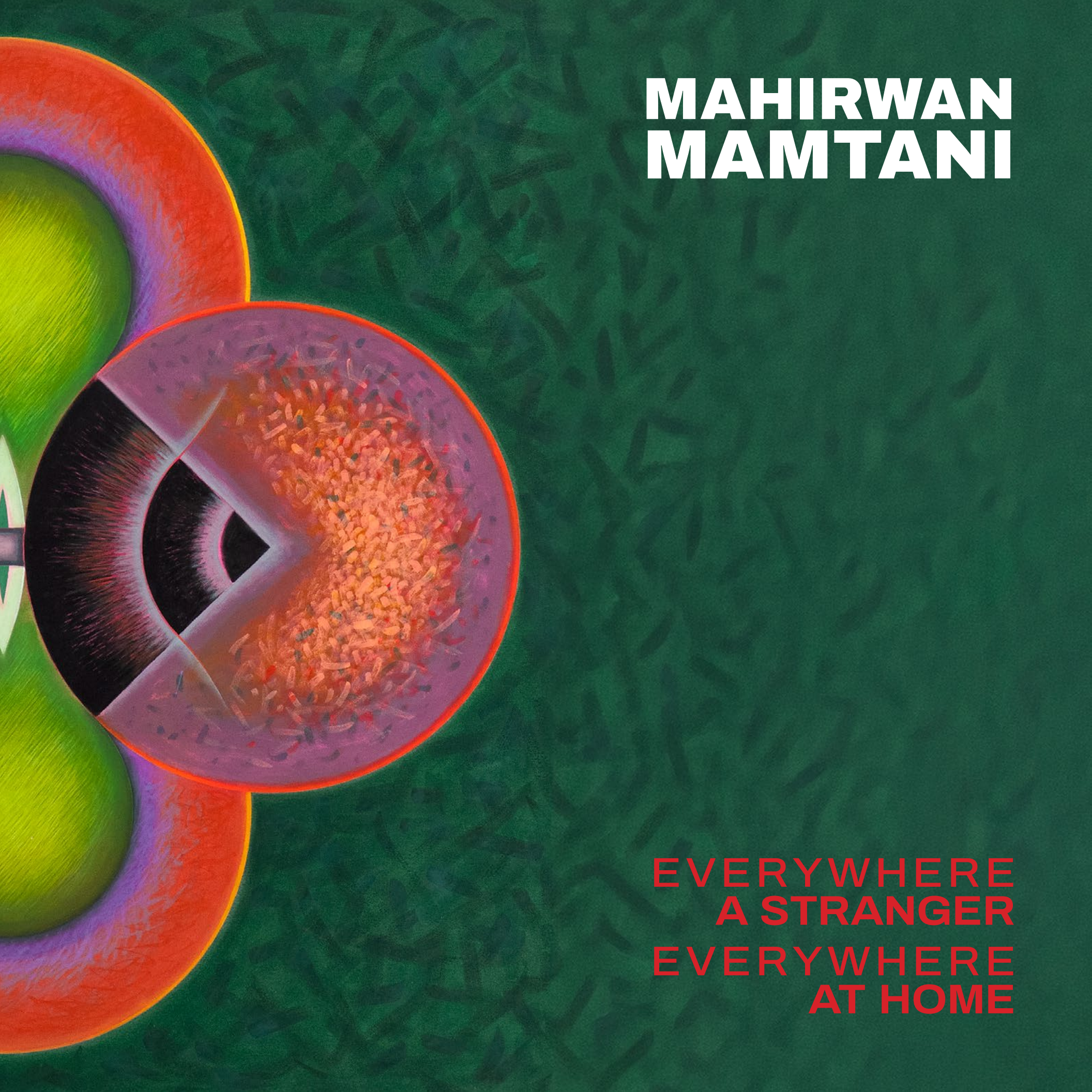




**MAHIRWAN
MAMTANI**

**EVERYWHERE
A STRANGER
EVERYWHERE
AT HOME**

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A STRANGER
EVERYWHERE
AT HOME

OCTOBER 2026
ICIA Gallery, Mumbai



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FOREWORD

The Institute of Contemporary Indian Art is delighted to present *Everywhere A Stranger, Everywhere At Home*, an exhibition of works by Mahirwan Mamtani. His practice has been guided by an enduring inquiry into the ideas of home and belonging, and this presentation brings together paintings from the 1990s in which that pursuit is at its most assured. The title, borrowed from Goethe, evokes one of the most enduring questions of human experiences: where does one belong?

Mumbai is a fitting city in which to pose this question. It has always been a place of arrivals, home to generations who came from somewhere else and made a life here, and many of its residents will recognise the feeling in Goethe's writing, the sentiment of belonging fully to a place and yet carrying another within. Mamtani's response to that condition has been unusually quiet. In a period when much of Indian art was turning outward, towards the streets, the politics and the noise of a new nation, he pursued a practice of stillness and concentration. It was not a conventional route, and it has not always been an easy one to hold. The exhibition focuses on two series from the 1990s, a decade in which Mamtani's language reached a remarkable clarity and confidence. Seen in a single space, the paintings reward the kind of attention that the pace of a city rarely encourages. They do not announce themselves. They ask the viewer to slow down, to stay with a single canvas, and to notice how much happens within a disciplined structure when one looks long enough. We hope the presentation allows for exactly that.

An institution is, in its way, also a kind of home, a place where work is given time, context and an audience. It is our hope that the exhibition offers Mamtani's work that welcome, and offers visitors a rare invitation to pause. I thank the artist for his generosity and for the trust he has placed in us, and everyone whose effort has brought this exhibition together.

