

Dorothea Rockburne

REINVENTING THE ELEMENTS

Copper, Egyptian Blue, Isaac Newton



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Copper, Egyptian Blue, Isaac Newton

Jill Newhouse Gallery

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This catalogue accompanies the exhibition

Dorothea Rockburne: Reinventing the Elements

from October 1 to November 16, 2013

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*“By using the familiar tools of science and math,
I could travel into the unknown.”*

AS EARLY AS THE 1990s, Dorothea Rockburne’s interest in science, nature, mathematics and cosmology had led her to study the skies. When she became ill in the fall of 2000, Rockburne underwent surgery and radiation treatment which lasted into the first several months of 2001. Searching for reading material which would occupy and challenge her mind, Rockburne found the book *Newton’s Gift or How Sir Isaac Newton Unlocked the System of the World*. The resulting series of postcards were inspired by her reading, and by her deepening understanding of gravity and relativity.

In this series of works, Rockburne has used pure copper and blue watercolor. The title of the series *Reinventing the Elements: Copper, Egyptian Blue, Isaac Newton* refers to the creation of copper, which is one of the original elements of the universe. Each work is intimate in scale but universal in implication. For Rockburne, copper expresses time and space, while “. . . blue is everything. Blue is personal. Blue is religious. Blue is universal. . . . it transports me to another place whenever I see it or use it or even hear the word.”

— J.N.

SECRETS OF THE
MYSTERIOUS
PERIGEE MOON
AS I SAW IT ON
JUNE 19 2013

WHILE VACATIONING LAST JUNE in Watermill I visited artist friends whose house is on Noyack Bay. As I arrived I could see on the opposite side of that spit of land a spectacular sunset taking place. I joined my friends, we had a splendid evening and then it was time to leave. Walking to the car we were struck by the amazing size of the low hanging Perigee moon. I had never seen such a large and beautiful moon, made more evident by the surrounding velvet, indigo, nighttime sky.

No matter how crowded the east end of Long Island becomes it is a magical place. When that full moon occurred I had been in Watermill six or seven days reading and resting, listening to the wind, listening to birds, eating fresh food, watching ripples of light gleam from the water of Sag Harbor Bay and generally allowing the feel of nature to fully enter my total self. Soon, a familiar restlessness began. I wanted to work but I had no materials.

Next day, with that moon memory vivid in my mind, I drove to an art supply store, purchased colored pencils and some small pads of drawing paper. My architect friend, Michael, had loaned me his house so there was a drawing table where I could work. That moon remained vividly in my mind.

Ah, moon! Its history most curious and mysterious. I remember many years ago watching a film called "Trip to the Moon" by an early French

film maker, Georges Melies, wherein the spaceship lands squarely in the eye of the surprised moon. I remember vividly when the Americans landed on the moon. And now, here I was vacationing in paradise, . . . yet thinking and feeling compelled to work.

The first question: how can I draw the shape of the moon when its shape is always changing? How does the exterior shape relate to the interior shapes? Where are the edges? Why are my body's fluid-tides attracted to that huge yellow moon or is it really yellow? Those soft moon edges pull at me.

Usually, when I work I work in silence, however I put Maria Callas on the sound system and climbed the circular stairs to Michael's drawing lair seeking to find the defining lines to the moon's activity, activity which had affected my singular yet related self. I was not engaged in thought. I began to draw freehand ellipses. Then, quietly and mysteriously, the memory of the work of Myron Stout entered my focus.

In Provincetown in the mid-fifties I walked the beaches with Myron. He'd pick up an interesting pebble or shell and comment on it, then he'd muse on this and that as the sun set over Provincetown Bay. He was having friends to dinner. "Would I like to join them around nine?" I arrived at his small upstairs apartment with adjacent studio and looked

at his always compelling work. His paintings are black and white, small with a perplexingly beautiful central shape. How had that indefinable shape been derived? Why did it pierce my visual soul? Several summers following I would see that same painting slightly altered. He would change the position of the central, hauntingly white, curved shape, not a circle, and move it slightly, maybe a quarter of an inch, usually to the right. Although small and plain the paintings were labor intensive. I was young. The other guests were intelligent and knowledgeable. I listened quietly. Eventually, around midnight, Myron would begin to cook! He was, of course, a marvelous cook.

