on another. A glance up finds it spelled out in paint on canvas across the room. You felt suddenly that the gallery was a matrix, a brain, and yourself its swift and constellating thought.

A rare artist has the power to bring something into existence without appearing to lay any claim to it. "The eye hears, the ear sees," Richard says. Within the tapestry and the acoustics of his work, a high-up pure emotional tone sounds, behind the generous play and hubbub at hand. A tone so harmonically perfect that one emerges from an exhibition dazzled by the bright light it has shed on the community of mind.

Elizabeth King

I first met Dick almost fifty years ago. I was an uncertain art student while he, at least to me, was an accomplished artist living in the lower east side of New York City. At that time the lower east side was not the trendy place we know today; it was a lot rawer, a lot dirtier, and a lot cheaper. Dick lived and worked in a cold-water flat, or more accurately, a cold-water room, in a walk-up building with shared bathrooms on each floor. His room was extremely small with a tiny storage pantry. He could live in the room — there was a cot, a table, and a chair — or he could work in the room; there was not space, however, to do both at the same time. Dick's solution was to get up in the morning, dismantle his cot, and move that, along with most of his other living stuff, to the storage area. Painting materials would then be brought from the

storage area to what was now his studio. In the evening, the room was swept, cleaned, and sometimes even repainted, if needed. His studio returned to being a small room with a cot, a table, a chair, and a single painting on the wall. Dick did this every day, seven days a week.

Many years later while going through the Monastery of San Marco in Florence, I found myself thinking of Dick and the way he lived and worked during this period of his life. I think it was because of the simplicity of the individual monk's cells, each a small room with a cot, a table, a chair, and a single painting on the wall.

**Bernard Martin**

**Team teaching the Art Intro class with Richard was the best education in education I have ever received. Few people I know are as fortunate as I to have had such a stellar colleague. When I think of the man, I remember that the light from the distant stars still reach us long after the star is no longer there. I think of Richard in this respect; his gifts to me and others will carry on his spirit, persona, and notions for generations to come.**

**I know my students loved him. They parroted his lectures and criticism, and felt superior to their peers because they had a seat in his classes and were not part of the SRO crowd. Tempers flared when the space in Richard Carlyon's sculpture class was**

**kept at a sane level. The adoration of the student body was earned through his giving. I think every kid knew that when Richard regarded their work or lectured, they were getting the maximum from someone whose love of the field was absolutely unquestionable. His ability to find germs of quality in the paltriest endeavors was part of his genius. A student once said of Richard that he knew Carlyon had great eyes because he could brilliantly explain what he perceived. "And, of course, he loved my work." Richard seemed to leave each student with something positive to build upon.**

**The honesty and positive reinforcement were things those who loved Richard emphasized in their own teaching. I learned from Richard that "keeping the glass half full" was essentially a choice against its alternative.**

**...Once while conducting a critique of a sculpture student's work in the lobby of the new building, I saw Richard across Broad Street walking to his studio. I asked the students if they knew that white-haired guy in the black jacket. They lined up at the glass windows, and several of the students said, yeah, that's Richard Carlyon. I then asked if they knew where he was going. It was wonderful to be able to talk to the students about Richard's commitment to his work and his work habits relative to their work habits and commitment. I told the kids to check on Richard and they would see him most days trekking to his studio. A few students commented on their Carlyon sightings. They were the best students, upon whom a good example is never wasted.**

**Lester Van Winkle**



Richard Carlyon is one of the most influential artists in Richmond's history — generations of artists in this community have been profoundly inspired by his generosity, intellect, broad perspective, and process. As part of this retrospective dedicated to Carlyon's career, a tribute celebrating his artistic connections and contributions to dance and performance was presented by the VCU Department of Dance and Choreography on September 26, at the university's Grace Street Theater.

Entitled *Move*, the evening-length program included images of Carlyon's work, several of his performance-based videos, and dance inspired by him and his work. The "script" for the performance came from Carlyon's own lecture notes, quotations, and statements, combined with the perceptions of other artists who spoke to the vital, influential role that he played for so long. Using Dick's own words, we found, enabled us to present some of his great wit

intact. The program featured appearances by fellow artists, colleagues, former students, and performers from the Richmond dance community. These participants included Sally and Tim Bowering, Felix Cruz, Jason Carlyon, Mary Flinn, Buffy Morgan, Laura Schandelmeier, and Ray Schandelmeier.

It also featured *Their Then Now / Doin' The Shorty George*, a dance created by choreographer Laura Schandelmeier in 2003. The footwork in Schandelmeier's dance is an adaptation of the movement in Carlyon's video *Their Then Now*. Through video editing, Carlyon re-choreographed the Shorty George dance number performed by Fred Astaire and Rita Hayworth in the film *You Were Never Lovelier*, originally choreographed by Hermes Pan.

For me, this evening was an extremely important part of the city-wide retrospective honoring Richard Carlyon. Dick had a gigantic range and ability to address and comprehend diverse aesthetics and art

forms — sculpture, painting, film, etc. — and dance was certainly included in that range. He danced as a child and as a young man, studying the Martha Graham technique when he became a student at Richmond Professional Institute. Later, when he was my painting teacher and I was considering dance as a career, his understanding of Dance the Art Form was clarifying and invaluable to me. Over the years, his informed comments and feedback continued to be invaluable and somehow always inspiring. He had that rare ability to infuse an emerging artist or re-infuse a working artist with the excitement of the process, the challenge, and the journey.

In truth, to watch Dick move at any point in his life was to see him dance. This performance was a way of sharing another rich aspect of Richard Carlyon, THE ARTIST.  
**Chris Burnside**



# The Video Art of Richard Carlyon: A Conversation

Wesley Gibson

When one wears earphones or iphones, one shuts out the visual or auditory world and replaces it with a representation. This leaves one part of the sensorial body in the corporal world and the other part in the virtual world. Richard Carlyon, from his six-part video, *A Saying of Sorts*

Carlyon is the most ontological of artists. His videos are one long meditation on the metaphysics of being. Of being here. Now. Not in the “be here now” of New Age-ism, but in the “what does it mean to be here now” in an age of the corporal (we can’t escape our bodies) and the virtual (are we being subsumed, the work seems to ask over and over again, by the virtual?). In the above-quoted video, Carlyon reads the same text on six different screens. Five screens show different versions of him, and in one there is simply a serenely contemplated wall that becomes an abstract painting of sorts. It could be one of his paintings, in fact: a black band, some stripes, then a white expanse. In the other five channels, his voice echoes eerily from video monitors, or just from the background, and sometimes from both; but in the video where his image is absent, his voice is, significantly, clear as a bell. We can hear him because we are not being assaulted or distracted by the virtual world (those videos of the artist). The only other sounds are the gentle, almost lulling sounds of traffic. It is a moment of serene contemplation. Carlyon’s work is rife with such moments, both the serene and the less-than-serene, and sometimes even the antic.

To move dust is an adventure. Richard Carlyon quoting Marcel Duchamp in *A Saying of Sorts*

One can’t help but think of Carlyon’s great dust drawings — drawings he made by simply leaving paper lying around his studio and then tracing whatever collected after a few weeks. They are beautiful, at once microcosmic and macrocosmic. A similar effect occurs in the punning *Rock Video*. A video for three monitors, it simply records the artist rolling various rocks, about the size of his fist, across a scuffed wooden floor. (The settings for Carlyon’s videos are always homely: paint-splattered, wooden beams exposed, wires hanging loose.) Sometimes he uses the jagged editing he likes to employ in almost all of his videos to create little rhythms, but usually he is simply content to let the rocks roll and record their movement. Sometimes they come to an abrupt halt; sometimes they wobble to a stop. You begin to notice

little things like that in Carlyon’s videos, and he wants you to notice them. He wants you to begin to discover the profound in the mundane. Humans and their rocks: skipping them across ponds, building their edifices, stoning one another to death.

Today each person lives his or her life as unannounced performance. Richard Carlyon, *A Saying of Sorts*

In the video *Their Then Now*, Carlyon re-edits a Fred Astaire and Rita Hayward dance number so that movement is reiterated, re-examined. The initial joyful artificiality of the original becomes, if not more joyful, then differently joyful. Carlyon always wants us to see again, or to see anew, or to see askew. For him, as often as not, art is not about discovery but about rediscovery.

Imaginary acts are not unreal. Richard Carlyon, *A Saying of Sorts*

Again, think Fred and Rita. Wholly imaginary characters bursting into song and dance at the drop of a top hat. And yet not unreal. Imaginary acts become part of the texture of memory and therefore of reality, or at least of our reality as we continue to make up our lives. This is seen most clearly, I think, in *A Rolling of Flows*, a series of dissolves that Carlyon edited together from mostly black-and-white melodramas. Breathtaking in and of itself, one moment dissolves into another, creating the paradoxical feeling of the endlessness and terrible finiteness that memory holds for us. For Carlyon, time is almost always both element and subject.

The same thing seen twice but in different resolutions allows its viewer to see it twice in different ways. Richard Carlyon, *A Saying of Sorts*

In *Floor Show*, a video for five monitors, Carlyon alternates an image of himself walking barefoot in cuffed jeans across a floor with rocks being rolled across the same floor. The images on all five screens appear to be identical; but the more you watch, the more the image changes. The floor becomes an abstract canvas. The subtle gradations in the light become subtle gradations of color because of the editing. At times, the bare feet begin to seem unbearably fragile and human. The artist’s shadow as he walks back and forth and around the floor — not pointlessly, but without



narrative intent — reminds me of another quotation from his *A Saying of Sorts* about how forms in darkness do not cast a shadow. This inevitably leads me to contemplate mortality and, finally, Plato's Cave, where the poor men mistook the shadows on the wall for reality. But you will supply your own meanings for the shadow that Carlyon deliberately renders in this work.

**To observe something is to alter it. Richard Carlyon, *A Saying of Sorts***

The blue image of a naked young man swimming across a pool to a chorus of frogs appears in *Seen Unsaid*. Here, Carlyon uses the same repetitive editing to create little rhythms and, on its own, this image is romantic and erotic. But when the young man emerges from the pool, we see instead a realistically colored image of his bare wet feet walking across the concrete. What was previously dreamy becomes less ideal — more like feet of clay, as it were. By observing and connecting these images, Carlyon alters them.

**Any activity that releases art from the burden of its exclusive history in order to discover it everywhere is worthy of serious attention. Richard Carlyon quoting Kenzo Okado in *A Saying of Sorts***

The activity depicted in *Nomad's Crossing*, a video for six monitors, is of Carlyon moving himself with his feet while seated in a battered and splattered chair, across an equally scuffed and paint-splattered floor. He moves in little arcs; he moves forward; he moves backwards. Apparently, this task is not easy because the artist struggles with it, sometimes mightily. The more one watches, the more Sisyphean it becomes. This simple and unknowable activity takes on the quality of myth or metaphor. The protagonist (we do not actually see Carlyon's face; he is shot from about the waist down) becomes a sort of Everyman in his brown shoes, jeans and white shirt — clothes, in other words, of the most banal kind. His activity, isolated and thoroughly gazed upon, begins to take on a resonance that at times becomes almost painful to watch and to hear. Carlyon is acutely aware of

sound in his work, and he does not spare us the abrasive scraping of that chair across the floor. It becomes the fingernails of life across the cosmos of a blackboard.

In the world of print, children were seen and not heard but, on the internet, children are heard and not seen. Richard Carlyon, *A Saying of Sorts*

This question is everywhere in Carlyon's work: Who are we immutably? Who is technology turning us into?

The phrase 'I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen it' really should be 'if I hadn't believed it with all my heart, I wouldn't have seen it.' Richard Carlyon, *A Saying of Sorts*

In the center monitor of the extraordinary three-part *Pacer's Song*, the artist appears formally dressed in a black suit and informally undressed in bare feet, a recurring motif that often seems to symbolize, or embody, the fragile human body and its flawed beauty. He slaps (those sounds again) up and down another one of his bare-bones interiors, this time a hall. He sits in a chair, gets up again, paces, drags the chair through an open door. Then from a different angle: he drags the chair down the hall, drags it back, sits again, paces, drags the chair off-screen, pushes/slides the chair down the hall,

drags the chair down some steps with it awkwardly thumping behind him. He finally stops and, apparently having given up on the chair, simply walks up and down the stairs. Though we never see his face, the uncertainty and anxiety of this pacer are palpable. Meanwhile, the videos on the left and the right contain images from movies jaggedly edited in Carlyon's favorite style. They repeat motions at irregular intervals, sometimes creating what look like little skips, and sometimes creating longer motions: a woman or a man running up stairs, doors opening and closing to we know not what, together with the image of a key and the phrase, "took me just half an hour to find it" — all hypnotically repeated and filled with dread, sometimes faintly (who is behind that door?) and sometimes startlingly (men falling violently downstairs). The pacer in the center video has plenty to be pacing about. We don't know what's going to happen when we get to the top of that staircase, or who is behind that door, or when we're going to tumble down that staircase to our own death.

Anyone can name anything. Richard Carlyon, *A Saying of Sorts*

I'm not sure that Carlyon names, but I certainly think he renames; and I think he is passionately involved in the task of allowing the viewer the fearful pleasure of naming or renaming.





An error: failure to adjust from a preconception to an actuality. Richard Carlyon, *A Saying of Sorts*

I believe Carlyon's work is saturated in this idea. In *Difficulty and Desire*, he sits in shadow, in front of a window, a still fan resting in the window, the sign of some building behind him. The colors are red, white, and blue. He intones, almost inaudibly, "She was a visitor," over and over again, moving his head slowly from left to right. (This line comes from composer Robert Ashley's opera, *That Morning Thing*.) Then the image changes: the fan is now running, and you can clearly see that the sign behind him says UNIFORMS. There's also another sound, like a beast lowing. Then someone else seems to be saying, "She was a visitor." Carlyon reappears, eerily lit; holding the mask of a black and bearded man to his face, which he then removes to reveal another mask, plastic and opaque, covering his own face. The piece is clearly about identity, about the transient or elusive or unknowable nature of identity. But it is also clearly about a perceptual shift from the preconception that we can know ourselves to the actuality that this is impossible, that identity is always flexible, that perhaps we should even consider another identity all together.

Making something real by rendering it is not the same as making it recognizable. Richard Carlyon, *A Saying of Sorts*

Carlyon was undoubtedly interested in what was real. But real did not mean recognizable. It meant repeating an image or an action until it became unrecognizable, until it became invested with new meaning — perhaps more authentic meaning. For all of his variety, experimentation, curiosity, and endless reinvention, he strikes me in a way as a very old-fashioned artist. Images in art have never meant to be read realistically; they are meant to be read mythically, symbolically, or metaphysically. Rotting fruit in seventeenth-century Dutch still-life painting is never rotting fruit; it is death. Images are meant to be explored and discovered. Richard Carlyon understood to the core of his artistic being that exploration and discovery are an essential part of the pleasure of art. I would venture to say that in *A Saying of Sorts* and *Pacer's Song*, among other video works, he conveys this understanding with real greatness. But I will let him have the last word in our conversation because he should. Talking with Dick always made me excited about the possibilities of being alive. These videos do, too. If he hadn't believed it with his whole heart, they remind us, then he wouldn't have seen it.

Hassidic Jews believe that every object in the world has divine sparks trapped within it. Mind you, this includes roofing nails and peanut butter. The ordinary is not ordinary. The obvious is not obvious. Richard Carlyon, *A Saying of Sorts*

Wesley Gibson is a writer living in San Francisco, California. He has written art reviews and catalogues and is the author of a memoir, *You Are Here*, and a novel, *Shelter*.





Richard Carlyon's studio, 723 West Broad Street, Spring 2006.