Vikram Sethi
Chairman, ICIA

MAHIRWAN MAMTANI

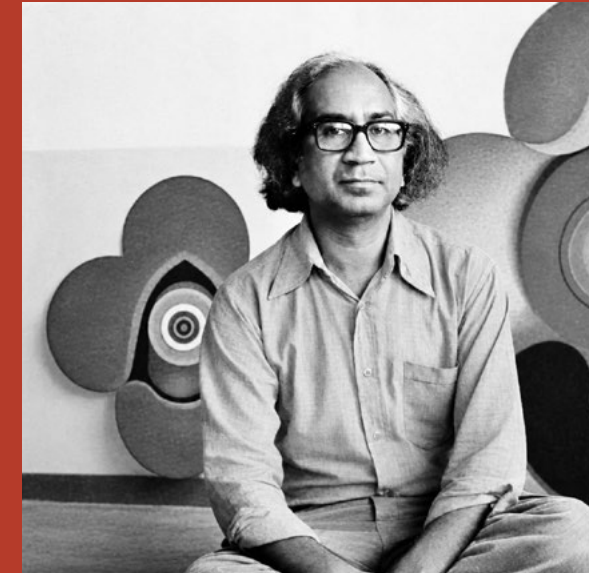
EVERYWHERE A STRANGER EVERYWHERE AT HOME

The exhibition of works by artist Mahirwan Mamtani (b. 1935) takes its title from the writings of German poet and polymath Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832). Mamtani quotes the phrase to capture the journey that has remained central to his practice: the search for a place to call home. For Mamtani, the search ultimately transcended geography, finding expression instead in an inner world shaped by spiritual inquiry.

In the years following Independence, the Indian subcontinent underwent political, social and cultural upheaval. The redrawing of borders and the displacement that followed altered not only geographies, but also individual ideas of home. For artists, this period brought with it a search for new forms of expression that could move beyond the colonial past while remaining rooted in Indian philosophical and visual traditions, and reflect the aspirations of a new and modern India. It was within this larger moment of transformation that Neo-Tantric art emerged in India in the 1960s. The term was coined by art historian Dr. L.P. Sihare and it included several artists such as Biren De, G.R. Santosh, Sohan Qadri, P.T. Reddy, K.V. Haridasan, Acharya Vyakul and Mahirwan Mamtani.

For Mamtani, however, the turn towards tantric philosophy and its language was personal. Forced to leave his home in Sindh in 1948, he carried the experience of displacement into his artistic life. While many artists responded to the upheavals of a changing nation by looking outward, recording its violence and new realities, Mamtani turned inward. His practice became a search for an inner language through which he could process and heal the loss and find a renewed sense of belonging.

In the 1960s, when Mamtani moved to Germany, he encountered the work of Piet Mondrian, Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky, alongside the broader currents of European modernism and Constructivism. At the same time, the publication by Ajit Mookerjee, brought renewed attention to Indian tantric philosophy. Between these worlds, European modernism and Indian philosophical thought, Mamtani developed a visual vocabulary that was both modern and deeply rooted in ideas of the cosmic.



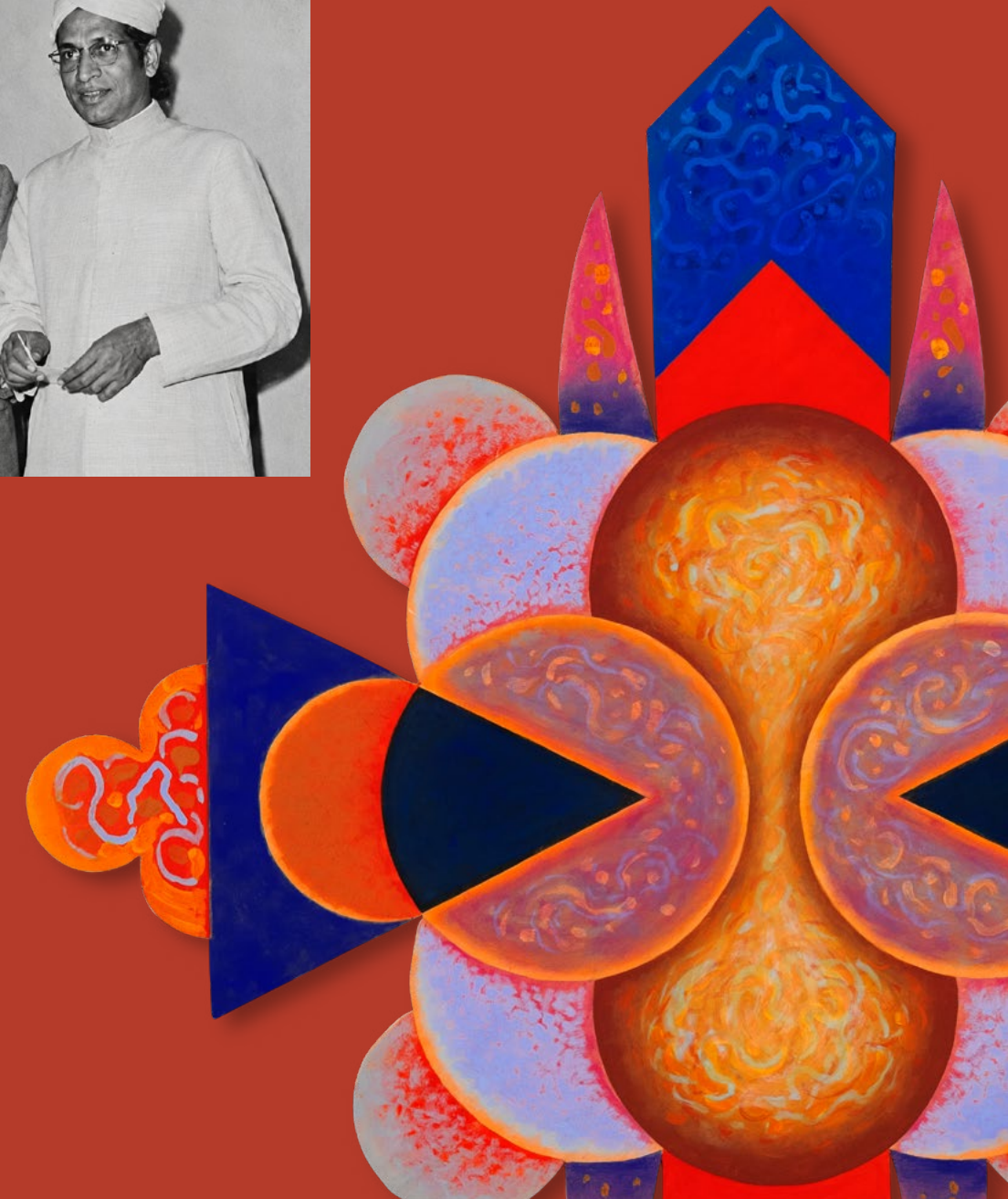
Clockwise from top left:

The artist in his studio, 1955

The artist in Olympia Pressestadt, Munich, Germany, 1975

The artist with India's former President Dr. S. Radhakrishnan in New Delhi, 1962

Press article featuring exhibition Kreis-Visionen, Schauspielhaus, Wuppertal, 1972





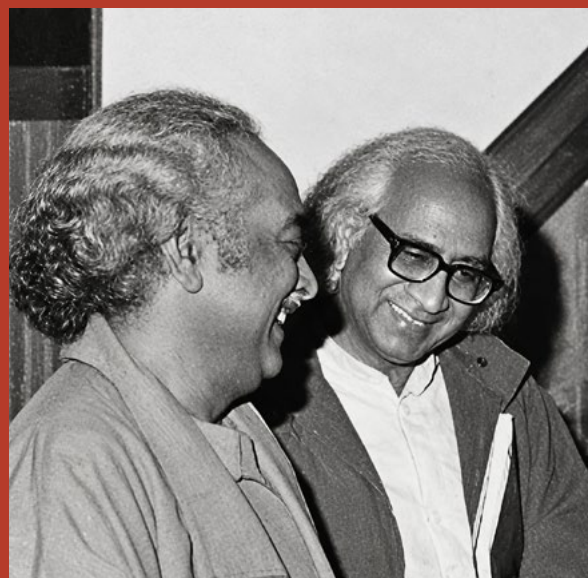
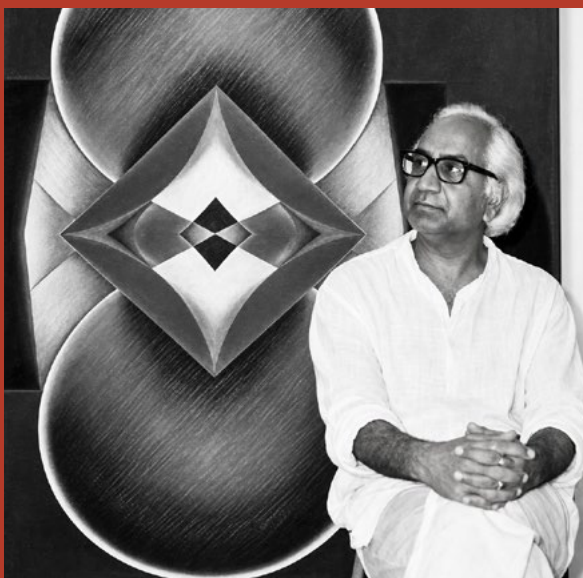
Clockwise from top left:

The artist in Munich, 1990

Artists G.R. Santosh & Mahirwan Mamtani

The artist with Thomas Grochowiak, Director of Museum Reklinghausen (Coordinator of TANTRA exhibitions in Germany), 1980

Biren De, G.R. Santosh, Om Prakash, Director of IFA Stuttgart Hermann Pollig, Indian Ambassador Kamlesh Sharma, German artist Georg Karl Pfhaler and Mahirwan Mamtani (left to right)



After years of searching, Mamtani arrived at the four-circle form as a recurring structure within his practice. The fourfold configuration evoked the four elements of earth, water, air and fire, as well as the four seasons and four directions. It also suggests a four-petalled lotus, evoking the unfolding of consciousness. More than a geometric device, it is a means of organising the world: a structure through which opposing forces could be held in balance and multiplicity brought into unity.

The exhibition brings together works from his two series of the 1990s, Centrovision and Cosmic Geometry. In Centrovision, the fourfold forms are more centripetal and contemplative, drawing the eye towards a concentrated centre or opening. In Cosmic Geometry, the same underlying structure becomes more expansive and intricate, unfolding through layers of geometry, pattern, texture and colour. Yet across both series, the centre remains the anchor, the source from which energy appears to radiate and towards which it returns. This centre can be understood in relation to the bindu, the primordial point in tantric thought: a point of origin and return, where the microcosm and macrocosm converge. Some of the forms in his works are densely textured, almost as if they're made up of countless animated particles, while the changing hues suggest currents of energy moving through matter and space. The works appear at once contained and expansive, as though an entire universe were held within their symmetrical structures.

For Mamtani, the work is not the destination but an instrument, a means through which he undertakes an ongoing pursuit of self-knowledge. The continuous repetition of the same pattern across his canvases, rooted in the principles of tantra, becomes a means of invoking cosmic harmony while setting in motion a process of internal transformation. His lifelong engagement with geometry, colour and symbolism can thus be understood as an attempt to give a form to the formless, to make visible an order that exists beyond the material world. Mamtani finds another kind of home: not a place on a map, but a centre within; not geographical, but cosmic.