When Maria Callas sings her line and color present contrasts ranging from a deep broad line which then slips into a slender acute one. Her voice, always rich and steady, can sway and curve in an emotionally sure manner. She seems to use her vocal instrument almost as a kind of drawing. I wrote once that, “drawing is the bones of thought.” Because we are all human, are all forms of expression similar? Now, as I think about it, Myron’s mysteriously glowing shapes may have been the result of his constant observation and consequent digesting of the changing phases, shapes, of the moon over Provincetown Bay.

Dorothea Rockburne, August 2013



*Reinventing the Elements:
Copper, Egyptian Blue, Isaac Newton Postcard Series*

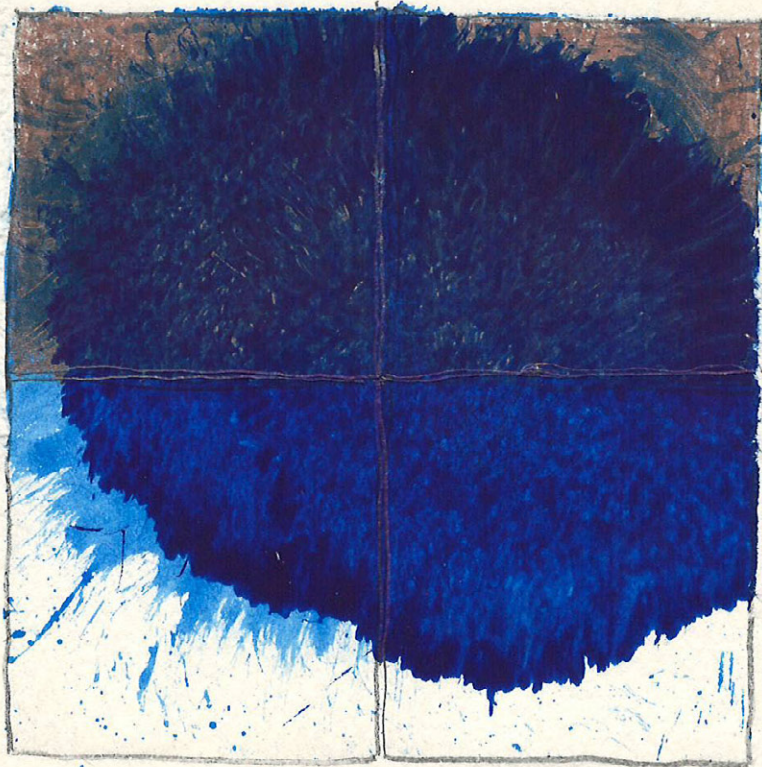
2001

Lascaux Aquacryl, pencil, copper on Holbein paper

$5\frac{7}{8} \times 4\frac{1}{8}$ inches (15 × 10.5 cm), each

All signed and dated lower right; numbered lower left

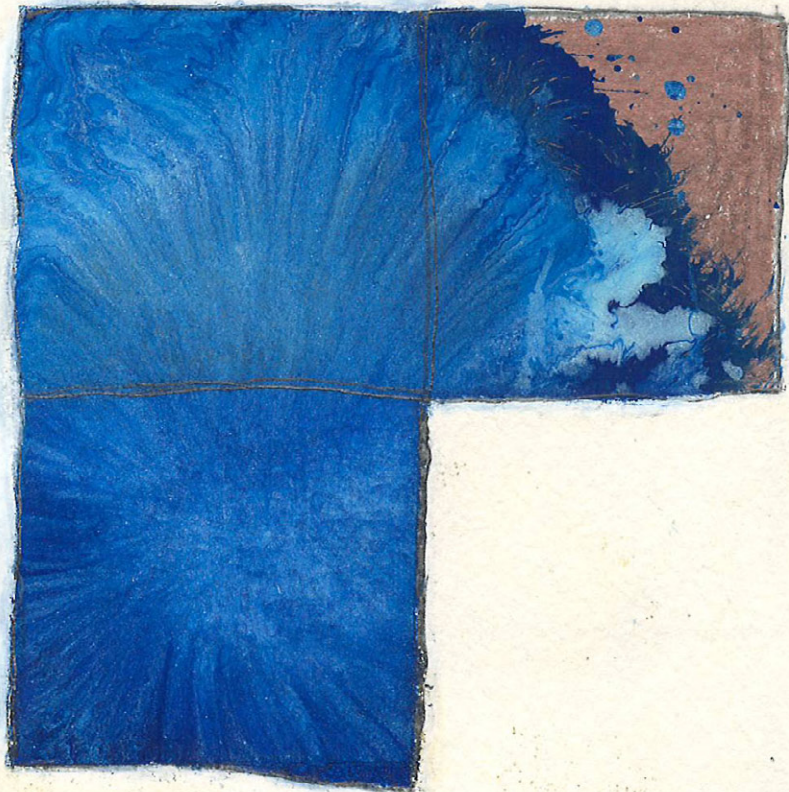
Reinventing the Elements:
Copper, Egyptian Blue, Isaac Newton Postcard Series
#5