*Kali #2*, 1956  
VACR, number 59

AG Anderson Gallery checklist  
RG Reynolds Gallery checklist  
1708 1708 Gallery checklist  
VACR Visual Arts Center of Richmond checklist







Untitled, 1957  
RG, number 8





Untitled, 1958  
RG, number 7





*Eleanor 1*, 1958  
RG, number 16



*Portrait, 1960*  
VACR, number 56

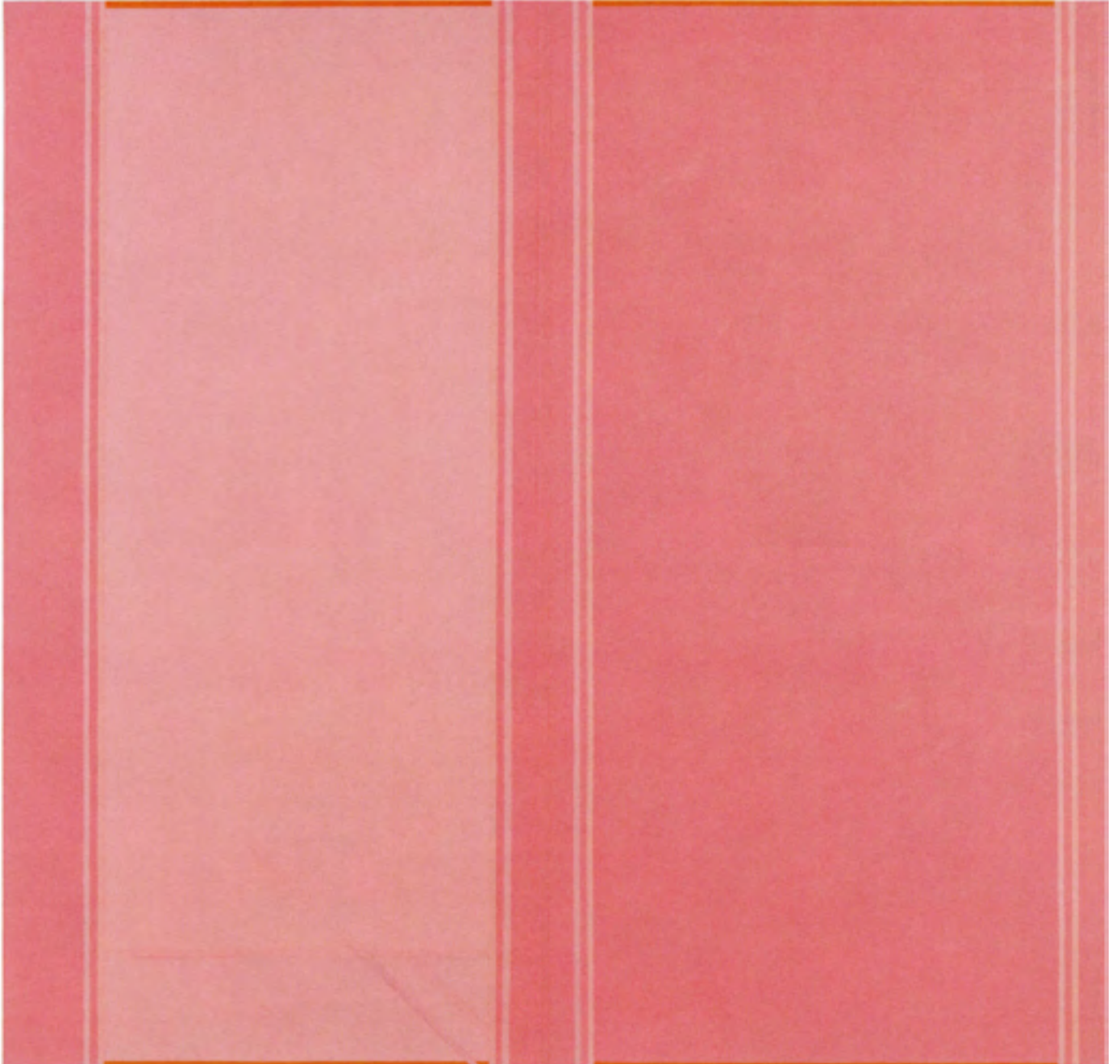


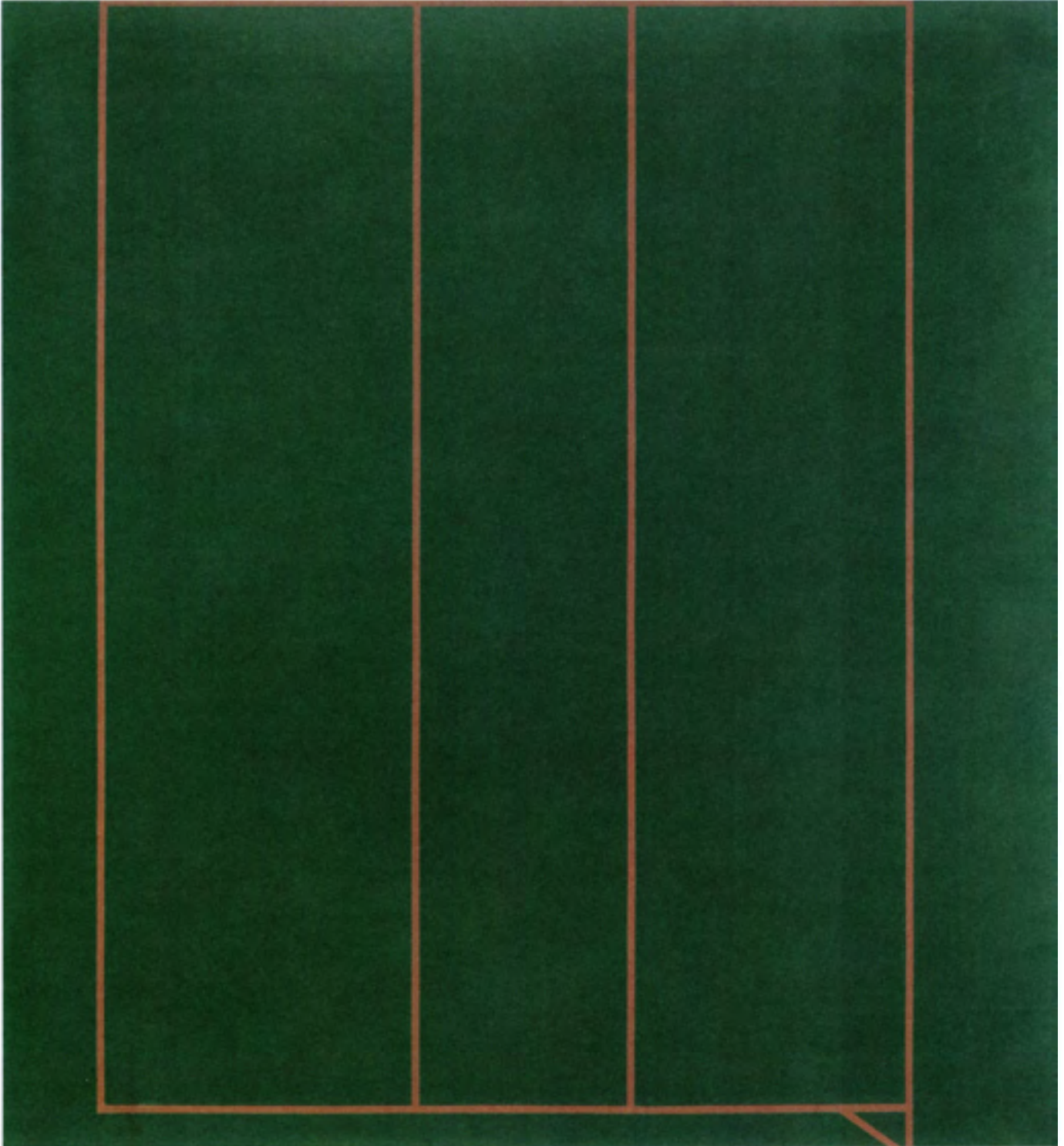


Untitled (Mannequin Series), 1965  
RG, number 6

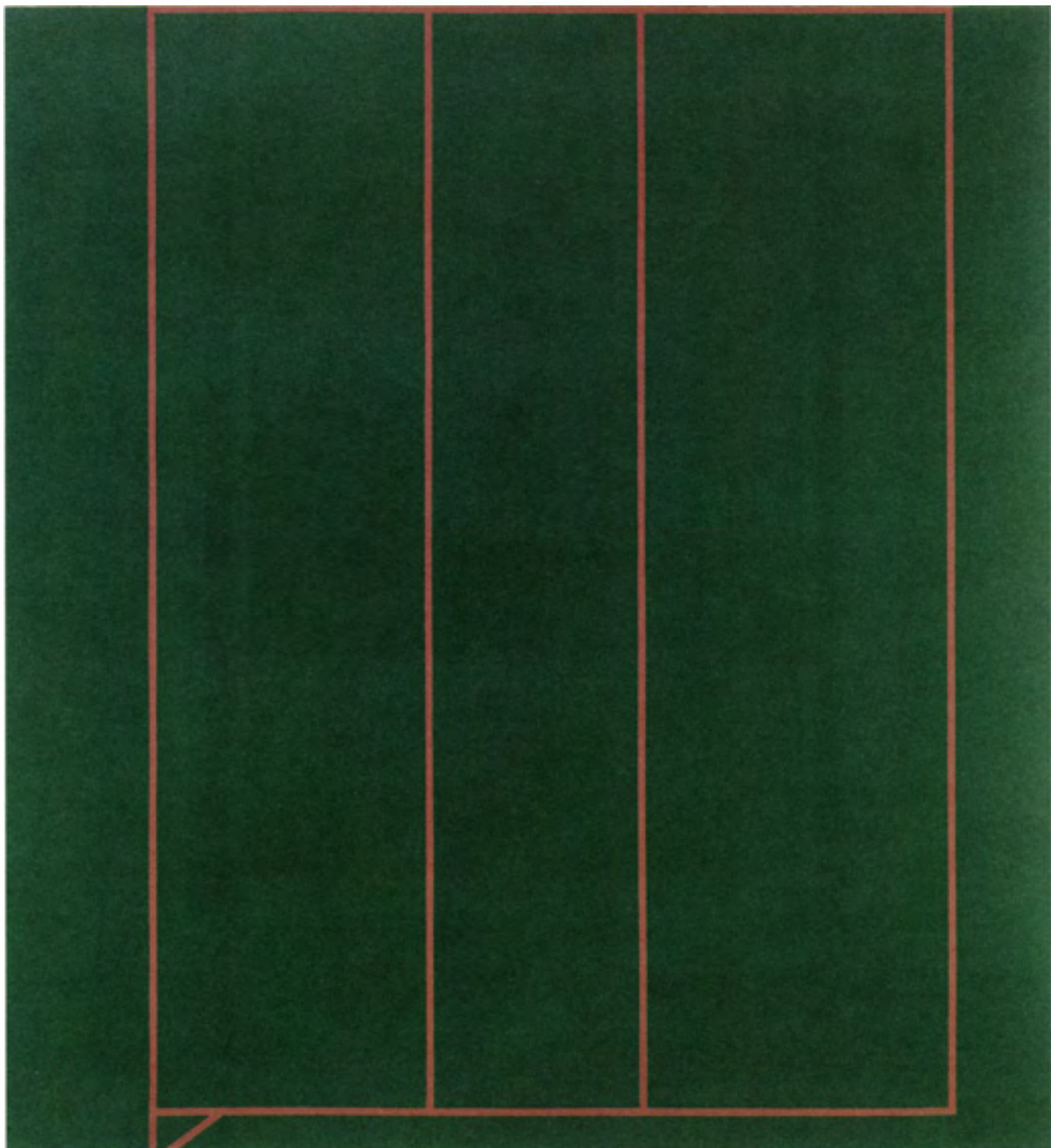


*First Song (For Eleanor)*, 1975  
RG, number 12