Ruchika Jain

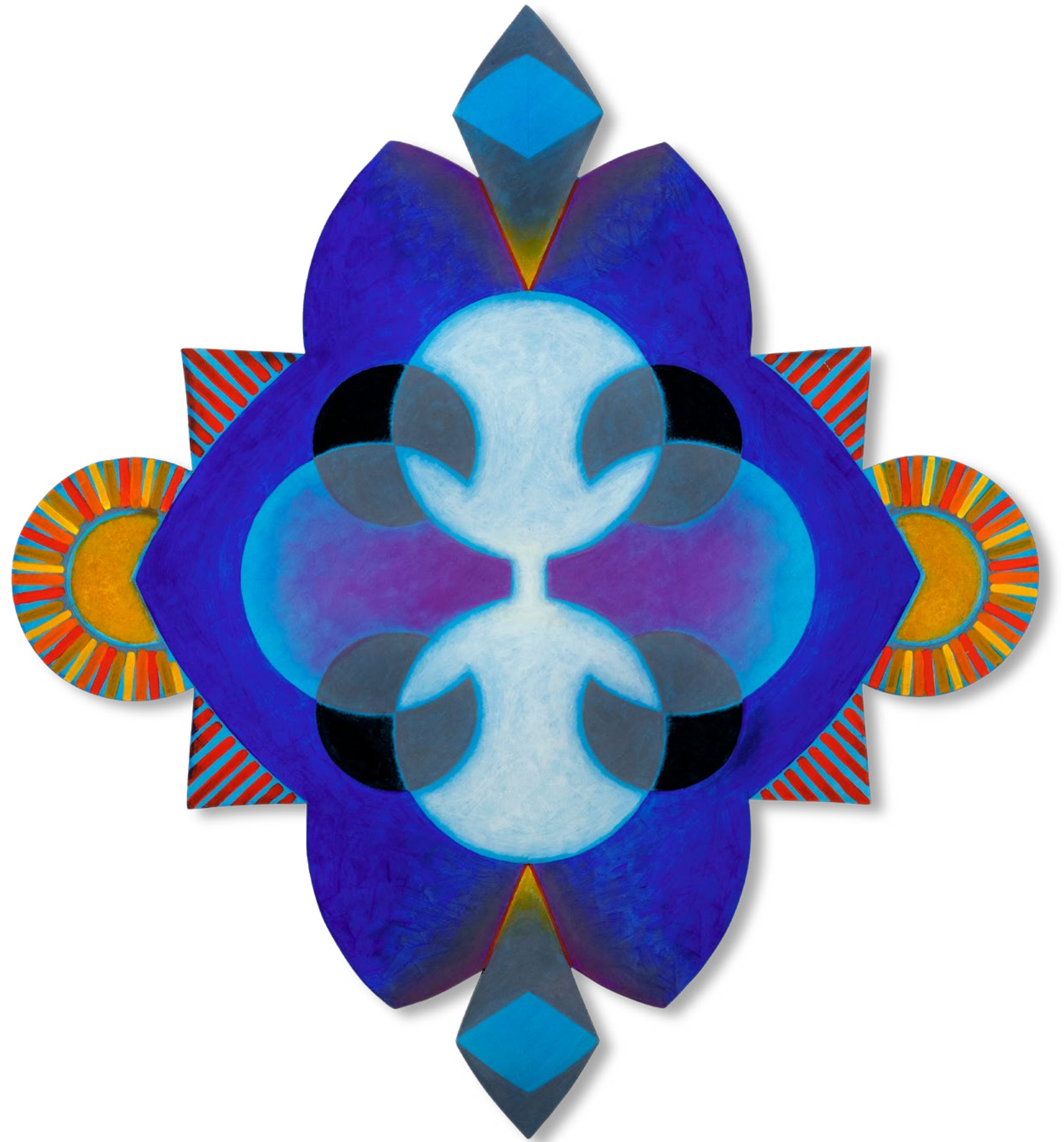


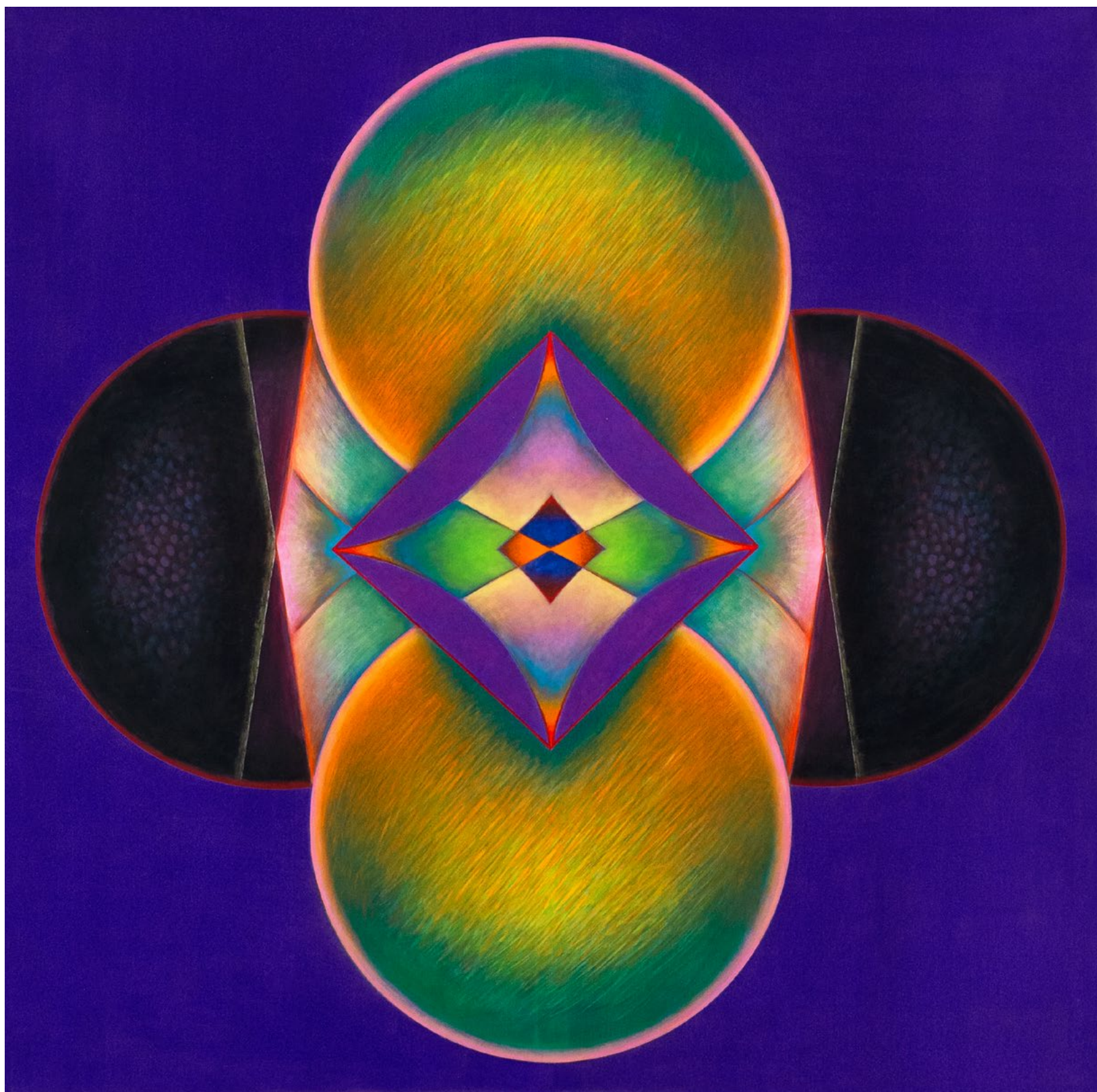
CENTROVISION 1151

57 x 57 in (144.8 x 144.8 cm)
Acrylic on canvas
1990

COSMIC GEOMETRY 006

44 x 40 in (111.8 x 101.6 cm)
Acrylic on woodcut
1996





CENTROVISION 1152

57 x 57 in (144.8 x 144.8 cm)
Acrylic on canvas
1990

CENTROVISION 1190

31.5 x 31.5 in (80 x 80 cm)
Acrylic on canvas
1990



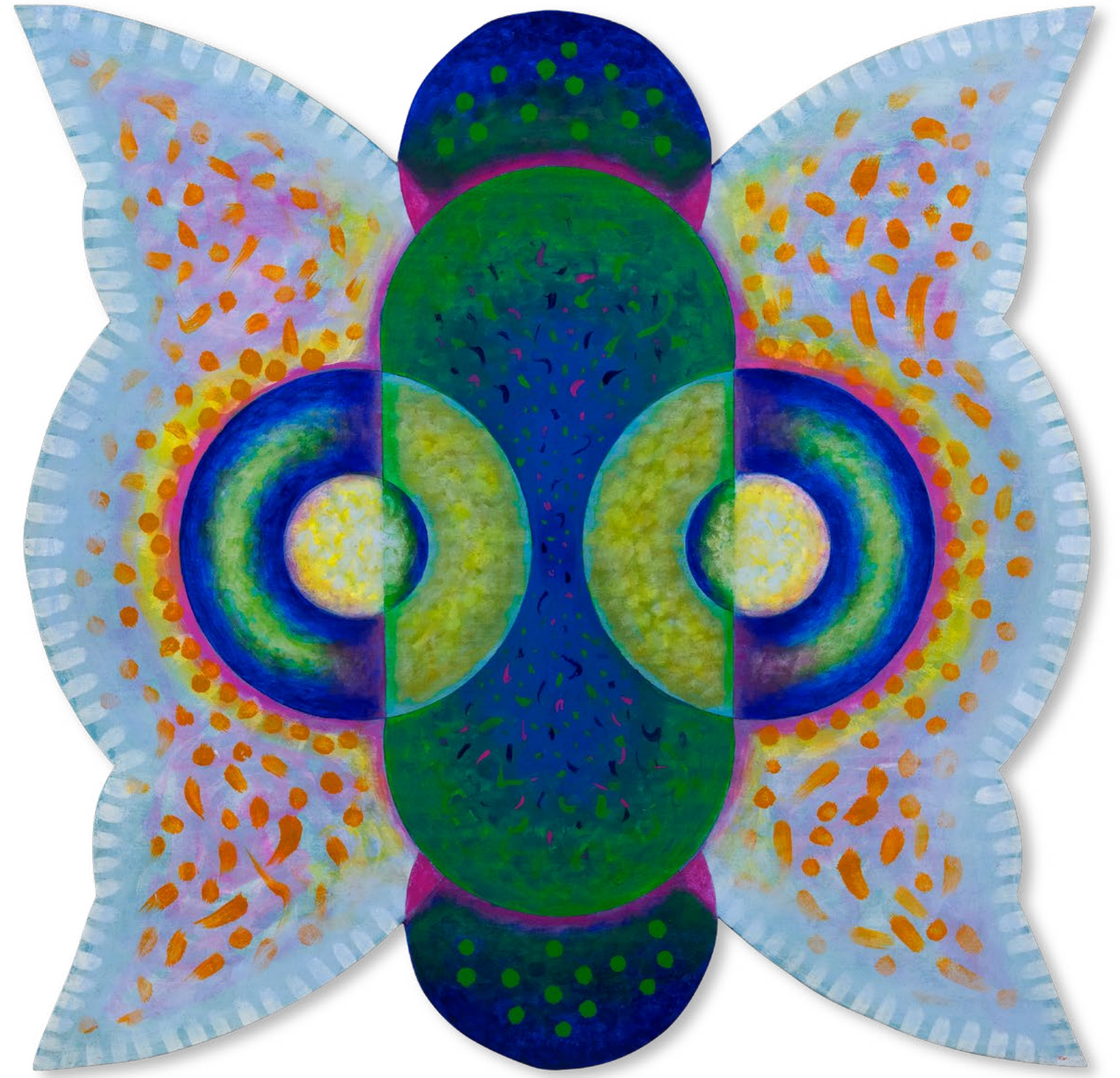


COSMIC GEOMETRY 017

31.5 x 31.5 in (80 x 80 cm)
Acrylic on woodcut
1996

COSMIC GEOMETRY 015