#5

W. B. 8/01

Reinventing the Elements:
Copper, Egyptian Blue, Isaac Newton Postcard Series
#7

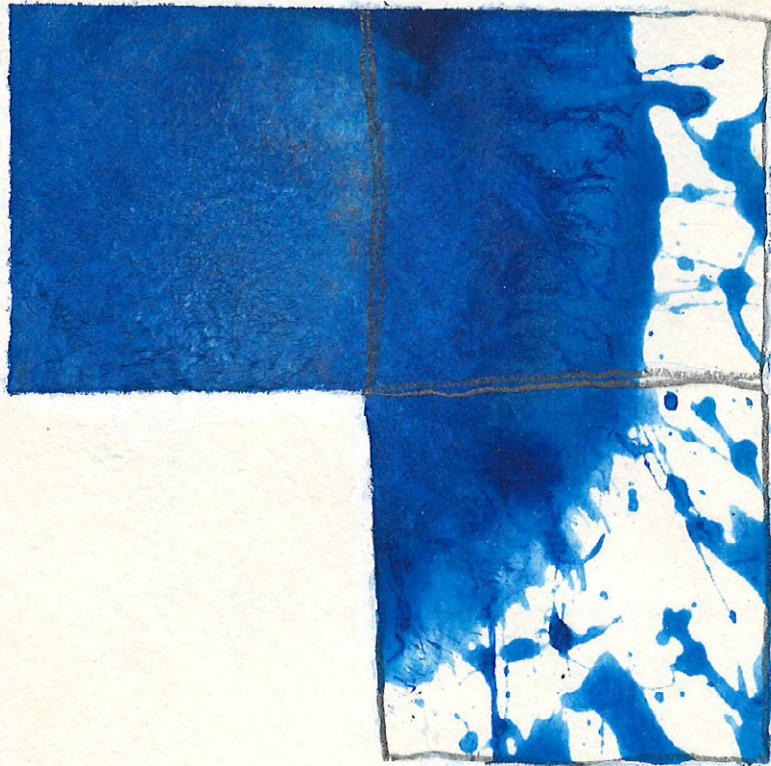


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W.R. 8/01

Reinventing the Elements:
Copper, Egyptian Blue, Isaac Newton Postcard Series
#8

10/11/01
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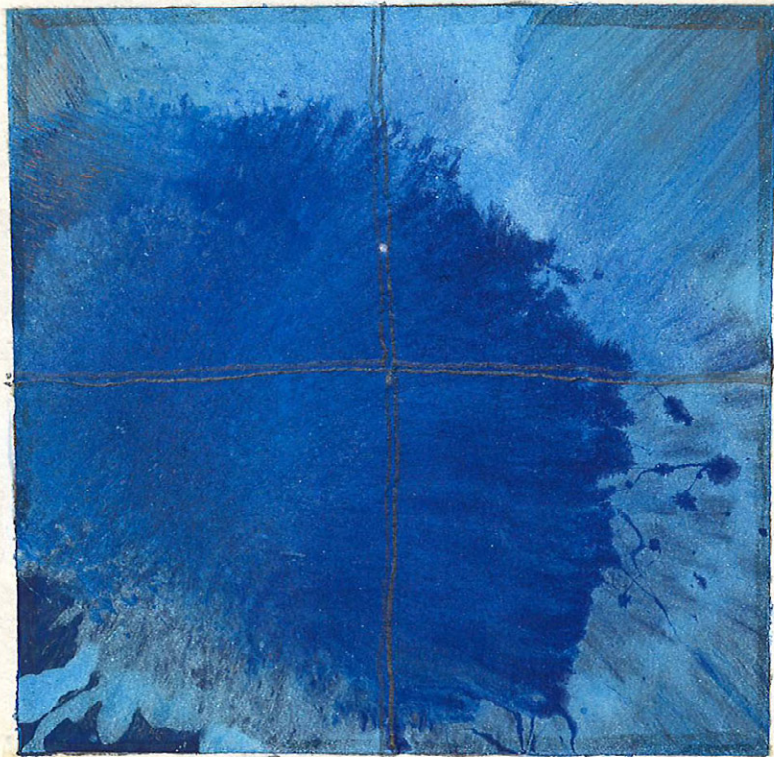


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h.p.v. 08/01

Reinventing the Elements:
Copper, Egyptian Blue, Isaac Newton Postcard Series
#13