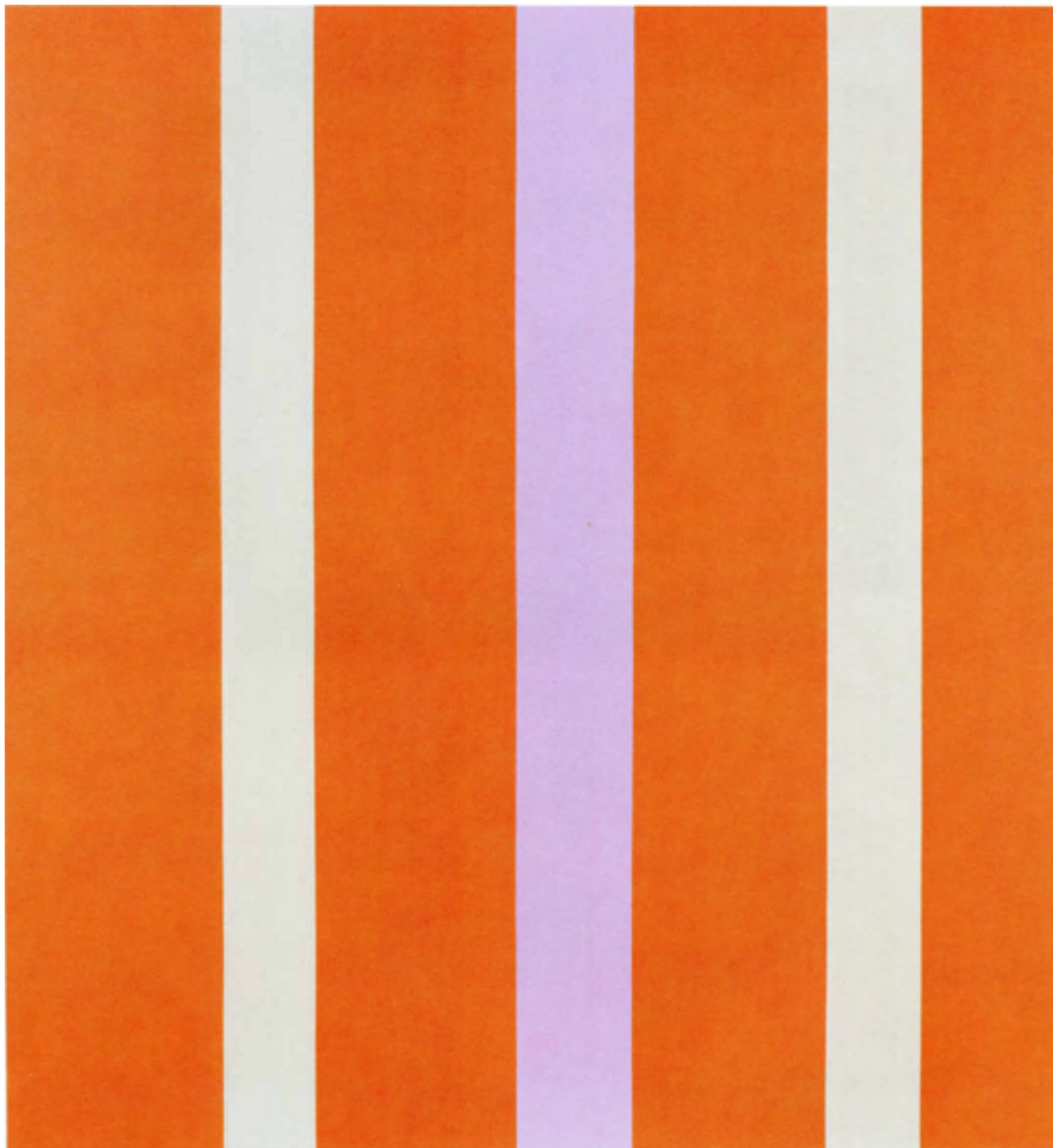






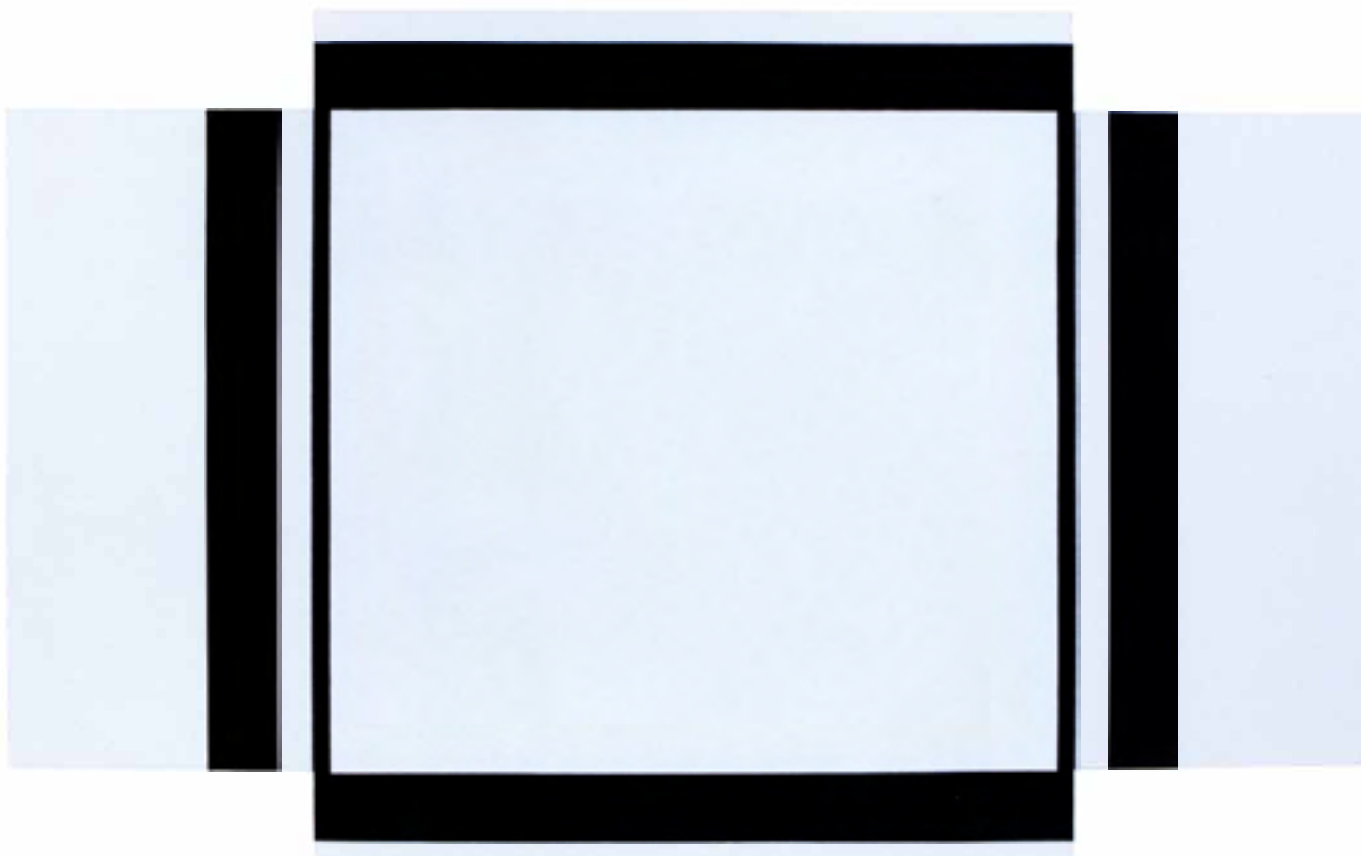


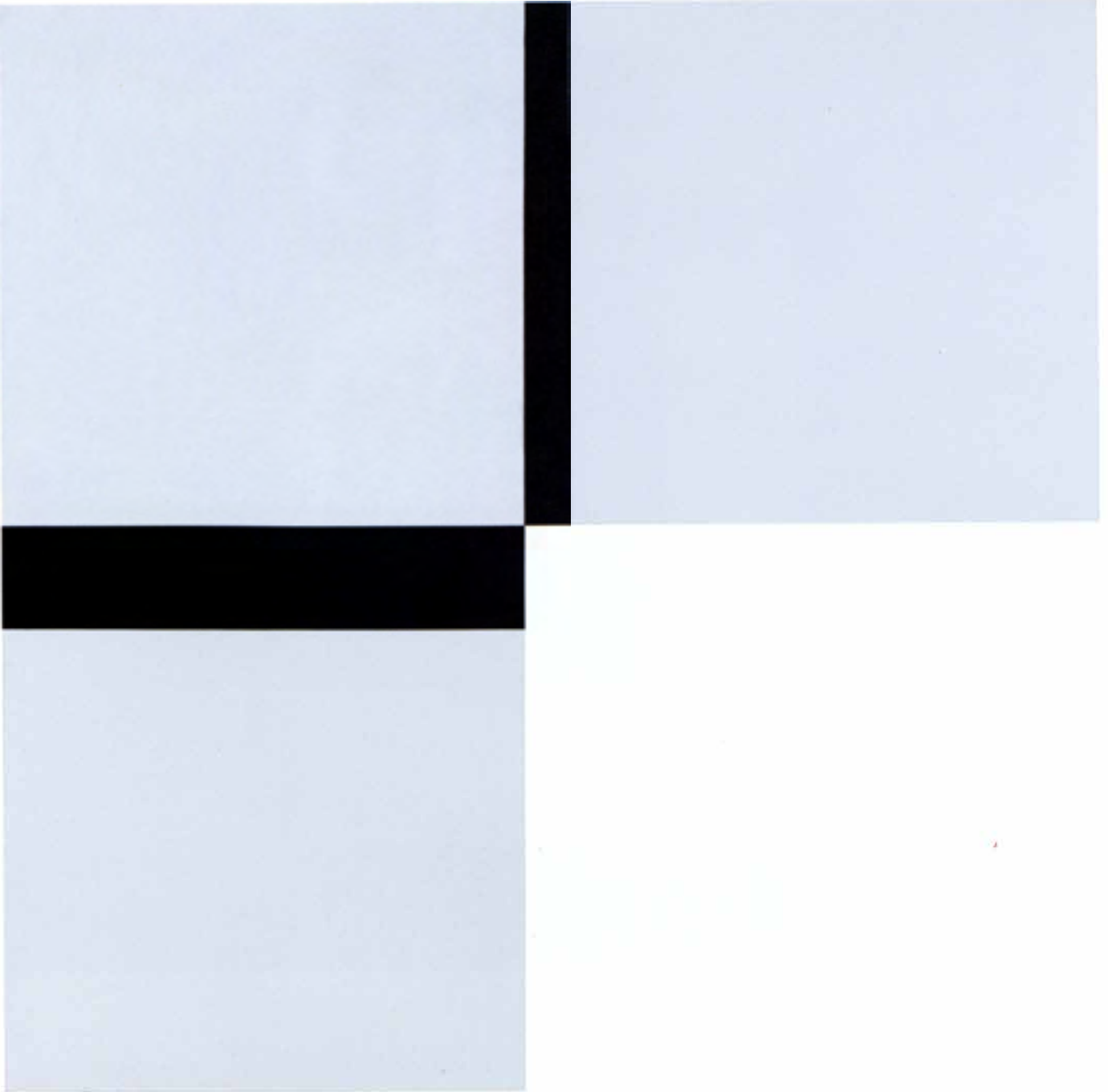
*Trinity for a Nomad (For George Karney)*, 1975  
AG, number 21



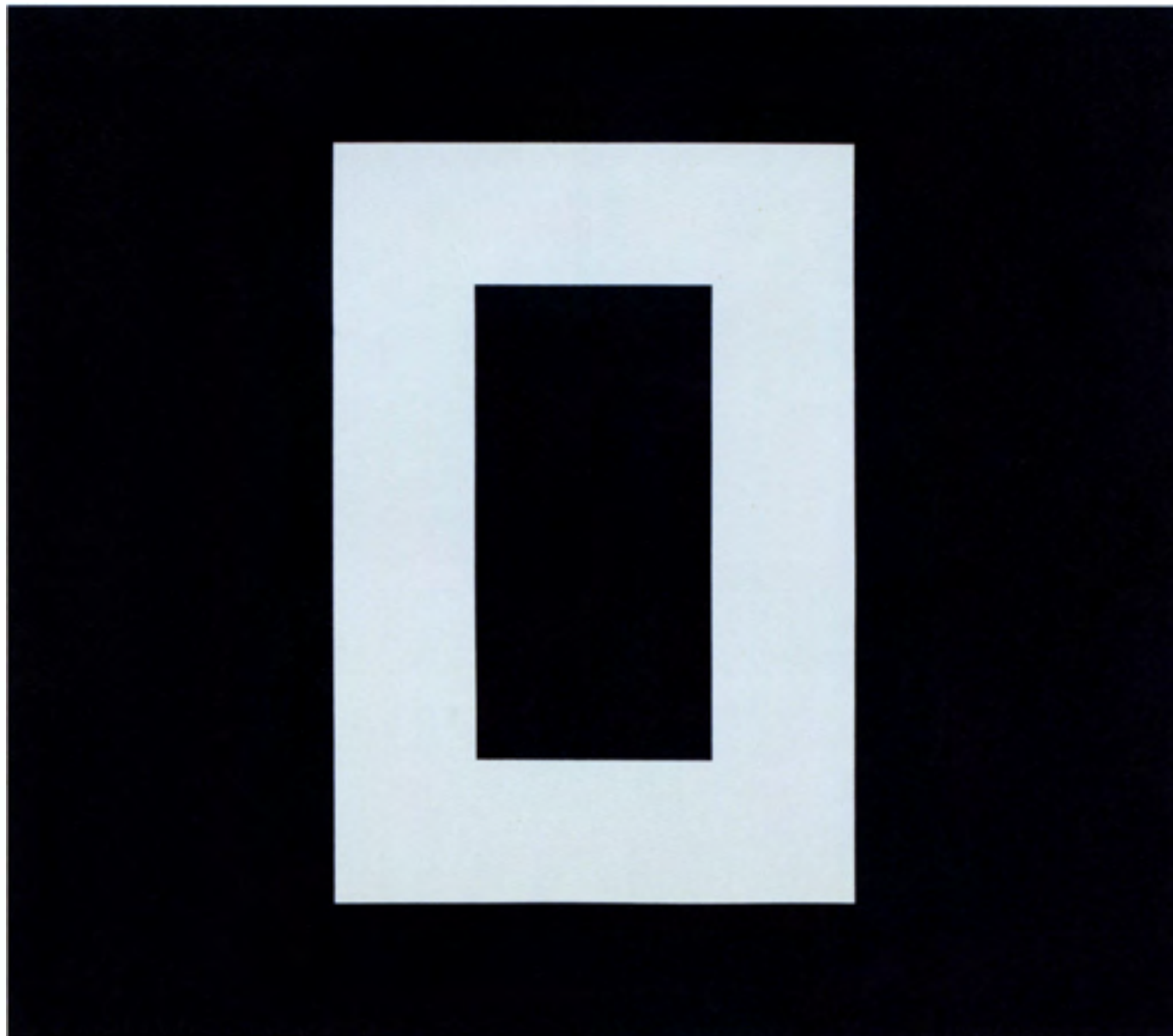


*Marker III: Point Gratiot, 1979*  
1708, number 6



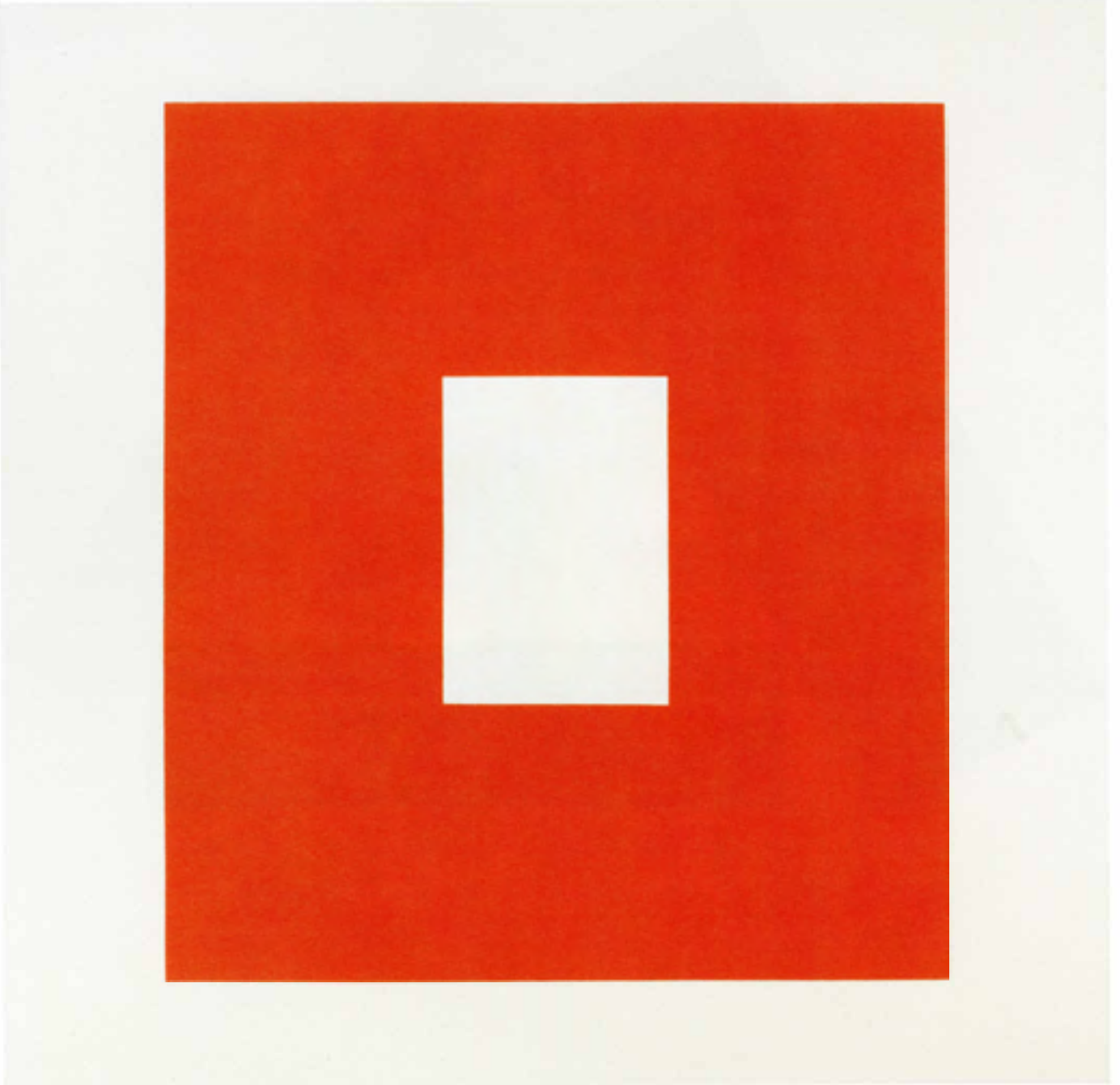


*Pelasgian Slate III (Pelagus)*, 1981  
Acrylic polymer emulsion on canvas  
66 x 75 inches  
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond;  
Gift of Bev and David Reynolds, 2009.9  
(not in exhibition)