31.5 x 31.5 in (80 x 80 cm)
Acrylic on woodcut
1996



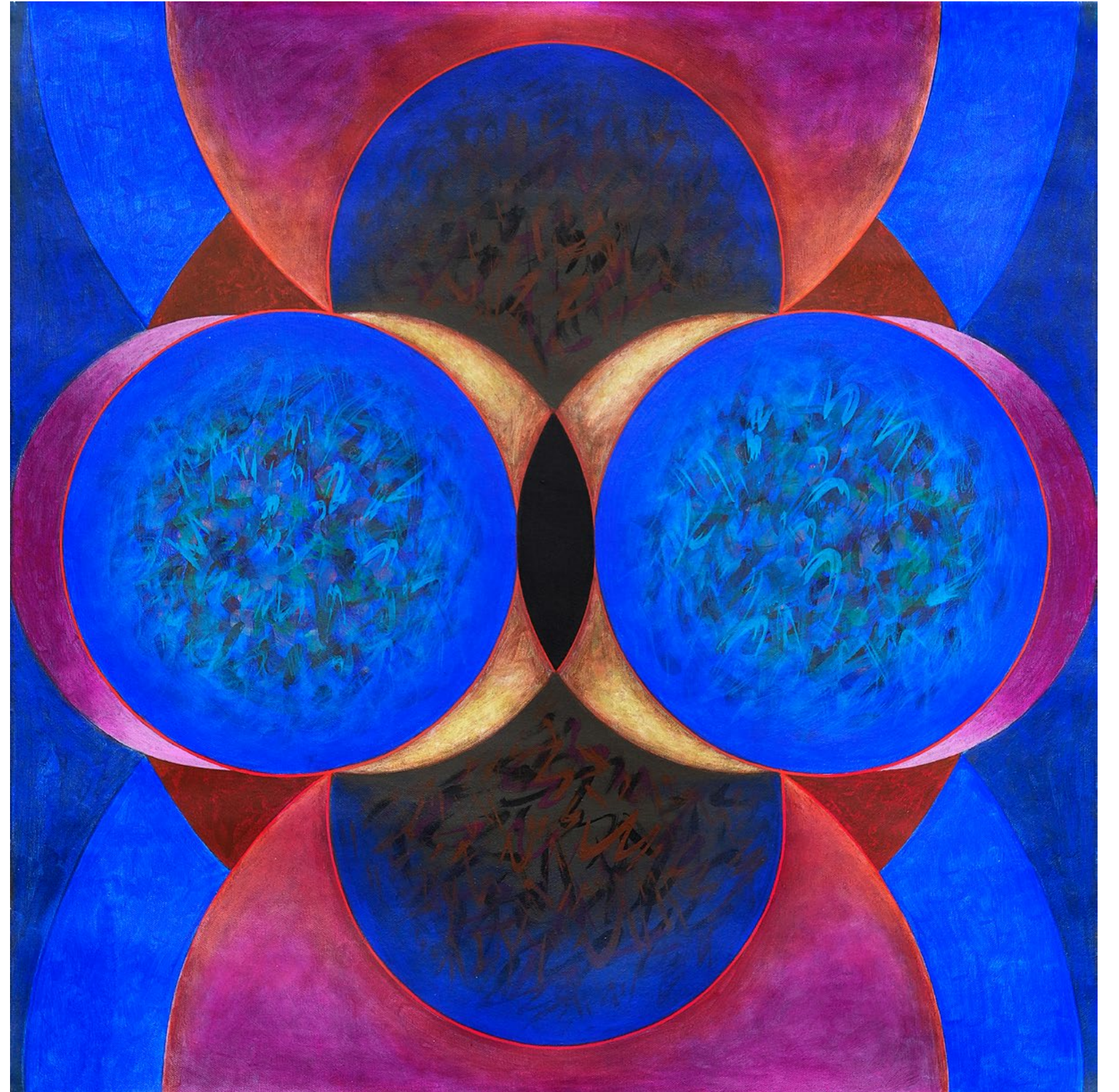


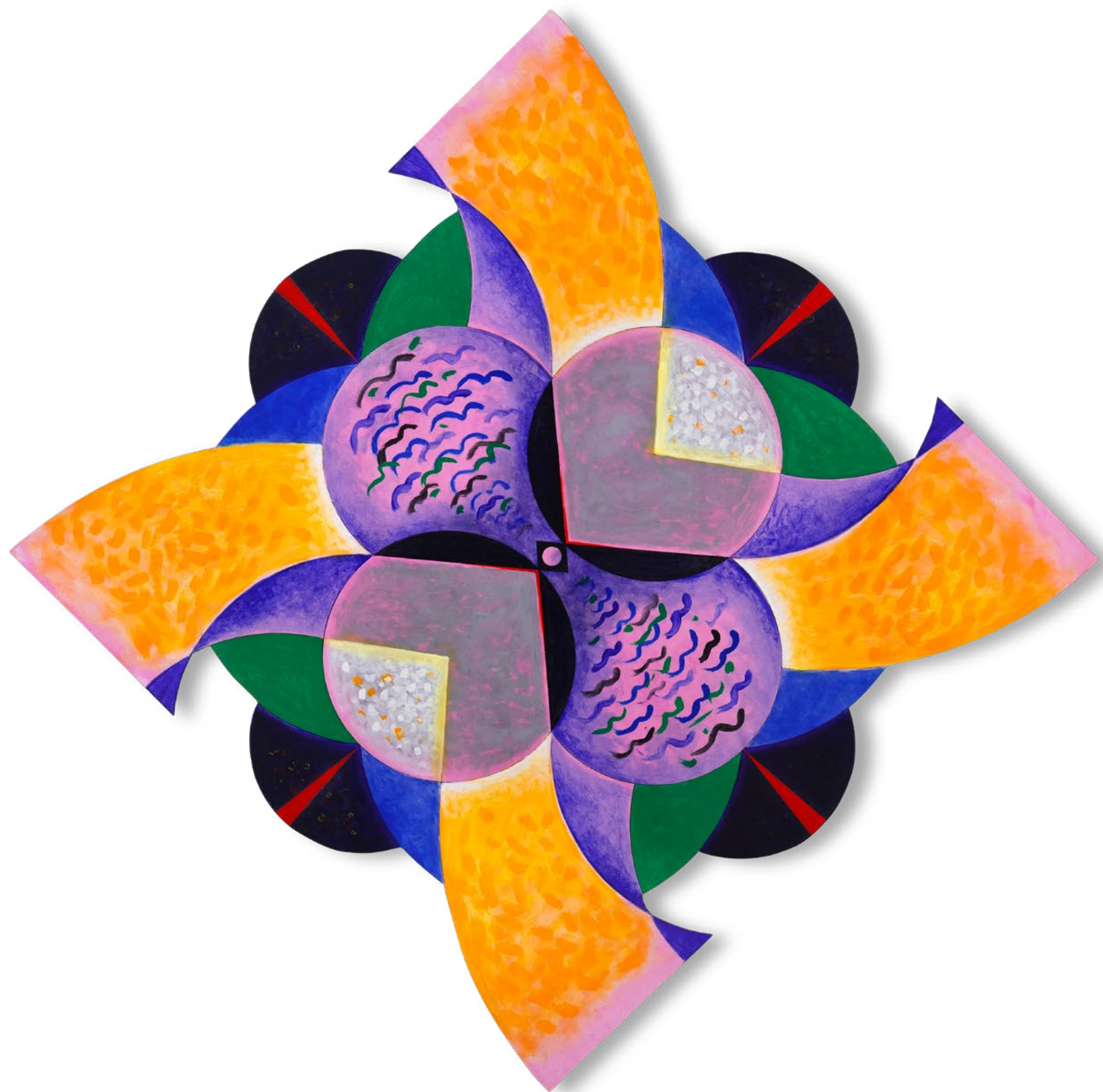
CENTROVISION 1158

57 x 57 in (144.8 x 144.8 cm)
Acrylic on canvas
1990

CENTROVISION 1191

31.5 x 31.5 in (80 x 80 cm)
Acrylic on canvas
1990



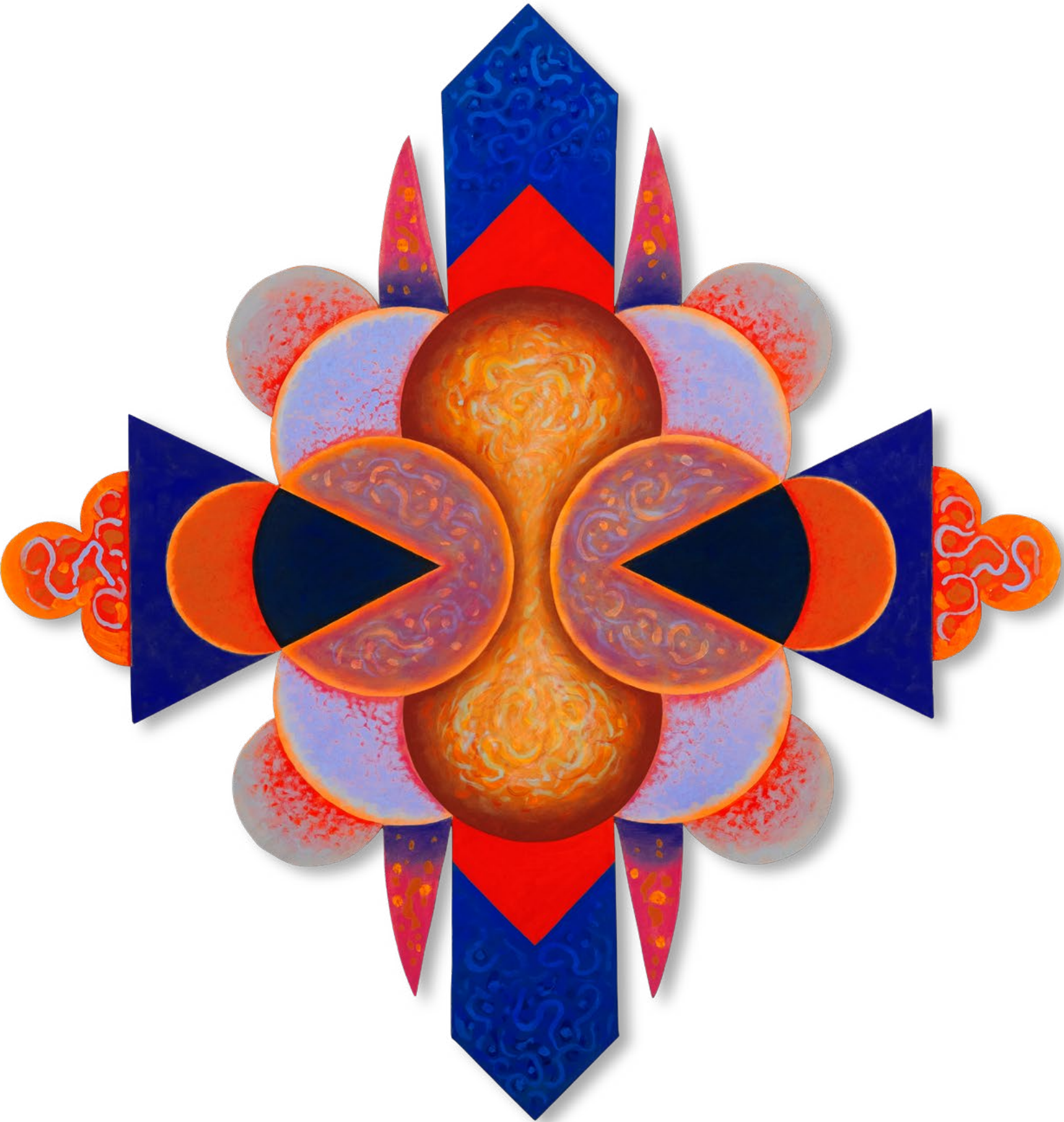


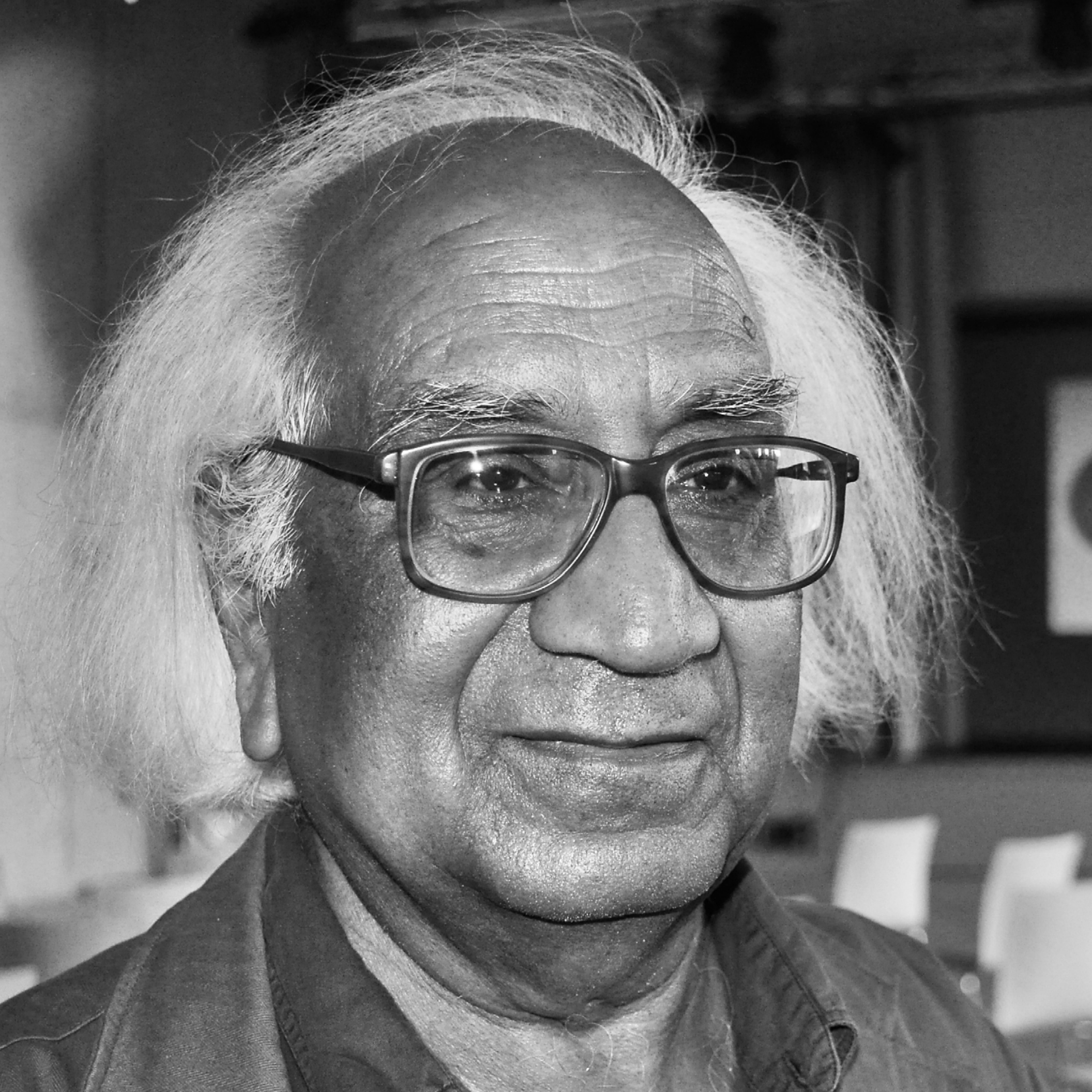
COSMIC GEOMETRY 009

44.5 x 44.5 in (113 x 113 cm)
Acrylic on woodcut
1996

COSMIC GEOMETRY 008

44.5 x 42.5 in (113 x 108 cm)
Acrylic on woodcut
1996





MAHIRWAN MAMTANI

Born in 1935 in present-day Sindh, Mahirwan Mamtani is a prominent Indian modernist known for his meditative abstractions and geometric compositions. Following the Partition, his family migrated to India and settled in Delhi. He received his Bachelor of Arts in 1955 and a National Diploma in Art from the Delhi Polytechnic in 1962. In 1966, he was awarded a scholarship by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) to study at the Academy of Fine Arts, Munich, under Professor Franz Nagel. He has lived and worked in Germany since then.

Mamtani is associated with the Neo-Tantra movement in India and with the Spiritual in Art group in Europe, initiated by Dr. Walter Schönenberger. He has received several distinctions, including the National Award for Painting from the Lalit Kala Akademi in 1978 and recognition at the 10th International Print Biennale in Tokyo in 1976. He has exhibited extensively in India and internationally, including in Germany, France, the United Kingdom, the United States and Japan. In 1985, he exhibited at the landmark Neo-Tantra exhibition at UCLA alongside artists including Biren De, G. R. Santosh and P. T. Reddy. The exhibition brought together key practitioners associated with Neo-Tantra and contributed to establishing the movement within international art discourse. His works are held in several private and public collections, including the British Museum, National Gallery of Modern Art, and Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi.



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