→ copper ←

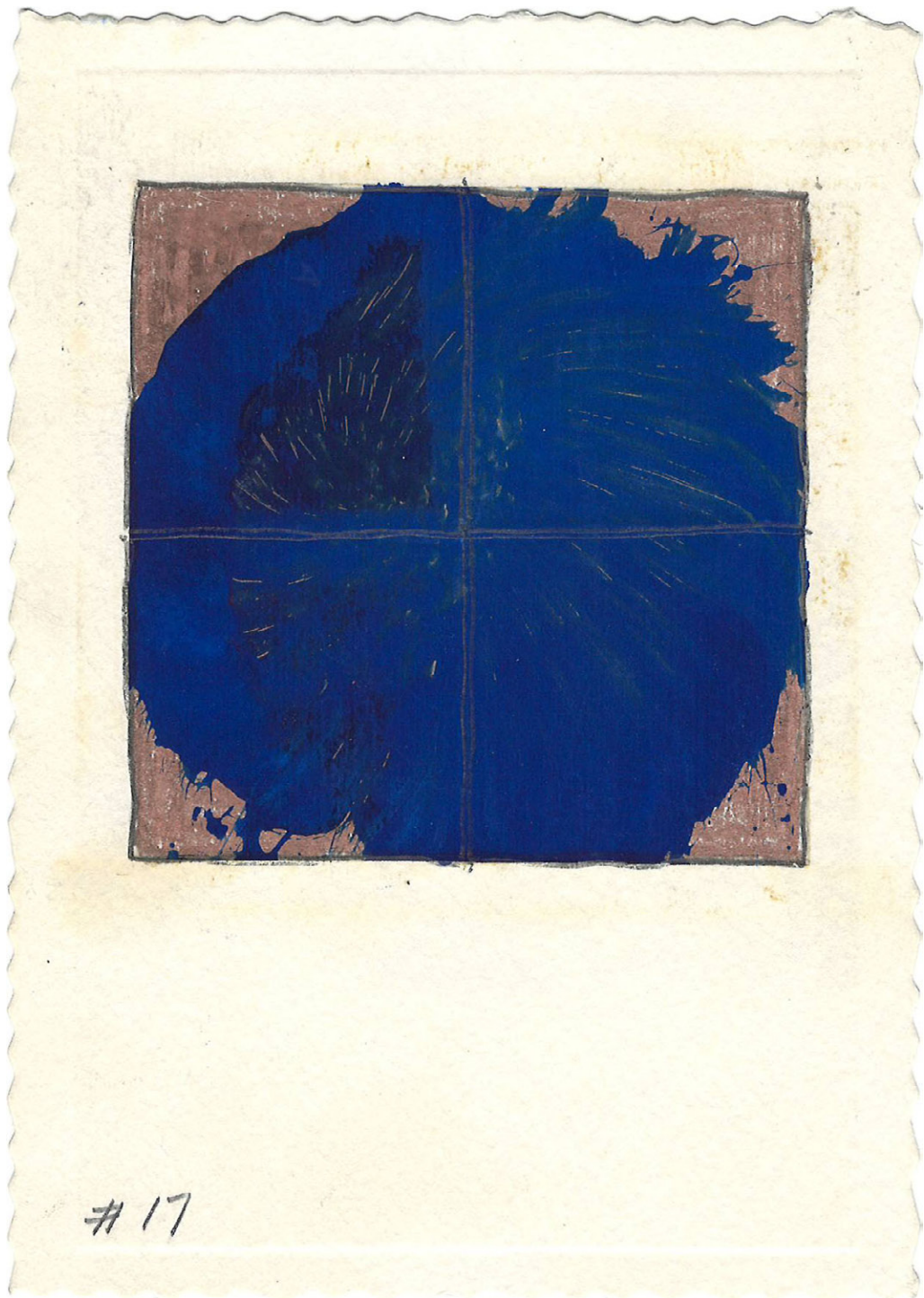


← copper →

#13

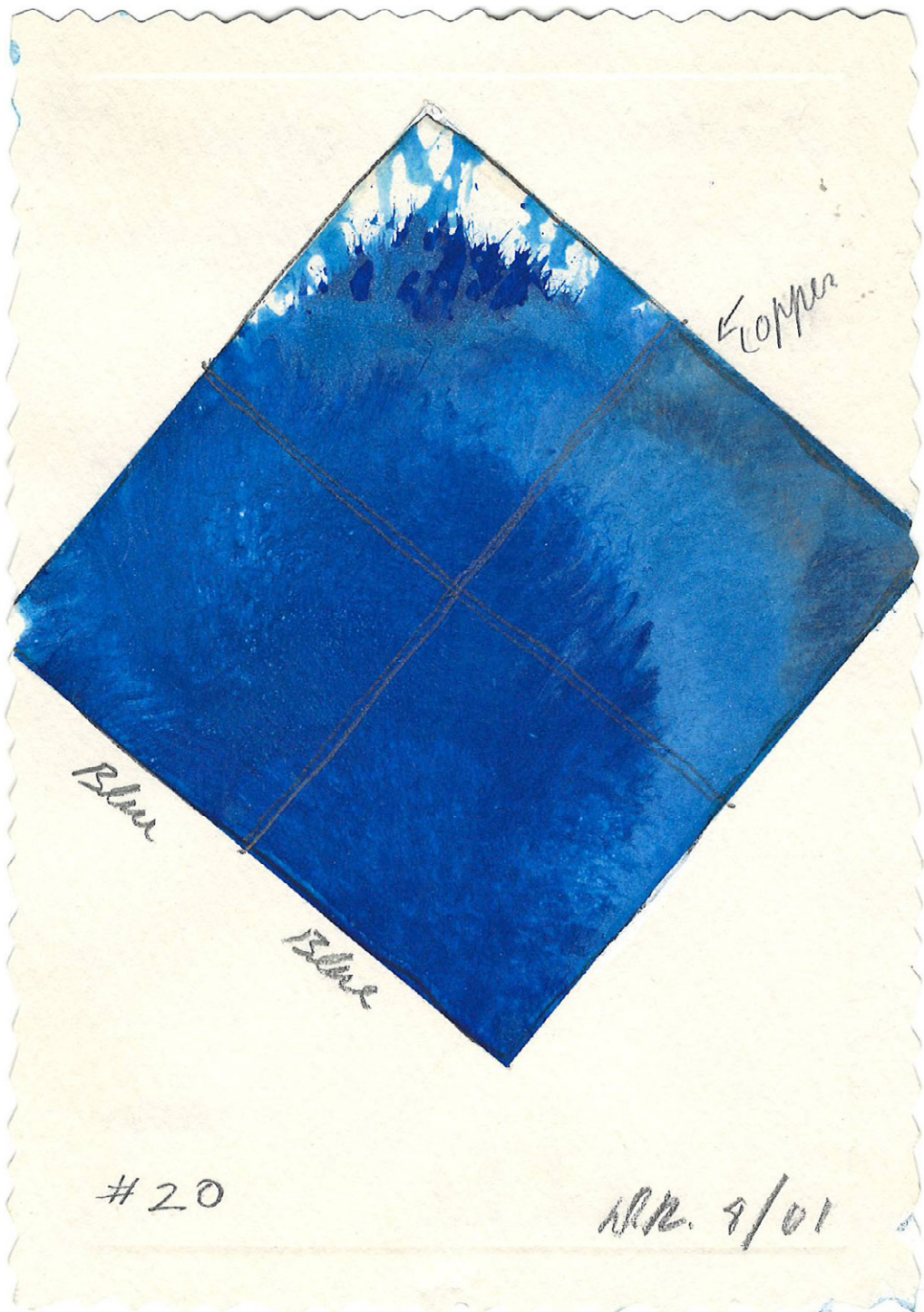
HR 08/01

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#17



#17

Reinventing the Elements:
Copper, Egyptian Blue, Isaac Newton Postcard Series
#20