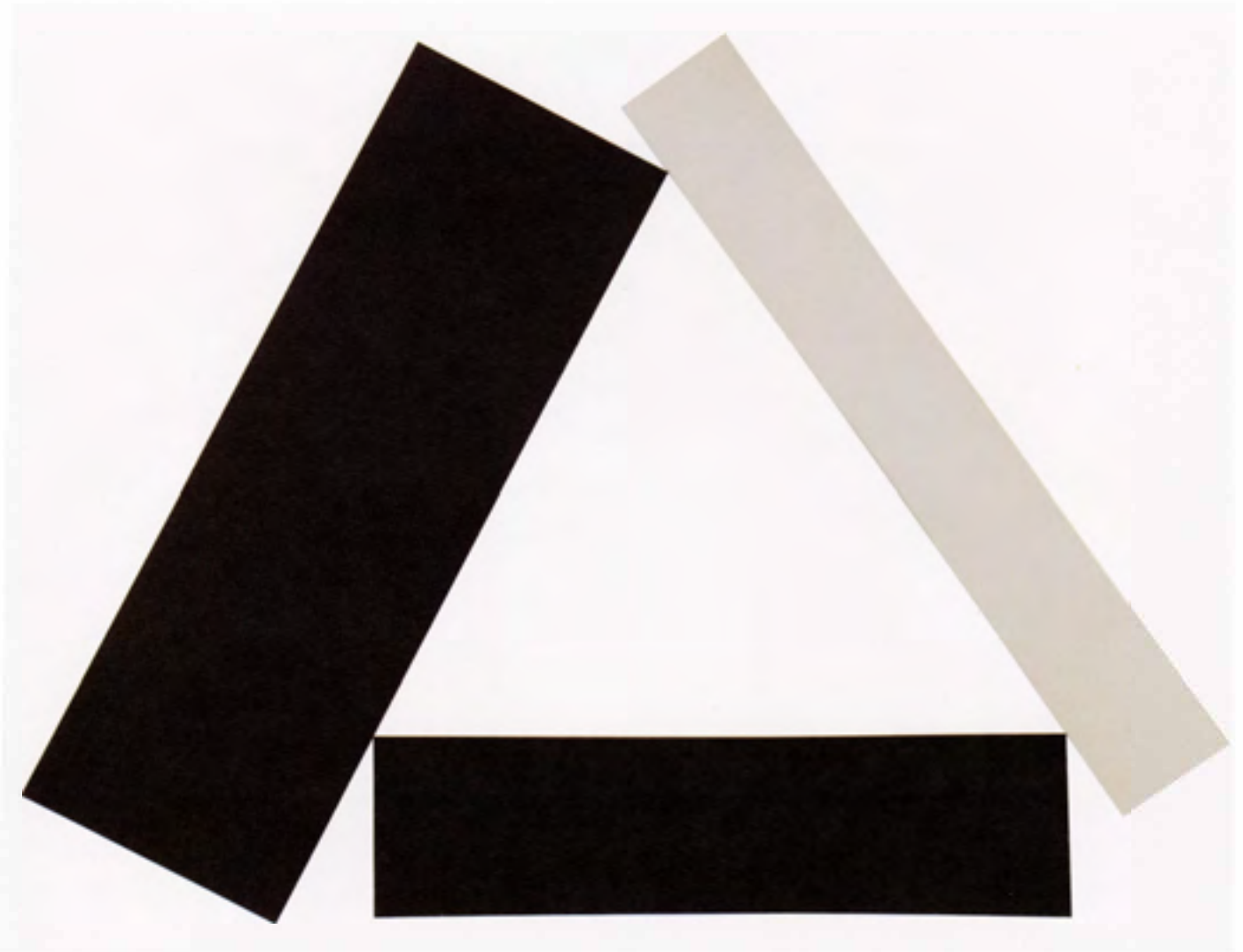


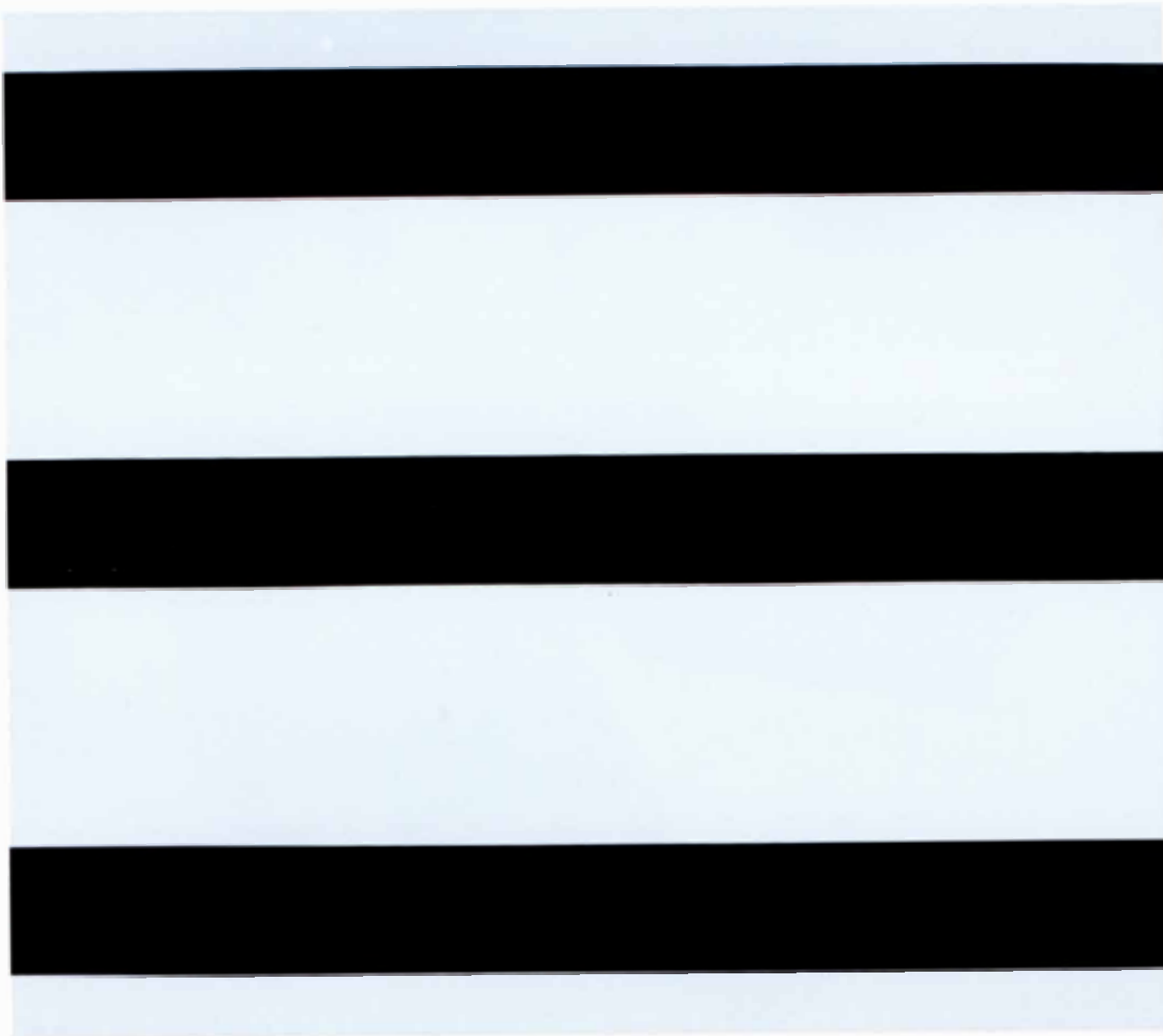


*Olympian Slate IV-A: Briareus, 1981*  
RG, number 3



*Signal VIII (Off Sides for David Gordon), 1983*  
AG, number 11







*Temporary Utility No. 1: Closet for Rodchenko, 1982 (top)*

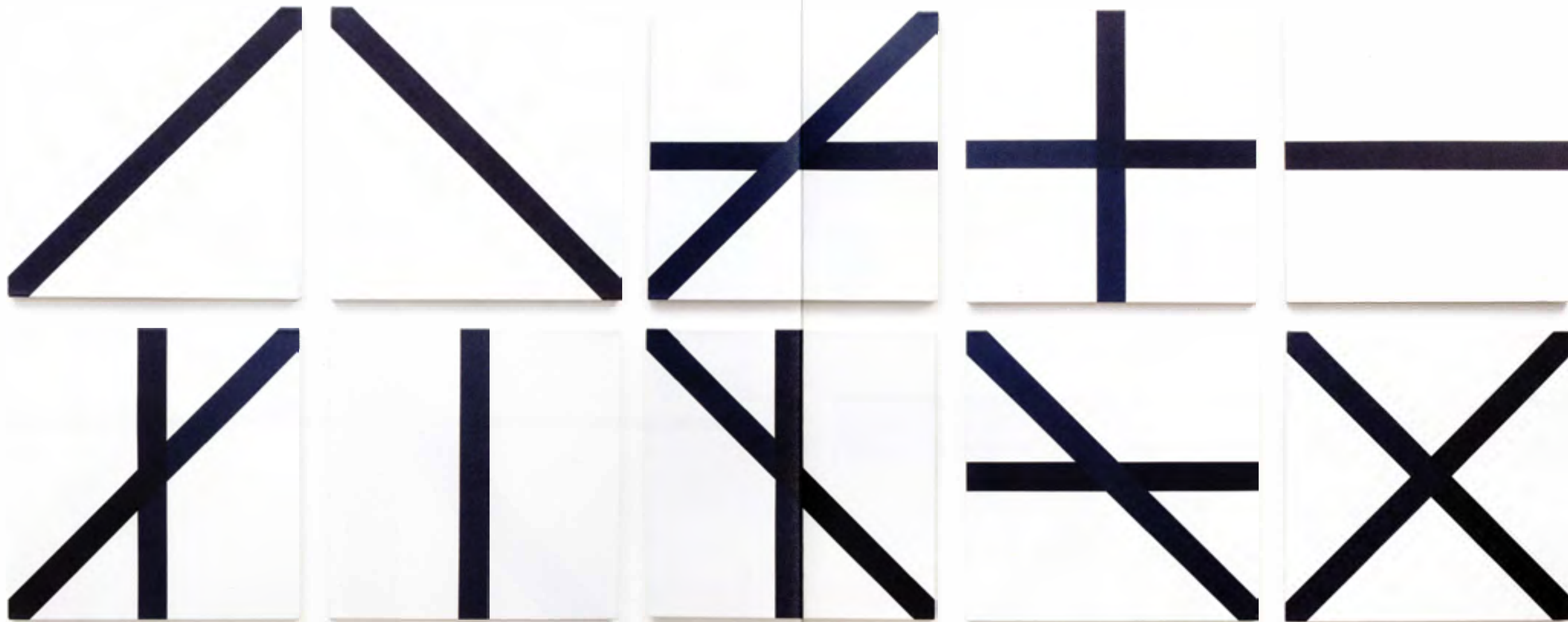
VACR, number 39

*Jump Chain, 1991 (bottom)*

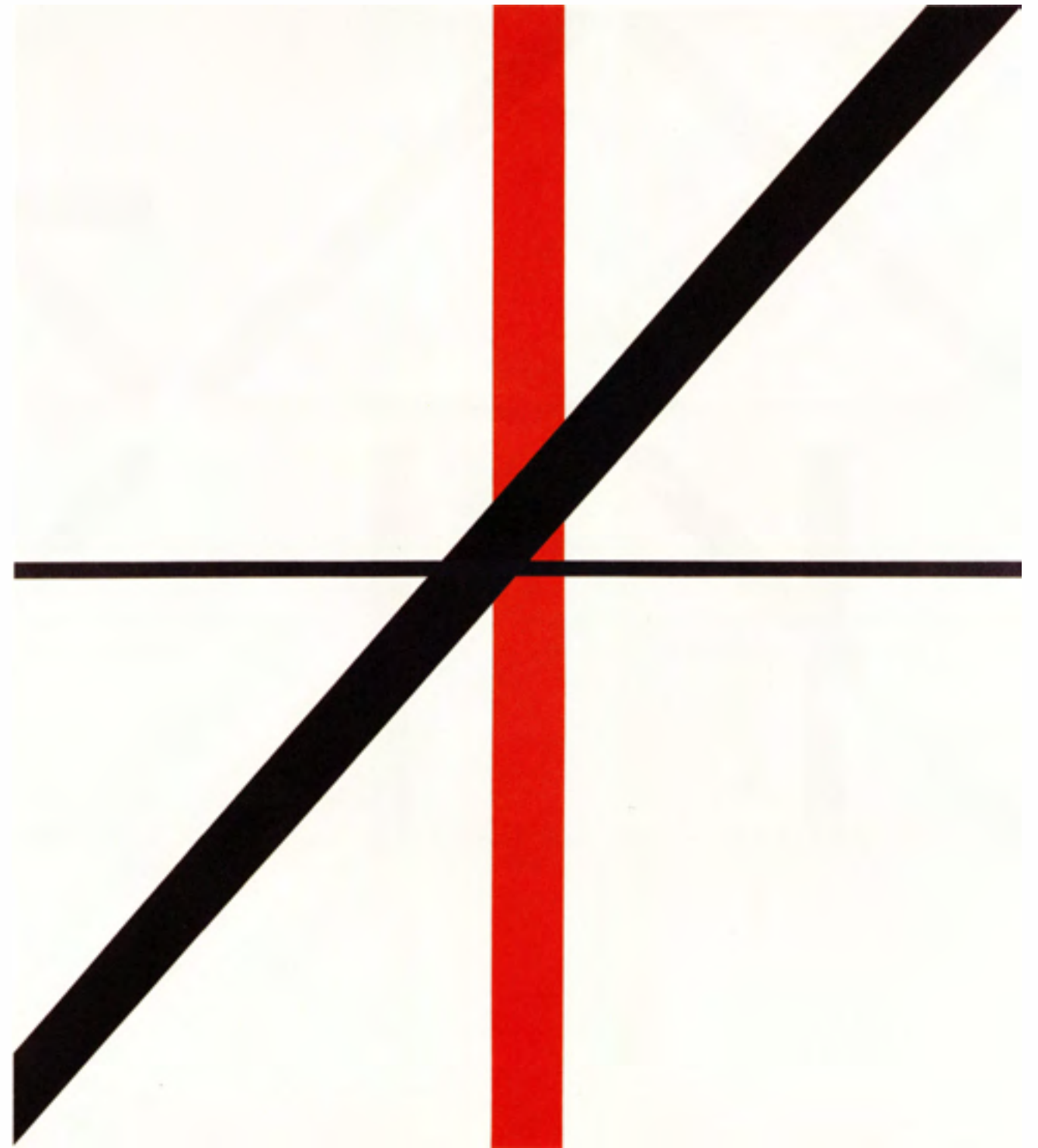
1708, number 4



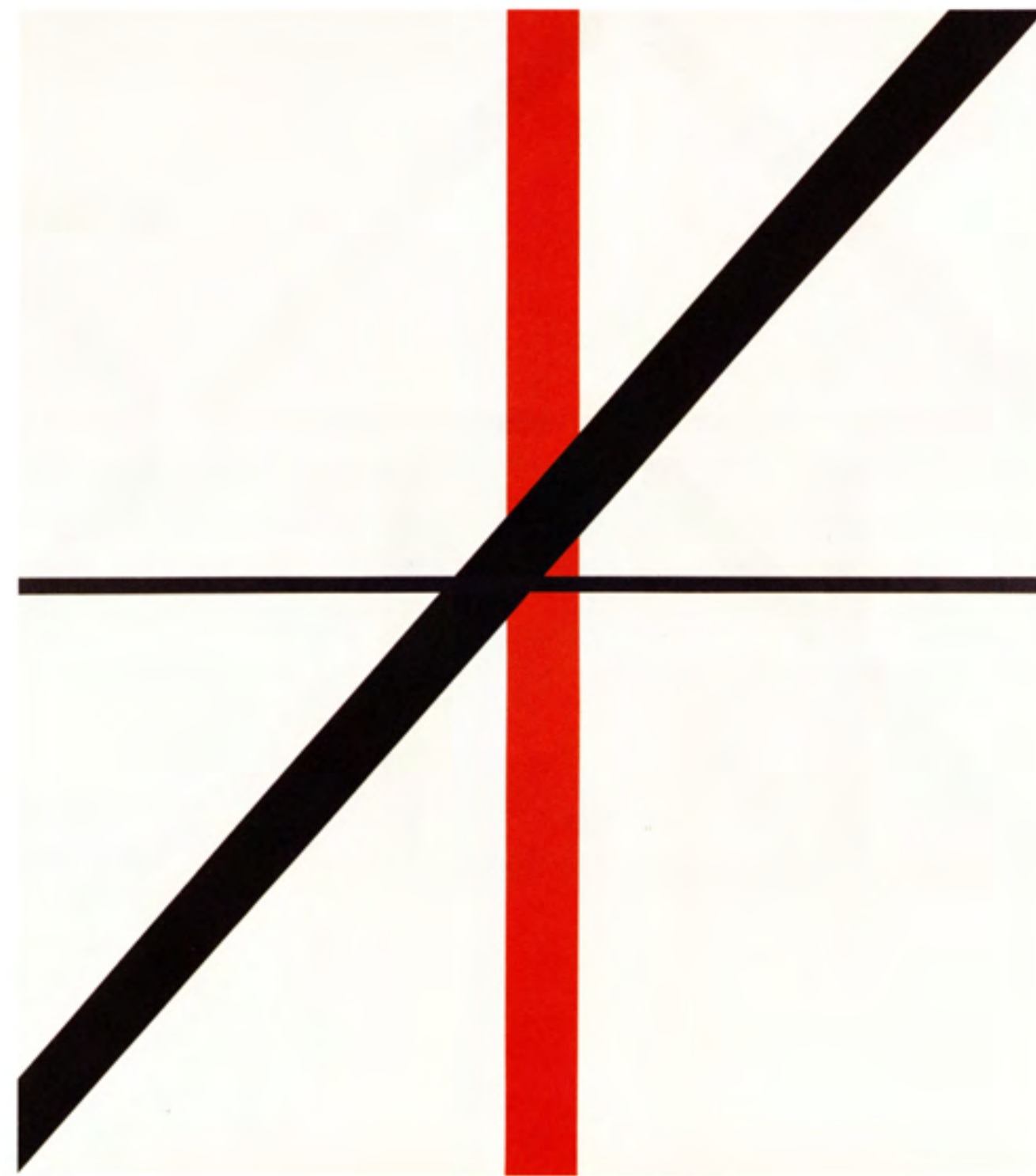
*Painting in 10 Parts, 1984*  
AG, number 10



