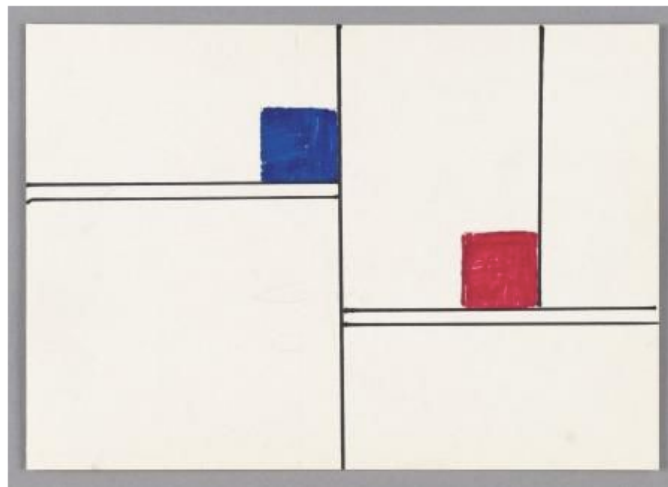


Entertainment

Drawings of Roxbury Polymath, Artist Arthur Carter, Examined in New Book

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“Study for Construction No.5 by Arthur Carter from the book “Arthur Carter: Studies for Construction”, published by Abrams.



In the new book “Arthur Carter: Studies for Construction,” arts journalist, curator and City University of New York professor Charles A. Riley opens with an anecdote centered on a “light lunch” at Mr. Carter’s waterside home on the East End of Long Island.

The lunch sounds delightful, but the point isn't to illustrate the success of a polymath who, prior to embracing art, reached the heights of both finance and journalism, having founded both The Litchfield County Times and New York Observer. Rather, the denouement concerns the spatial relationship of two parallel lines in an unfinished sketch.

Mr. Carter, whose third career is as an accomplished sculptor and artist, is wondering how far apart the lines should be in Mr. Riley's prelude to an astute and thoughtful exploration of Mr. Carter's sketches that, when all the elements align, take on three dimensionality as sculptures.

"With the numberless goings-on of a full and varied life, this is what concerns Arthur Carter: whether to erase the line and redraw it a fraction of an inch to the right, widening the channel of blank paper and changing the delicate proportions of the study," Mr. Riley writes. "The quandary is all the more interesting because it relates to a small, private musing of an artist best known for a monumental steel sculpture holding its own on Park Avenue. This moment spent contemplating an unfinished study reveals an internal focus. He looks up and says, 'It's very important.'"

If the distance between two lines seems to be an aesthete's concern that can be indulged from a foundation of success in life, then the remainder of Mr. Riley's thoughtful essay that leads into approximately 175 pages with more than 200 drawings should be required reading.

Consider the juxtaposition of Mr. Riley's judgment at one point that "... all drawings are beginnings, and none can be taken as an end in itself" with Mr. Carter's declaration, "Only squares and circles, lines and ellipses can elegantly explain and simplify the complex meaning of life."

Together these statements point to an essential quality to Mr. Carter's work that is palpable when viewing both his sketches and sculptures—the works, even at their most tactile and "finished," suggest the fluidity of both the artist's and viewers' evolution as they instinctively harness lines, geometry, shading, volume and sheer presence to establish meaning, and emotion, that must be felt rather than forcefully articulated.

In that sense, the distance between two lines in an unfinished sketch

absolutely matters; it is the difference between two possible futures.

Asked about the work and his process, Mr. Carter offers a simpler, less lyrically analytical response than Mr. Riley's. "I have a sketch and a pad and occasionally if an idea occurs to me I'll develop it," he says. "I like some of the work. I think some of the work is very, very good and some of the work is fair."

That casual take belies the studied, intellectual aspects of the drawings. In discussing a particular series of drawings, Mr. Riley writes, "The series establishes a pattern not just of mark-making but of decision-making that leads cautiously to a sense of style. No matter what the medium, style is not a spontaneous achievement. It reflects clarity of mind as well as technique."

One purpose of the studies, as the title of the new book makes clear, is as concepts for three-dimensional sculptures. But not all of the drawings make the leap from paper to permanence. "When you go to three dimensions, there are problems that occur, and sometimes a nice drawing doesn't work in three dimensions," explained Mr. Carter, who does 90 percent of his drawing at his studio at Judds Bridge Farm in Roxbury, Conn., where he spends weekends in the spring and fall.

When a drawing moves into other dimensions, the transformation naturally requires the addition of depth, and sometimes, Mr. Carter said, "The more depth you create it takes away from the piece."

In the end, the studies result in the fabrication of a dozen or dozen and a half constructions every year, Mr. Carter said.

Those studies, "lyrical abstractions of geometry," are also credited by Mr. Riley with being infused with a certain musicality, which is no surprise given Mr. Carter's "tastes and talents" as a trained classical musician. "Arthur Carter: Studies for Construction," which is published by Abrams with a list price of \$50, is the first book to focus on Mr. Carter's drawings. Previously Abrams published "Arthur Carter: Sculptures, Paintings and Drawings," also written by Mr. Riley, whose other books include "The Jazz Age in France" and "The Saints of Modern Art."

In addition to planning upcoming exhibits, Mr. Carter said another project on

the horizon would combine the two books about his work to offer a more complete picture of his oeuvre. "I'll have the book and then I'll talk to Abrams and see if they want to publish it," said the Renaissance man who was a highly successful investment banker and industrialist before turning to newspaper and magazine publishing with the launch in 1981 of The Litchfield County Times.

His artwork is widely collected and has been exhibited at the New Britain Museum of American Art in Connecticut, at the Tennessee State Museum, the Galerie Piltzer in Paris and New York University's Gray Art Gallery, among other venues.

For more on Mr. Carter's work, see the Web site at <http://www.arthurcartersculptures.com>, and for more on the books, see Abrams' site at www.abramsbooks.com.