Kopper

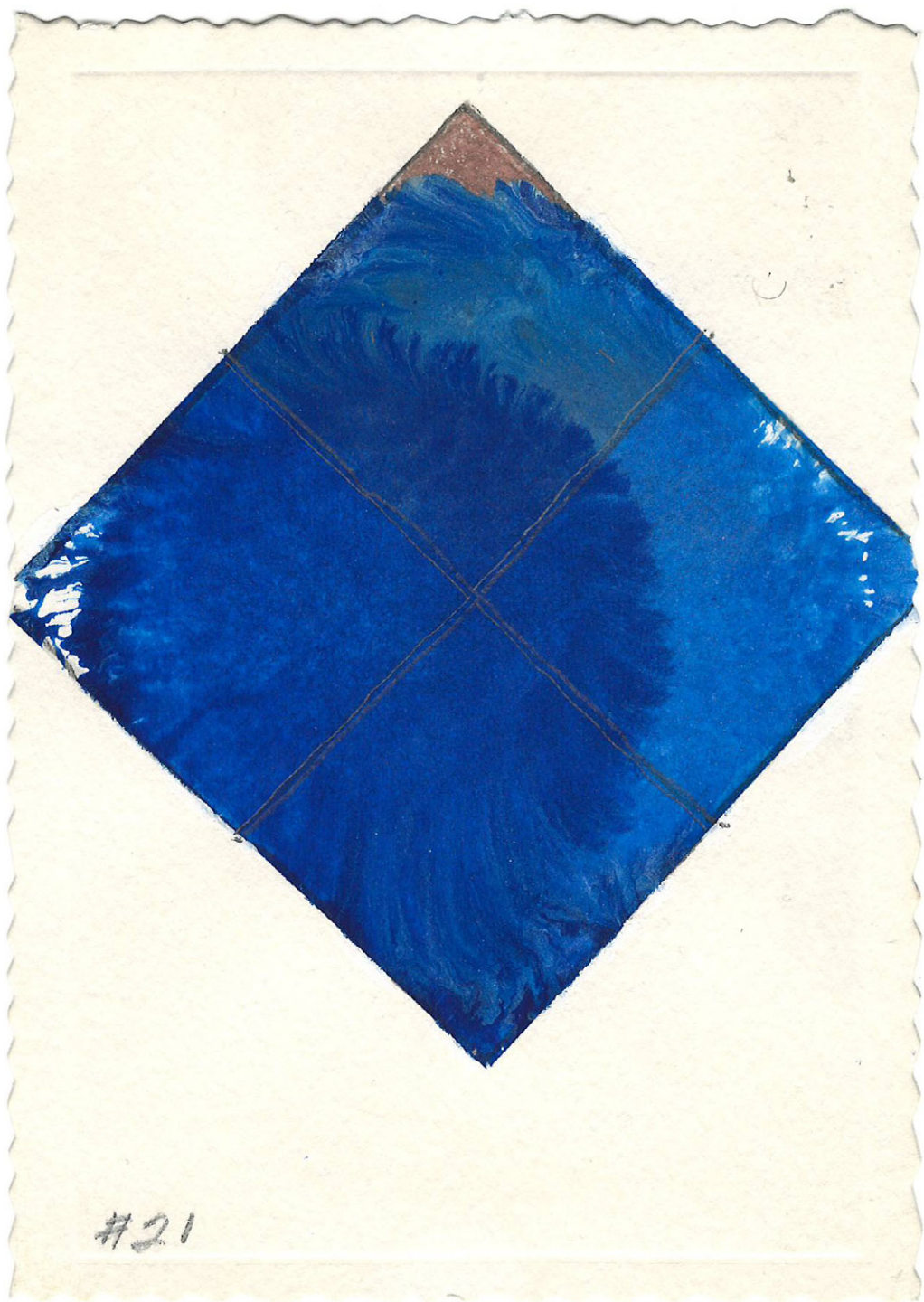
Blau

Blau

20

APR. 9/01

Reinventing the Elements:
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#21



#21

Reinventing the Elements:
Copper, Egyptian Blue, Isaac Newton Postcard Series
#24

Copper