Left to right: *Above/beyond, (here and there), THISIS, ...over (AND) above*, 1984  
AG, numbers 6-9



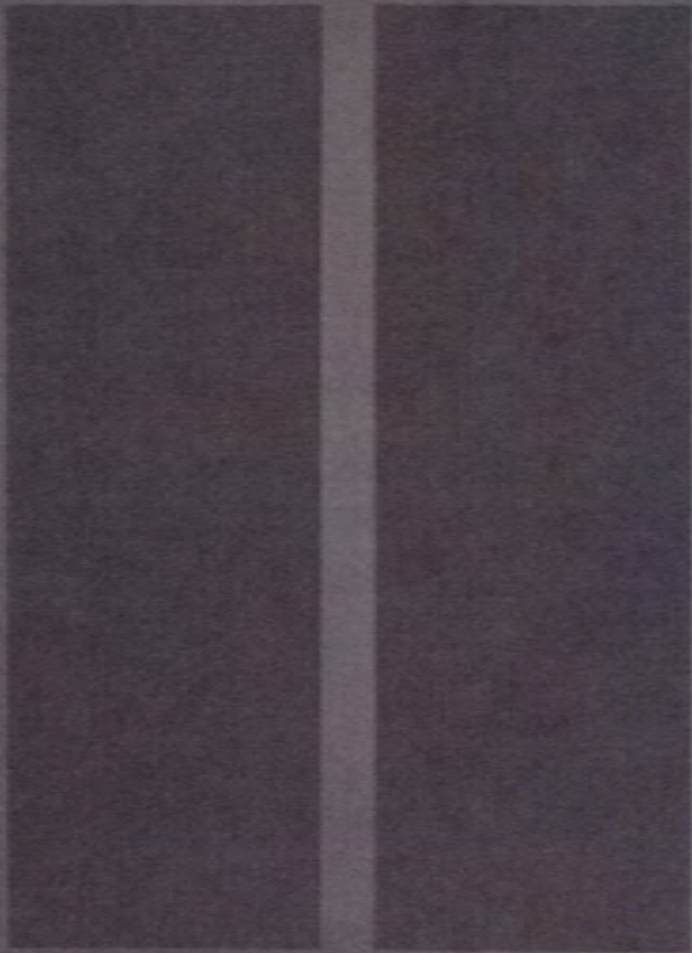








Watchman's Sleep (to Mallory Callan), 1988-89  
AG, number 3

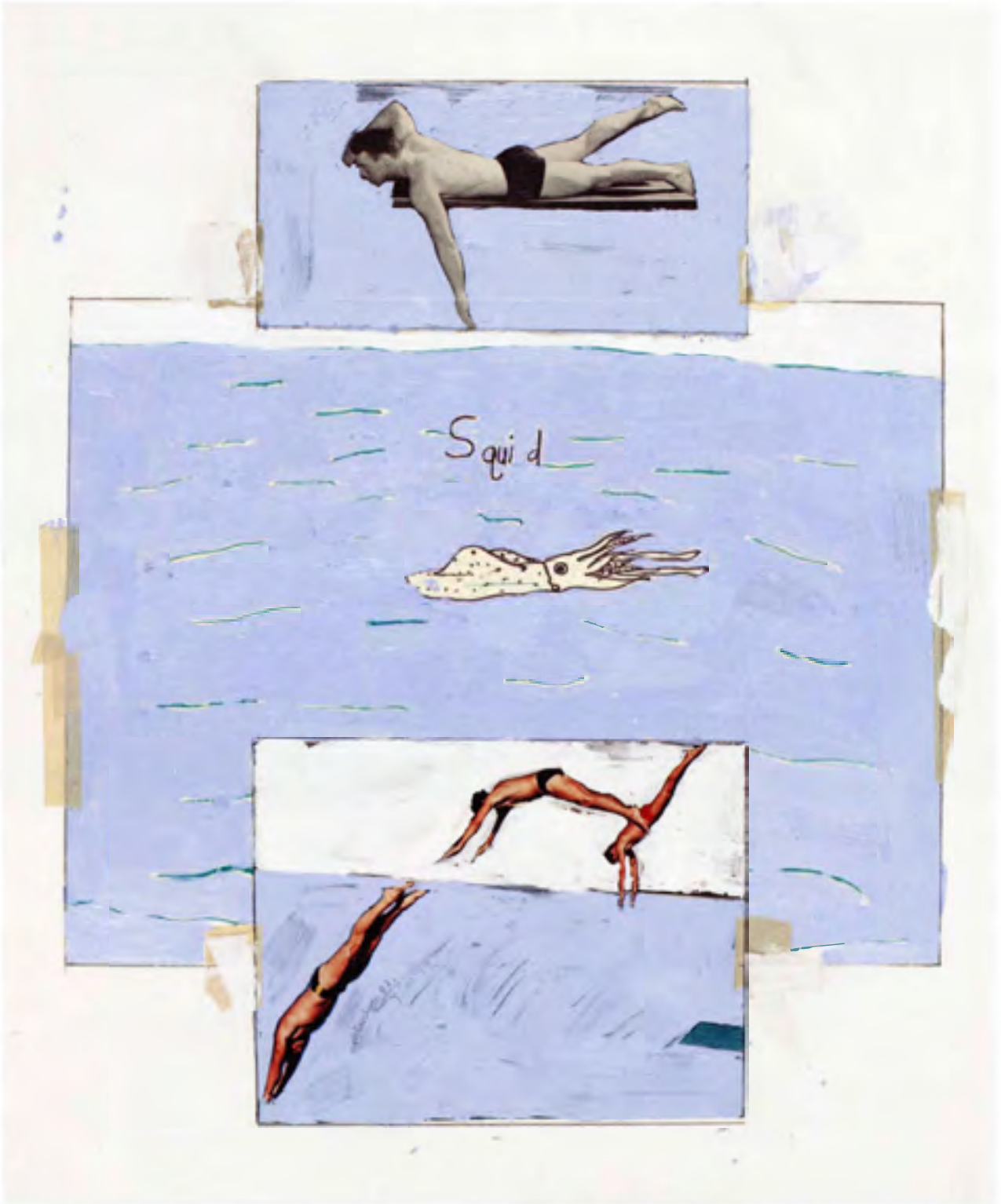




*from an idle position. While listening, 2001*  
AG, number 1

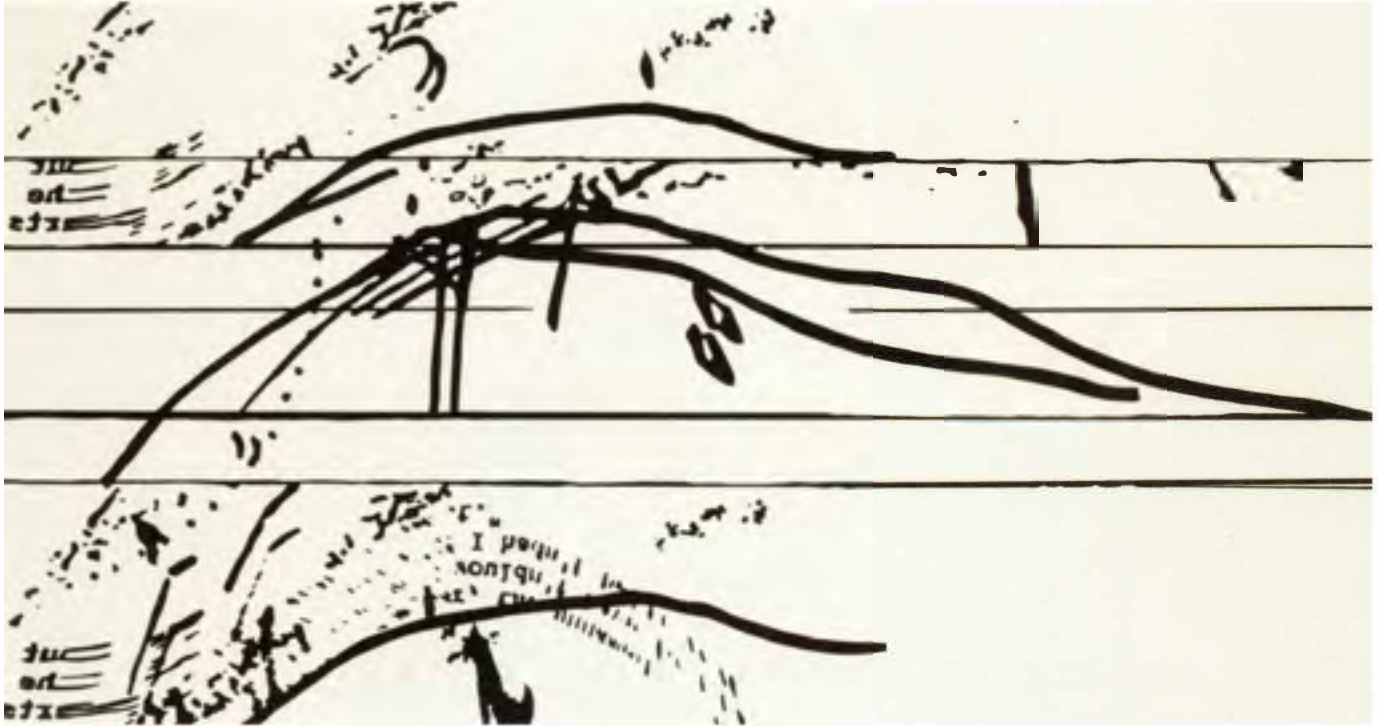


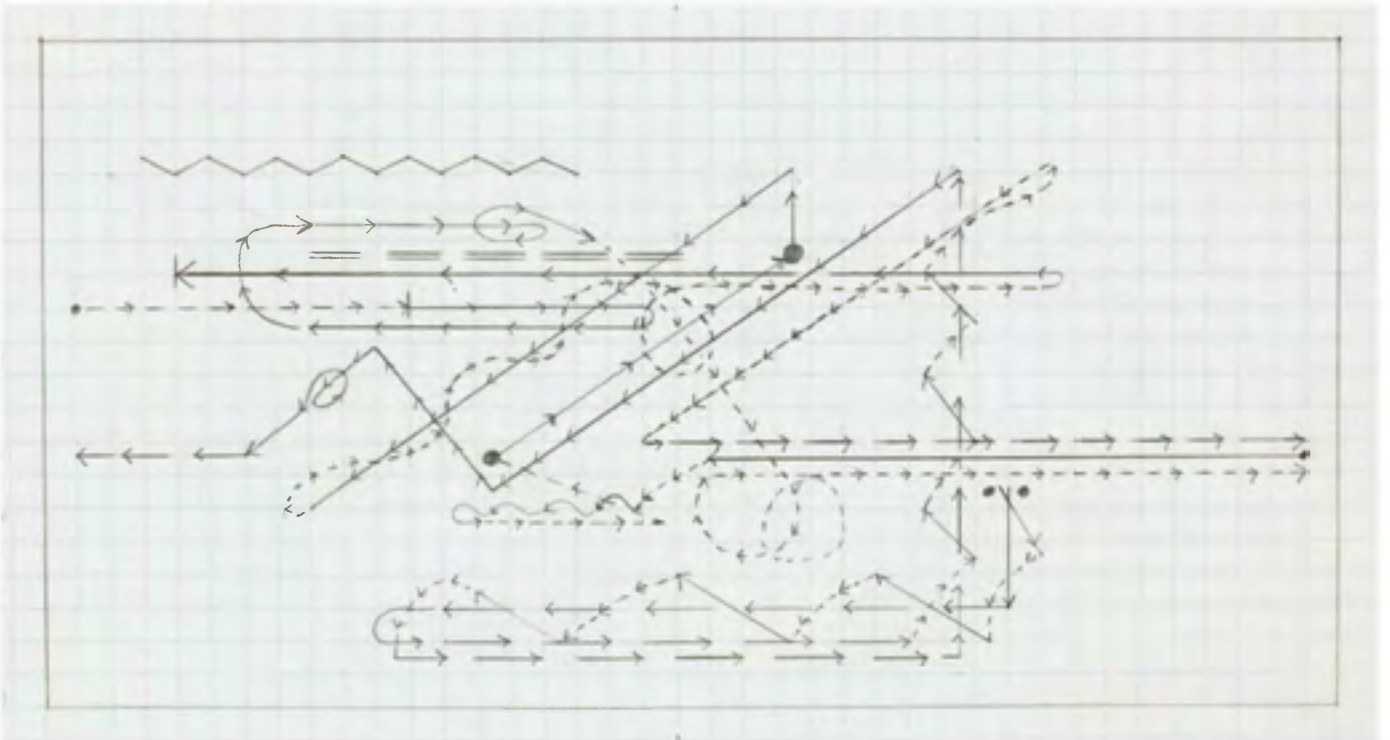
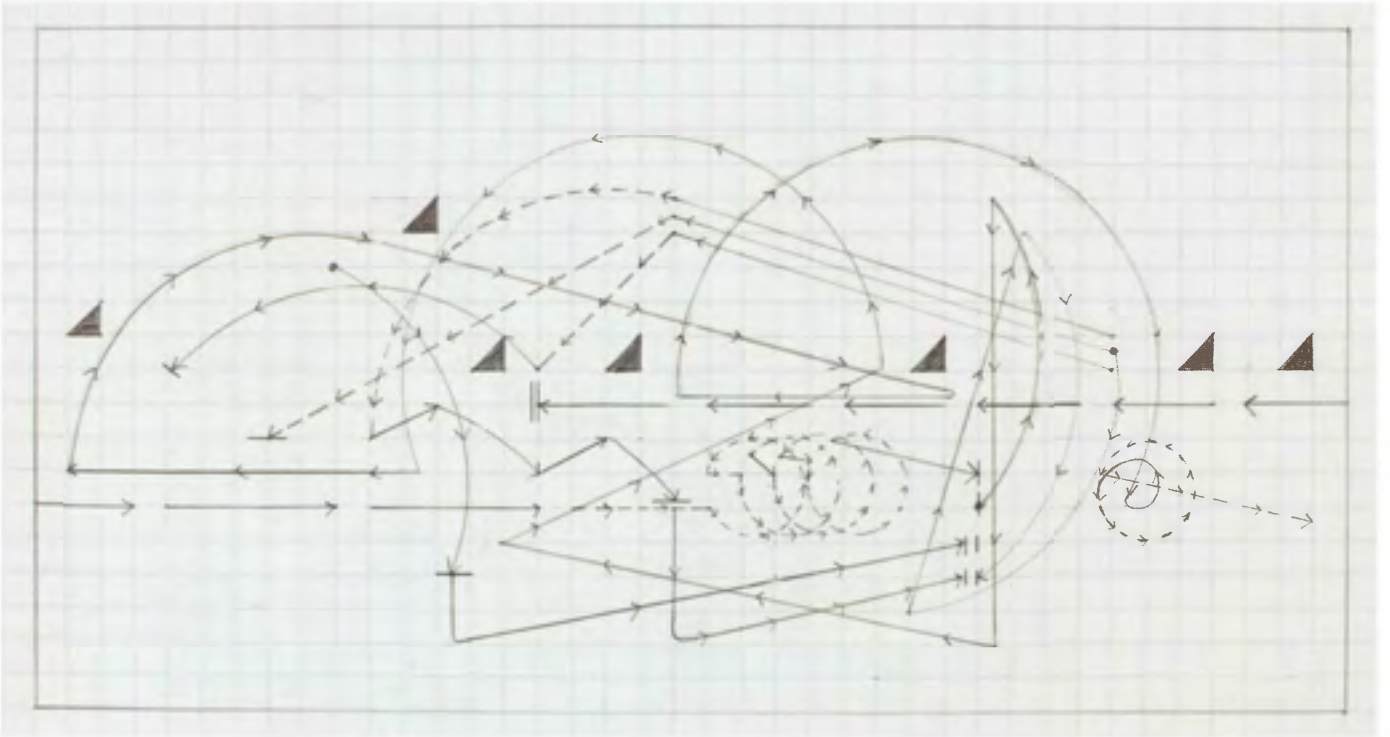
*Re-Run #9 (Ripples), 1982*  
VACR, number 32







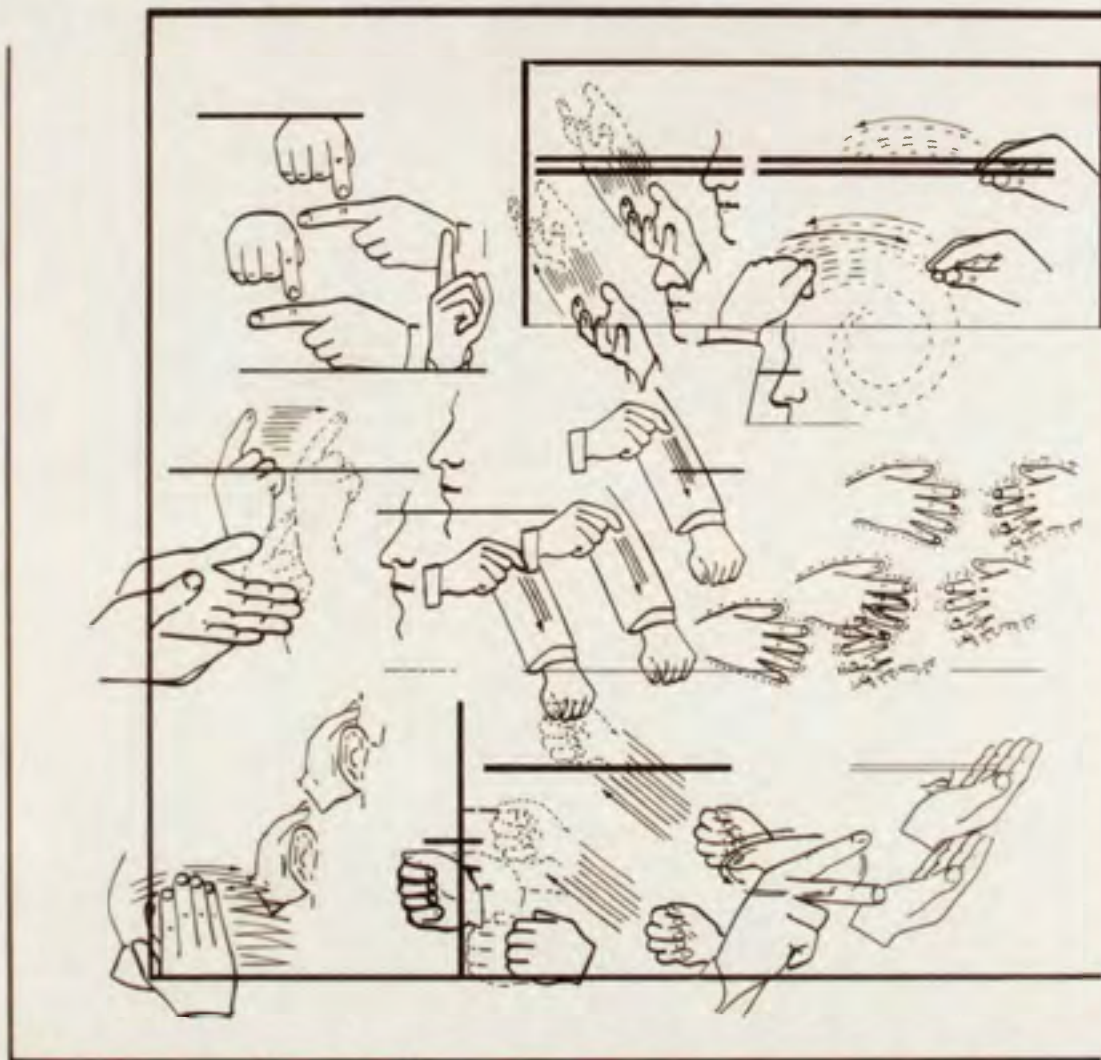








said. So #3, 2004  
Pigmented ink on vellum  
25 x 24 inches  
Private Collection  
(not in exhibition)



Richard Carlyon's studio, 723 West Broad Street, Spring 2006.



## TAKE 5: OF MEMORY AND LANGUAGE

My great-uncle Alfred was 40 years old on the day that I was born. He died on my 24th birthday. During the years I spent with him, I never — ever — heard uncle Alfred speak as much as a single word to anyone. His only vocalizations consisted of beautifully hummed sounds. I learned a lot from uncle Alfred.

A childhood friend of mine — a kid named Zachariah — was a secretive kind of guy. He loved to bury “smallish things” in the ground. Two or three times a week (over a period of several years) he would say to me: “I buried something today.” When Zachariah was 63, he was caught and then trapped by an enormous mudslide from which he never escaped. His body disappeared and has never been recovered.

One of my aunts was neurotic to an extreme. She had a marked propensity for shrieking as she spoke and, as she did so, she would claw at the air with her left hand and tug at her hair with the right. The theatrics of her behavior fascinated me. I could never figure her out but that didn’t matter. Being in her company was always an adventure for me.

When I was 16, I fell madly in love with the image of the American film actress, Lana Turner. Everything about her image-persona enthralled and excited me. I once fantasized that a chance encounter placed the two of us on an empty dance floor where we tangoed the night away. My fantasy remained as such, but on my 17th birthday I changed the color of my hair from its natural brown to Lana Turner blond.

About four years ago (I recall it was one morning during the last days of November 1997) as I was re-arranging the placement of the drawing table in my studio, I suddenly (in a flash!) experienced two notions which caught me by surprise. The first: that art is not what it is about. The second: that art probably is not even about what it does. Now that I’ve given a public face to these notions, I have nothing more to say of them. As noted in the opening paragraph of this statement: Hum’s the word.



## Choice

### Anderson Gallery VCU School of the Arts

<sup>1</sup> "Mid-Atlantic Reviews: Richard Carlyon." *Art Papers*, July/August 2002, p. 40.

<sup>2</sup> This and the following quotation derive from an unpublished statement written by the artist in 1975.

Checklist dimensions are given in inches, by height, width, and depth. Unless otherwise noted, works are lent courtesy of the artist's estate.

The paintings, drawings, collages, videos, and related objects assembled for the Anderson Gallery's installation reveal a limber yet resolute vision often undergirded by the artist's passionate interest in dance. Notes from a studio conversation with Richard Carlyon in February 2003 provided a starting point for considering how this portion of his retrospective might take shape. Among various other topics, Carlyon took great delight in describing a project then underway that entailed intense scrutiny of choreographer Martha Graham's rehearsal films from the 1930s to the 50s. With the support of a grant from the Virginia Commission for the Arts, he had spent eight days viewing these films at the Graham Trust in New York City, carefully plotting and later superimposing the paths that the dancers created on the space of the floor as they performed her pieces. Nineteen studies on graph paper resulted; each is an intricate, meticulously woven maze of line and pattern affirming Carlyon's realization that a keen graphic sensibility was integral to Graham's genius. He had planned to eventually render his *Dance Maps* as much larger ink-on-parchment drawings.

Years earlier, Carlyon's own experiences as a choreographer yielded similar insights. Compelled to revise a group work for five dancers in compliance with the spatial demands of a new venue, he undertook what became a drawing exercise. His conception of drawing as a form of "graphic notation," a flexible open-ended definition that allowed him to resume drawing in the mid-1990s after abandoning it for a decade, seems to have originated in this context. With regard to dance, Carlyon's graphic notations offered a means of analyzing how the space of a stage is animated; in other words, he asked, how does one take possession of that rectangle? This query helped define not only his understanding of performance work, but also his approach to activities in other arenas, where the physical parameters might be determined by a video monitor, a sheet of parchment paper, or the expanse of a canvas. "Syncopated sensory encounters," a description Paul Ryan applied to the contents of the artist's 2002 solo show, aptly summarizes the outcome of Carlyon's response to this challenge.<sup>1</sup> Over the years, employing a particular style of video editing, unconventional means of making drawings, multi-panel (or monitor) formats, and serial imagery, he created a stimulating array of variations on this theme.

The language Carlyon used to characterize his paintings as "entrances, exits, passageways, channels, corridors or aisles through varying levels of space and time" reinforces the connection with dance and bodily movement.<sup>2</sup> In part because of the Anderson Gallery's ample exhibition space, this installation ultimately included a survey of his paintings over a 25-year period, beginning with a selection of his brightly colored canvases from the mid-1970s. It concludes with a pair of paintings from the last group he completed, in which segmented and sometimes partially obscured letters and words, rendered in various shades and sheens of gray, are the primary component. Within this timeframe, along with notable individual paintings, four important series are represented. In each, Carlyon either combined consecutive canvases to create mesmerizing, motion-filled networks of interrelated lines, or arranged discrete rectangular panels into rhythmic compositions dedicated to well-known choreographers. Whether comprised of letters, lines, or shapes, these visual puzzles spark a sequence of physical sensations and mental activities capable of directing the viewer's attention, as he described it, "on, over, behind, around, across and through fragments, details, interruptions and intervals." Here, Carlyon proposes a way of seeing that is quintessentially choreographic.

During the spring of 2008, Carlyon's studio on West Broad Street was photographically documented, and the contents inventoried and packed. Its reassembly introduces the exhibition at the Anderson Gallery, together with selected self-portraits dating from the late 1950s to the early 90s. The methodical disposition of every item contained within this work space conjures a deliberation and preparedness in which choice always resides as the necessary counterpoint to chance. Carlyon grappled with both of these elements in his work, recognizing the significance of each, and yet he never wavered from a course of action once it was determined. The fact that he was able to accommodate and balance both sides of this creative coin constitutes another measure of his success.

Ashley Kistler  
Director

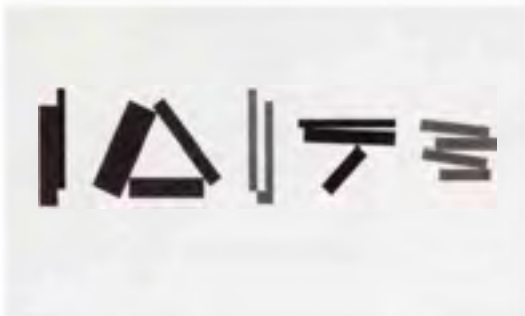


**Paintings**

- |   |                                     |  |
|---|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1. from an idle position.<br>While listening  | 2001<br>53 x 71                     | Polymer emulsion, graphite,<br>and watercolor on wood panel<br>Collection of Media General, Inc.                   |
| 2. given. Differently<br>however  | 2000–01<br>58 x 74                  | Polymer emulsion and graphite<br>on wood panel<br>Collection of Cynthia S. Becker<br>and the late Edward J. Becker |
| 3. Watchman's Sleep<br>(to Mallory Callan)  | 1988–89<br>39 x 78                  | Polymer emulsion on canvas<br>Collection of Hiter and Jil Harris   |
| 4. Diamond Series:<br>Be-fore, (du-ring),<br>while, la-ter, Since   | 1985<br>84 x 84                     | Liquitex and acrylic polymer<br>emulsion on canvas   |
| 5. S-W-E-E-P-E-R  | 1985<br>48 x 54                     | Liquitex and acrylic polymer<br>emulsion on canvas; Collection<br>of Jason and Cheryl Carlyon                      |
| 6. THISIS   | 1984<br>75 x 66                     | Liquitex and acrylic polymer<br>emulsion on canvas<br>Collection of Altria Group                                   |
| 7. ABOVE / beyond   | 1984<br>75 x 66                     | Liquitex and acrylic polymer<br>emulsion on canvas<br>Collection of Altria Group                                   |
| 8. (here and there)   | 1984<br>75 x 66                     | Liquitex and acrylic polymer<br>emulsion on canvas<br>Collection of Altria Group                                   |
| 9. ...over (AND) above  | 1984<br>75 x 66                     | Liquitex and acrylic polymer<br>emulsion on canvas<br>Collection of Altria Group                                   |
| 10. Painting in 10 Parts:<br>Part One (Angelica),<br>Part Two (Lackawanna),<br>Part Three (Henrietta),<br>Part Four (Palmyra),<br>Part Five (Attica), Part<br>Six (Batavia), Part Seven<br>(Elmira), Part Eight<br>(Tonawanda), Part Nine<br>(Ithaca), Part Ten<br>(Chautauqua) | 1984<br>30 x 30<br>62 x 178 overall | Liquitex and acrylic polymer<br>emulsion on canvas   |
| 11. Signal VIII (Off Sides<br>For David Gordon)   | 1983<br>104 x 139                   | Liquitex and acrylic polymer<br>emulsion on canvas   |
| 12. Signal X (Notation<br>For Lucinda Childs)   | 1983<br>63 x 82½                    | Liquitex and acrylic polymer<br>emulsion on canvas   |
| 13. Signal IX (Tri-Splice<br>For Yvonne Rainer)   | 1983<br>78 x 105                    | Liquitex and acrylic polymer<br>emulsion on canvas   |
| 14. Signal VII (Tuner For<br>Trisha Brown)  | 1982<br>118½ x 28½                  | Liquitex and acrylic polymer<br>emulsion on canvas   |

15. <b>Screen II: for John Cage</b>	1982 72 x 84	Liquitex and acrylic polymer emulsion on canvas
16. <b>Marker IV (Lisbon)</b>	1982 42 x 78	Liquitex and acrylic polymer emulsion on canvas Courtesy of the Longwood Center for the Visual Arts, Farmville, VA; Gift of Jack Blanton for The Jack Blanton Collection, 2007.23.8
17. <b>Pelasgian Slate IV (Eurynome)</b>	1981 66 x 75	Acrylic polymer emulsion on canvas Collection of Jason and Cheryl Carlyon
18. <b>Slate #1</b>	1976 67½ x 93	Liquitex on canvas
19. <b>Panama Cut</b>	1975 97 x 32	Liquitex and acrylic polymer emulsion on canvas Courtesy of the Taubman Museum of Art, Roanoke, VA; Gift of Eleanor Ruffy Carlyon, 2006.038
20. <b>Transfer</b>	1975 85 x 57	Liquitex and acrylic polymer emulsion on canvas
21. <b>Trinity for a Nomad (For George Karney)</b>	1975 80 x 73	Liquitex and acrylic polymer emulsion on canvas
22. <b>WALKAROUND</b>	1975 97 x 31¼	Liquitex and acrylic polymer emulsion on canvas
<b>Drawings and Collages</b>		
23. <b>said. So #3</b>	2004 25 x 24	Pigmented ink on vellum Collection of Elizabeth King and Carlton Newton
24. <b>missaid #2</b>	2003 20 x 17½	Pigmented ink on vellum
25. <b>invisible. In other words</b>	2003 23½ x 13¾	Pigmented ink on vellum Collection of Jason and Cheryl Carlyon
26. <b>to the letter. Received</b>	2003 23½ x 17¾	Pigmented ink on vellum Collection of N. R. and R. C. Schandemeier
27. <b>noted. While watching #3</b>	2003 6⅞ x 17¾	Pigmented ink on Mylar
28. <b>noted. While watching #4</b>	2003 6⅞ x 17¾	Pigmented ink on Mylar
29. <b>noted. While watching #5</b>	2003 6⅞ x 19⅜	Pigmented ink on Mylar
30. <b>noted. While watching #6</b>	2003 6⅞ x 19¾	Pigmented ink on Mylar





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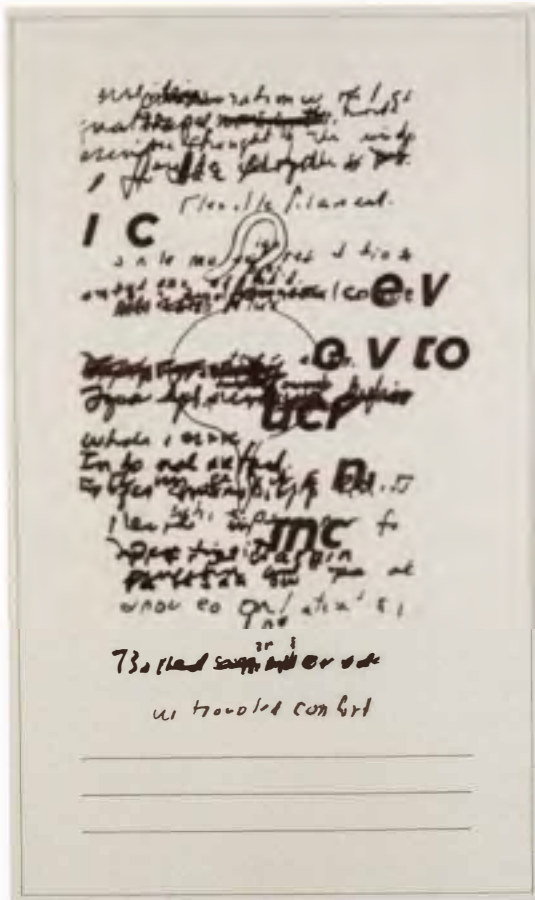


39



36

31. Followings: from above, so below An Ensemble of Dance Maps	2000 8½ x 11	15 drawings from a series of 19 Pencil on graph paper
32. Surge I: Monday	1999 25¼ x 40	Pigmented ink on parchment Collection of Cade Martin
33. Surge II: Tuesday	1999 31 x 36	Pigmented ink on parchment Collection of Julia and Randy Boyd
34. Surge V: Friday	1999 28¾ x 40	Pigmented ink on parchment Collection of Justin Brown
35. Surge VI: Saturday	1999 21 x 35	Pigmented ink on parchment Collection of Joan Gaustad and Gerald Donato
36. Souvenir I	1998 19 x 24¼	Pigmented ink on parchment
37. halted. Until exposed	1998 27¼ x 23¾	Pigmented ink on parchment
38. on a surface. Nonetheless	1998 27¼ x 35¾	Pigmented ink on parchment
39. Citing V: guilty pleasures. As shown	1998 27¼ x 32¾	Pigmented ink on parchment
40. Portrait of an Imaginary Wall II	1998 23 x 38	Polymer emulsion on blotter paper
41. Out of Print V: imagined. Such as if	1998 18 x 29¾	Pigmented ink on parchment
42. Out of Print VI: necessarily. Otherwise	1997 15¾ x 31¾	Pigmented ink on parchment
43. Self Portrait	1986 17¼ x 14¼	Pencil on paper
44. Self Portrait #2	1986 19½ x 27	Charcoal on paper
45. Self Portrait #4	1986 19½ x 27	Charcoal on paper
46. Self Portrait #5	1986 19½ x 27	Charcoal on paper
47. INTERLUDE No. 4 (Ear Ache)	1984 20 x 29¾	Polaroid photographs, screws, grommets, and pencil on board
48. Untitled	1973 24 x 18, or 18 x 24	7 collages Marker, charcoal, cut and pasted paper
49. Untitled	1973 18 x 24	Charcoal and pastel on paper
50. Self Portrait	1965 18¼ x 12¾	Pencil on paper



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51. <b>Self Portrait</b>	1958 35% x 26%	Oil and pasted papers on paperboard
<b>Videos and Photographs</b>		
52. <b>A Saying of Sorts</b>	2001	Six-channel video Running time: 17:35
53. <b>There Then Now</b>	1999–2000	Video Running time: 5:50
54. <b>Flight Song</b>	1996–2001	Video Running time: 5:33
55. <b>Blind Spot (Red)</b>	1992–93 20 x 24	Chromogenic photograph Collection of Susan Glasser
56. <b>Blind Spot (Blue)</b>	1992–93 20 x 24	Chromogenic photograph
57. <b>Blind Spot (Yellow)</b>	1992–93 20 x 24	Chromogenic photograph
58. <b>Red Again</b>	1989	Video Running time: 7:07
<b>Other Works</b>		
59. <b>Studio</b>	2008	Contents of Richard Carlyon's studio Located at 723 West Broad Street, 2002–08
60. <b>Selected untitled books</b>	1988–96 11 x 8½	Xerox prints
61. <b>Selected postcards</b>	1984–85 4 x 6	Sent by Richard Carlyon to Nancy Schandelmeier, Aix-en-Provence, France

## Early & Late Eleanor

### Reynolds Gallery

When Pete Humes reviewed Richard Carlyon's 2005 exhibition at the Reynolds Gallery, he titled his article, appropriately enough, "The Leader of the Pack." In it, he brilliantly summed up what had been not only a life of artistic exploration, discipline, and the pushing of boundaries but also one dedicated to intellectual challenges and to teaching as a way of inspiring others about the importance of creative pursuits. More than anyone in this artistic community, Richard Carlyon was able, through his extraordinary talents as both an artist and a teacher, to instill in students and a significant part of the Richmond community a greater understanding of the power and importance of contemporary art.

I clearly remember the first time I became aware of Richard Carlyon; I had the feeling he would have an important impact on my life. I had signed up for his Contemporary Art History class at VCU. It was taught in a stadium-style lecture room in the Hibbs building; usually there was standing room only.

As I entered the room on the first evening of class, I saw this rather slight, but elegant figure dressed in black with an amazing shock of silver hair and then heard the most contagious laugh come from him, which filled the room. It was the kind of laugh that makes you feel as if you have missed something very funny. The class was at the end of the work day in the dreaded 7–9:40 p.m. slot. But instead of regularly checking the time, the feeling I had was that class would end too soon, before he told us all that was on his mind that evening. After the second session, I went up to him and told him about my idea of starting a contemporary gallery in Richmond that would exhibit works by artists from New York along with regional artists. He looked at me with an amused expression and said, "That's a good idea, Bev, but it will never work in Richmond." This was in the late 1970s, and contemporary art did not sell here; there was no market. However, because of artists like Richard Carlyon, among many others, I pursued my plan, always with the goal of living up to the high bar set by him.

The process of reviewing Richard's art so that the Reynolds Gallery could honor him by participating in this retrospective was enlightening. Even though I have known many of the different periods of his work, I was often surprised and overwhelmed by the strength of so many pieces that I was seeing for the first time. Initially, the focus of this exhibition was to be a survey of his early and late works. The idea was to show the remarkable progression that occurred over 50 years in which he moved from his early, richly colored expressionistic paintings to the late minimal-conceptual canvases for which he is best known. In early paintings like *Tree* and *Still Life No. 4* (both 1952), strokes of brilliantly colored oil paint are applied in a direct intuitive manner by an artist already confident of his medium and sure of his compositional structure. These paintings offered the perfect starting point. However, another theme kept recurring in Richard's work that also was compelling to follow; it was that of Eleanor Rufty, his muse.

Eleanor first met Richard in New York in 1957, while she was on a student trip. They met again in 1958, when he came to Richmond for graduate school at RPI and Eleanor was a student model in the painting department. (Models at that time wore black bathing suits because nude models were not allowed.) *Eleanor 1* (1958) continues Richard's direct painterly, expressionistic approach. Colors are vivid; brushwork is bold; and the figure is planted solidly in space in a commanding position. There is also a series of stunning drawings of Eleanor from 1958 that have been in a portfolio since they were made, shown for the first time in this exhibition. In them, Eleanor, who is again seated, is captured in ink and oil pastel in a style directly influenced by that of Willem de Kooning; Richard would have been very familiar with de Kooning's art from his years of living in New York City.

Judging from the fire of excitement and energy in these drawings, an affectionate bond clearly started between Richard and Eleanor in those early classroom sessions. They were married in 1961.



As the direction of Richard's work changed in the 1960s, taking on a more restrained expression, his drawings of Eleanor became simple compositions in black ink on paper of, for example, her bouffant hair with a bow. At this time, Richard also began making minimalist-looking ink drawings on paper of buttons on a shirt tab or a simple pointed collar. Removing all that was not essential, he was looking for the essence of form and composition. His paintings soon became conceptual structures featuring bands of color, thinly painted but saturated in hue. These abstract paintings, a long way from the early representational works of the 1950s, are challenging explorations in the expressive possibilities of form and color. In *First Song (For Eleanor)* (1975), Richard brilliantly captures an intense expression through abstraction, by layering shifting bands of candy-colored pink to create a field of color that engulfs the eye.



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In a later phase of his art, Richard reduced his color palette as well, moving away from intensely saturated hues to create a variety of minimalist works limited mostly to grey, black and silver. He also began using new methods and new materials. For example, the series *Just Before the Movie Begins* (1998) was made with polymer emulsion on blotter paper. Several series of drawings, done in sumi ink on vellum, are composed using chance methods; they feature graphic notations as well as text and sign-language symbols. All of these works show how Richard was willing to explore radically new directions in his art in order to create compositions that would challenge the viewer in profound and unexpected ways.



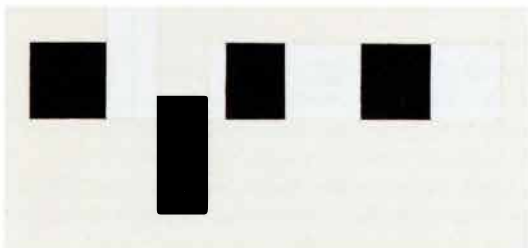
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Reynolds Gallery presents *Early & Late* and *Eleanor*, parallel exhibitions honoring a life lived well and a legacy of artistic integrity.

Beverly W. Reynolds  
Director

**Early & Late**

1. **Just Before the Movie Begins I-IV** 1998 Polymer emulsion on blotter paper  
19 x 24
2. **Iron, Lead...** 1987 Polymer emulsion on canvas  
78 x 60
3. **Olympian Slate IV-A: Briareus** 1981 Acrylic polymer emulsion on canvas  
57 x 84
4. **Untitled** 1965-67 Paint on paper  
20 x 26
5. **Untitled** 1965-67 Paint and pasted papers  
23 x 18
6. **Untitled (Mannequin Series)** 1965 Oil on canvas  
84 x 88
7. **Untitled** 1958 Oil on canvas  
50 x 44
8. **Untitled** 1957 Oil on canvas  
40 x 50½
9. **Still Life No. 4** 1952 Oil on canvas  
24 x 28
10. **Tree** 1952 Oil on canvas  
36 x 30
- Eleanor**
11. **Out of Blue (To Eleanor Rufty)** 1986-1988 Polymer emulsion on canvas  
60 x 84
12. **First Song (For Eleanor)** 1975 Liquitex and acrylic polymer emulsion on canvas  
82 x 79
13. **Eleanor** 1968 Ink and pencil on paper  
16½ x 13½
14. **Eleanor** 1965 India ink on paper  
22 x 28
15. **Eleanor #1** 1965 Charcoal on paper  
40 x 26
16. **Eleanor 1** 1958 Oil on canvas  
69½ x 62¾
17. **Eleanor 2** 1958 Oil on canvas  
70 x 63
18. **Untitled** 1958 3 drawings  
24 x 18  
Ink, pastel, and gouache on paper
19. **Untitled** 1958 Ink on paper  
24 x 18



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## Interval

### 1708 Gallery

Richard Carlyon was uninhibited by the unknown. He even ventured into the unknowable, knowing only that this chance-direction would lead to a true place of making, of creating without predetermined thought. He referred to his work once as “mediation between polarities,” or the interval — the space in-between. Carlyon reveled in the value of that stop-action time, the indefinable space between here and there. His work referenced these in-between spaces formally, conceptually, and often with sly humor, with a true grin.

Carlyon worked with the work in mind, within that interval between the beginning and the end of the art-making process. His art-making was about art, in the making. This bit of history is seen in the work itself — the happenings of his process, a space in-between time and creation, and in-between the artist and the art object. He created open spaces with and in his work — sometimes quiet, sometimes activated, sometimes suggested — with the use of line, strips, or “tracks,” planes on planes of paint and color, and spaces between materials, between figure and ground, between effect and content, and between actions.

Carlyon offers a sense of risk-taking and movement in his work that crosses formal boundaries — across lines, the layering and over-layering, the movement between mediums, across bodies of work, and camps. We encounter these events within his work often — as intervening lines, colors, planes, and materials; as hardware between masses; and within the spaces between layers of paper. Even the distance between individual works becomes important. This multidimensional association of space and time allows the in-between to come forward and remain fully in the viewer’s perspective, while suggesting a certain “quality of repeating rhythms,” as Carlyon described it.

Richard Carlyon was sincere and serious, but also full of humor and surprise. His grin will never diminish, nor will his passion. His work suggests serious laughter and a cunningness that exists in-between formal art concepts and across mediums. Carlyon was a coyote — young and old, serene and sly, laughing and crying, but especially all things in-between. The coyote hunts for “a something” and finds something else. The hunt was Richard’s practice, and the something else was what he found in the interval.

Brad Birchett and Gregg Carbo  
Co-Curators





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1. <b>Rock Video</b>	1996–1998	Three-channel video Running time: 14:51
2. <b>A Screwing</b>	1995 48 x 99¼ x 3	Wood and metal; Collection of Jean Crutchfield and Robert Hobbs
3. <b>Woodworks</b>	1993 96 x 152¼ x 2½	Wood and chrome-plated brass
4. <b>Jump Chain</b>	1991 5¼ x 16 x 7¼	Wood, metal, and enamel paint
5. <b>Signal V: Jersey Crosscut</b>	1979 75 x 75	Liquitex and acrylic polymer emulsion on canvas
6. <b>Marker III: Point Gratiot</b>	1979 45 x 87	Liquitex and acrylic polymer emulsion on canvas
7. <b>Untitled</b>	c. 1977–1979 65¼ x 131¼	Polymer emulsion on canvas
8. <b>Igor's Gate</b>	1975 69 x 75	Liquitex on canvas
9. <b>Igor's Gate Open</b>	1975 69½ x 75½	Liquitex on canvas
10. <b>East of Suez</b>	1975 77 x 70	Liquitex and acrylic polymer emulsion on canvas
11. <b>CHARLEMAGNE</b>	1975 97 x 19¼	Liquitex and acrylic polymer emulsion on canvas
12. <b>MAGELLAN</b>	1975 97 x 19¼	Liquitex and acrylic polymer emulsion on canvas
13. <b>Slow Rise</b>	1968 17¼ x 19¼	Cut and pasted paper
14. <b>Untitled</b>	1968 13 x 10½	Ink, pencil, cut and pasted paper
15. <b>Untitled</b>	1968 13 x 10½	Ink, pencil, cut and pasted paper
16. <b>Untitled</b>	1968 13 x 10½	Ink, pencil, cut and pasted paper
17. <b>Untitled</b>	1968 13 x 10¼	Ink, pencil, cut and pasted papers
18. <b>Untitled</b>	1967 22 x 18	Paint, cut and pasted paper
19. <b>Untitled</b>	1966 25 x 26¼	Paint, cut and pasted paper
20. <b>Window View #1</b>	1965 20 x 26	Ink and pasted paper
21. <b>Chamber of Poets</b>	1958 59 x 33	Oil and pasted paper on cardboard

## Chance

### Visual Arts Center of Richmond

The collages and related works in this exhibition, created over more than four decades, trace Richard Carlyon's nimble sense of humor and his imaginative interpretation of found objects and all manner of materials. A prolific artist, Carlyon explored his ideas through a variety of media, including painting, drawing, video, performance, and collage. His interest in collage and the element of chance extends to the layering, surface tension, obscuring of certain elements, and use of text also evident in his paintings, drawings, and videos.

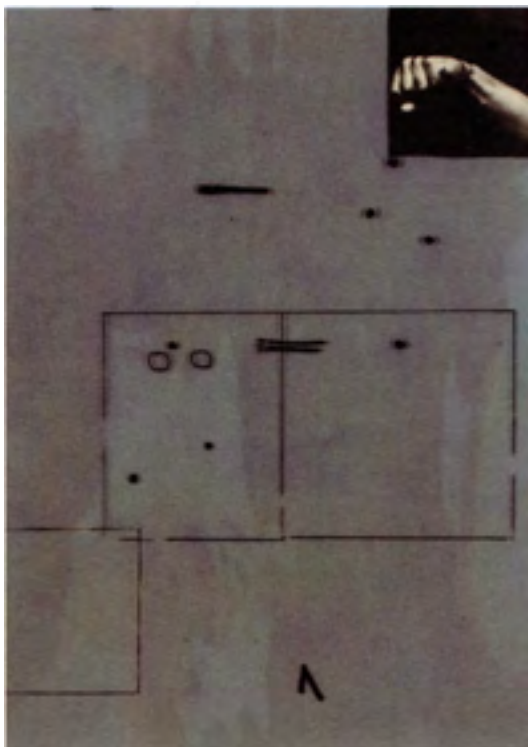
According to archaeological investigations, collage techniques have been used since the invention of paper in China around 200 BC. But it is the twentieth-century Modernist art movement that claims collage as an art form. George Braque and Pablo Picasso are well known for their experimental approach to collage as a means of exploring the relationship between painting and sculpture. Kurt Schwitters, Marcel Duchamp, and Henri Matisse continued to combine various materials on the surface plane throughout the early twentieth century. Carlyon certainly would have studied works by these artists while he was enrolled as a Liberal Arts major from 1948 to 1950 at the University of Buffalo. It is likely he would have seen their works at the Buffalo Museum or the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, and in Germany and Paris after being drafted in 1953.

By scavenging and using a wide array of materials — patterned papers, photographs, parts of various objects — Carlyon allowed chance to become part of his creative process. The work of John Cage and the significance this post-war composer placed on being attentive to one's surroundings especially helped shape the ingenuity and whimsy that characterized Carlyon's approach to collage. In the studio, Carlyon employed Cage's idea of applying systemic procedures in the creation of his collages, and this methodology allowed entirely new ideas to emerge.

Carlyon's incorporation of materials and objects found in the ordinary world brought a new level of meaning to his work. The appearance, for example, of a scrap of a commercial advertisement, a self-portrait Polaroid snapshot, or a note from his son, Jason, imparts to these collages not just formal properties but also semiotic characteristics. In addition to the images and textures created with paint, ink, and other traditional art materials, the possibilities for meaning and content in collage may be richer and more complex because of the associations that found objects and materials have with their original uses and contexts. They also open up a range of interpretations for the viewer, allowing the viewer to become part of the creative process.

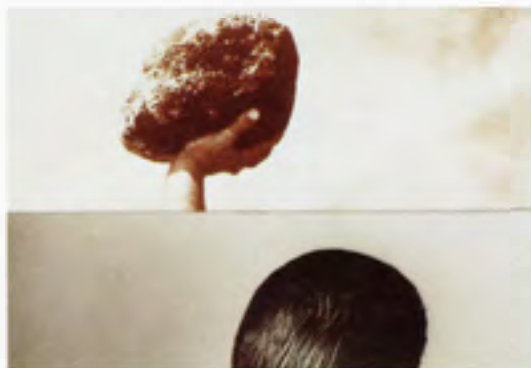
For Carlyon, experiencing the world by being open to whatever may occur became an essential ingredient in his creative process. This approach to both life and art is beautifully reflected in his collage and assemblage work.

Katherine Huntoon  
Director of Exhibition Programming



1. **Side Show** 2000 12 x 9 Acrylic paint, pencil, and pasted paper
2. **Robber's Lair** 2000 12 x 9 Acrylic paint, pencil, and pasted paper
3. **Untitled #3** 2000 14 x 11 Pasted paper
4. **Untitled #7** 2000 11 x 14 Pasted paper
5. **Her Next-to-the-Last Dream** 1997-98 30% x 43% Ink, acetate, acrylic, and photographs
6. **A Hanging** 1995 59 x 70 x 1 1/2 Metal, gesso, acrylic paint, and linen mounted on wood
7. **Posed For #1** 1995 19 1/8 x 24 3/4 x 1 Wood
8. **Posed For #2** 1995 19 1/8 x 24 3/4 x 1 Wood
9. **Posed For #3** 1995 19 1/8 x 24 3/4 x 1 Wood
10. **Posed For #4** 1995 19 1/8 x 24 3/4 x 1 Wood
11. **Studio Tour in 4 Parts: Helena** 1989 24 3/4 x 19 1/4 Mixed media, carbon prints, and Polaroid photographs
12. **Studio Tour in 4 Parts: Elaine** 1989 24 3/4 x 19 1/4 Mixed media, carbon prints, and Polaroid photographs
13. **Slide Show No. 1** 1986 17 x 14 Pencil, acrylic paint, and pasted paper
14. **Construction #2** 1985 4 x 6 Mixed media
15. **Wires** 1984 17 x 14 Pencil, ink, acrylic paint, acetate, and pasted paper
16. **Wires** 1984 17 x 14 Pencil, ink, acrylic paint, acetate, and pasted paper
17. **Matinee #4** 1984 15 x 15 Mixed media, Polaroid photographs, and paper mounted on wood
18. **Intermission #4** 1984 15 x 15 Mixed media, Polaroid photographs, and paper mounted on wood
19. **Relic XIV: Genet** 1984 73 3/4 x 8 Mixed media and Polaroid photographs
20. **EASEL III: Shih** 1984 96 x 11 x 4 1/2 Mixed media and Polaroid photographs





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|--|----------------------|--|
| 21. EASEL V: Wei Chi   | 1984<br>97 x 4½ x 8  | Mixed media and<br>Polaroid photographs                                      |
| 22. EASEL IV: Ching  | 1984<br>96 x 16 x 3½ | Mixed media and<br>Polaroid photographs                                      |
| 23. Keeper's Take  | 1984<br>27 x 14 x 7¼ | Mixed media; Collection of<br>Jason and Cheryl Carlyon                       |
| 24. INTERLUDE No. 1,<br>(Migraine)   | 1984<br>20 x 29½     | Polaroid photographs, screws,<br>grommets, and pencil on board               |
| 25. Grave Site #3  | 1983<br>14 x 11      | Pencil, ink, acrylic paint, wire<br>staples, acetate, and pasted paper       |
| 26. Scar II (Dachau)   | 1983<br>19 x 24      | Acrylic and enamel paint, pencil, ink,<br>staples, acetate, and pasted paper |
| 27. Scar V (Auschwitz)   | 1983<br>19 x 24      | Acrylic and enamel paint, pencil, ink,<br>staples, acetate, and pasted paper |
| 28. Re-Run #1<br>(I Took Care Of It)   | 1982<br>17 x 14      | Mixed media  |
| 29. Re-Run #4<br>(They Had It: We Got It)  | 1982<br>17 x 14      | Mixed media  |
| 30. Re-Run #6<br>(A Clear Picture)   | 1982<br>14 x 17      | Mixed media  |
| 31. Re-Run #8<br>(A Comic Slip)  | 1982<br>17 x 14      | Mixed media  |
| 32. Re-Run #9<br>(Ripples)   | 1982<br>17 x 14      | Mixed media  |
| 33. Re-Run #10<br>(Prophecy)   | 1982<br>14 x 17      | Mixed media  |
| 34. Re-Run #11<br>(Artist's Proof)   | 1982<br>14 x 17      | Mixed media  |
| 35. Re-Run #17<br>(I Don't See It:<br>Do You See It?)  | 1982<br>14 x 17      | Mixed media  |
| 36. Re-Run #20<br>(Poot)   | 1982<br>14 x 17      | Mixed media  |
| 37. Re-Run #21<br>(Wednesday Night<br>Dispatch)  | 1982<br>17 x 14      | Mixed media  |
| 38. IN TER RUP TION 2  | 1982<br>17 x 14      | Mixed media  |
| 39. Temporary Utility<br>No. 1: Closet For<br>Rodchenko (To be<br>disassembled in<br>Leningrad, USSR<br>on October 31, 2017) | 1982<br>20 x 72 x 2½ | Mixed media<br>and concealed objects   |



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40. <b>Wall Album No. 1</b> <b>Bark</b>	1982 13 x 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 4 $\frac{1}{2}$	Mixed media and Polaroid photograph
41. <b>Wall Album No. 2</b> <b>(Echo)</b>	1982 21 x 12 x 4 $\frac{1}{2}$	Mixed media and Polaroid photograph
42. <b>Untitled</b>	1972 24 x 18 $\frac{3}{4}$	Ink on newsprint
43. <b>Untitled</b>	1972 18 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 24	Ink on newsprint
44. <b>Untitled</b>	1970 14 x 16	Ink, pencil, cut and pasted paper
45. <b>Florentine Memo</b>	1967 24 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 19	Ink, envelope, stamp, and pasted paper
46. <b>Sully Mound</b>	1966 26 x 20	Paint and pasted paper
47. <b>Untitled</b>	1966 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 16 $\frac{1}{4}$	Ink, cut and pasted paper
48. <b>Omen</b>	1965 20 x 26	Paint, cut and pasted paper
49. <b>Window of the Muse</b>	1965 27 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 21 $\frac{1}{2}$	Spray enamel and pasted paper
50. <b>Untitled</b>	1965 26 x 20	Pencil, paint, and pasted paper
51. <b>Untitled</b>	1965 20 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 26 $\frac{1}{4}$	Paint and pasted paper
52. <b>Untitled</b>	1963 57 x 50	Oil and pasted paper on cardboard
53. <b>Self Portrait</b> <b>(as a Jew)</b>	1962 29 x 22	Gouache, ink, and pasted paper mounted on cardboard
54. <b>Lolita</b>	1962 29 x 13 x 6 $\frac{1}{2}$	Wood, metal, and oil paint
55. <b>Untitled</b>	1960 57 x 50	Oil on paper mounted on cardboard
56. <b>Portrait</b>	1960 35 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 32	Oil, pasted paper, and wire staples
57. <b>Untitled</b>	1959 48 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 60	Oil and pasted paper on cardboard
58. <b>Keeper of the Hedge</b>	1959 48 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 59 $\frac{1}{4}$	Oil and pasted paper on cardboard
59. <b>Kali #2</b>	1956 57 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 35 $\frac{1}{4}$	Oil on canvas





A N E X H I B I T I O N O F N E W  
W A L L W O R K S, P A I N T W O R K S,  
W O O D W O R K S, P H O T O W O R K S,  
W O R D W O R K S, T E X T W O R K S,  
A N D V I D E O W O R K S B Y  
R I C H A R D C A R L Y O N W I L L  
B E O N D I S P L A Y A T T H E  
A N D E R S O N G A L L E R Y F R O M  
S E P T E M B E R 29 - O C T O B E R 20.

## Biography



Richard Carlyon (1930–2006) studied painting and dance at Richmond Professional Institute (now Virginia Commonwealth University), earning a BFA in Fine Arts in 1953. After being drafted into the Army and later moving to New York City, he returned to RPI for an MFA and in 1963 became a full-time member of the faculty. Following his promotion to Assistant Professor in 1966, until his appointment as Professor Emeritus in 1996, Carlyon taught in the Departments of Painting and Printmaking, Communication Arts and Design, and Art History. He also taught at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and lectured extensively throughout the state. He received the Distinguished Teaching of Art Award from the College Art Association in 1993 and the Presidential Medallion, one of VCU's highest honors, in 2005.

Carlyon received three professional fellowships from the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in the disciplines of painting (1960), drawing (2002), and video (1996). He also received a fellowship from the Virginia Commission for the Arts in 2000 to prepare a series of drawings based on the movement patterns of choreographer Martha Graham's dances. University support in the form of grants for studio research funded such projects as: *Achromatic Abstract Painting; The Theoretical Principles of Resonance in Art, Communication and Media; and Word-Based Imagery Attained through Chance, Randomness, Automatism and Improvisation*. He was twice nominated for an Award in the Visual Arts (AVA), coordinated by the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art (SECCA) in Winston Salem, North Carolina.

From the mid-1950s until 2005, Carlyon participated in nearly 100 group exhibitions that include *The Image of the Word*, Gallery Iolani, Kaneohe, Hawaii (1998); *Three Abstract Painters: Richard Carlyon, Ray Kass, Paula Owens*, Flossie Martin Gallery, Radford University, Radford, Virginia (1990); *Southern Abstraction*, City Gallery of Contemporary Art, Raleigh, North Carolina (1987); *Exchange Exhibition*, Gallery 10, Washington, DC (1983); *Purism*, Siegel Contemporary Art, Inc., New York, New York (1982); *'40-'80 Exhibition*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (1980); *President's Inaugural Exhibition*, Modlin Fine Arts Center, University of Richmond (1971); *Richmond Painters and Printmakers*, Gallery of Contemporary Art, Winston-Salem, North Carolina (1970); *Opening Group Show*,

**Left: Richard Carlyon, October 1998**

**Top: Receiving the university's Presidential Medallion from VCU President Eugene Trani, December 2005. Jason Carlyon at center.**

**Bottom: With Myron Helfgott after receiving the Distinguished Teaching of Art Award from the College Art Association, Seattle, February 1993.**

Fleischmann Gallery, New York, New York (1958); *Four Experimental Artists*, Davidson College Gallery, Davidson, North Carolina, and Salem College Gallery, Winston-Salem, North Carolina (1958); *Virginia Artists Exhibition*, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (1958, 1953).

His solo exhibitions include *Richard Carlyon: Selected Work*, Reynolds Gallery (2005); *here. Say: Paintings, Drawings and Videos by Richard Carlyon*, 1708 Gallery (2002); *Drawings by Richard Carlyon*, Hunt Gallery, Mary Baldwin College, Staunton, Virginia (1999); *Sightings: Recent Work by Richard Carlyon*, 1708 Gallery (1998); *Present Tense: Wallworks, Paintworks, Woodworks, Photoworks, Wordworks, Textworks, and Videoworks by Richard Carlyon*, Anderson Gallery (1995); *On Display: Recent Wallworks, Woodworks, Photoworks and Printworks by Richard Carlyon*, 1708 Gallery (1993); *In Grays: Recent Abstract Paintings by Richard Carlyon*, Studio Seven Eleven, Richmond (1988); *Empty Screens: New Paintings by Richard Carlyon*, Reynolds/Minor Gallery, Richmond (1985); *Red & Black & White: Paintings by Richard Carlyon*, 1708 Gallery (1985); *Large Scale Paintings by Richard Carlyon*, St. Catherine's School, Richmond (1979); *Richard Carlyon: New Paintings*, Anderson Gallery (1976); *Paintings, Drawings, and Collages by Richard Carlyon*, Athenaeum Arts Center, Alexandria, Virginia (1972); *Richard Carlyon: New Works on Paper*, Studio Gallery, Washington, DC (1968); *Drawings and Collages by Richard Carlyon*, Westhampton College, Richmond (1966); *Paintings, Drawings Constructions and Collages: 1959-1962*, Studio Seven Eleven, Richmond (1962); *Drawings and Collages*, Rhess Gallery, University of Rochester, Rochester, New York (1957); *Richard Carlyon: Paintings*, Fleischmann Gallery, New York, New York (1957).

In addition to numerous private and corporate collections, Carlyon's work is included in the permanent collections of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond; the Taubman Museum of Art, Roanoke, Virginia; and the Longwood Center for the Visual Arts, Farmville, Virginia.





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**Colophon**

Project Director and Editor: Ashley Kistler  
Graphic Design: John Malinoski  
Printing: Worth Higgins and Associates, Inc.  
Plate Photography: Travis Fullerton  
Prepress: Jerry Bates, VCU Graphics Lab  
Type Family: Univers  
Papers: Cougar Smooth and Neenah Environment

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Richard Carlyon, 1964



Appearing on the inside covers and on the red pages interspersed in this catalogue are selected artist statements by Richard Carlyon: 1982, inside front cover; 1990, page 7; 1989, page 41; 2001, page 73; 1995, pages 88-89; 1991, inside back cover.

After darkness.  
The day before yesterday.

All the while, during and since.

Listening.

Alone.



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