↙ ↘

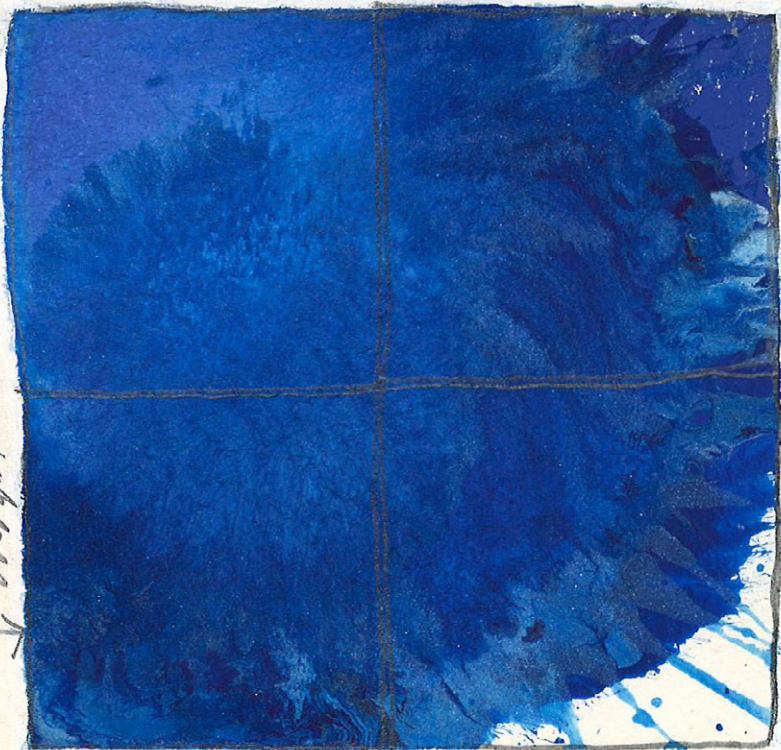


Blue ↑

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D.R. 8/01

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Copper, Egyptian Blue, Isaac Newton Postcard Series
#26



copied

26

DR 8/01

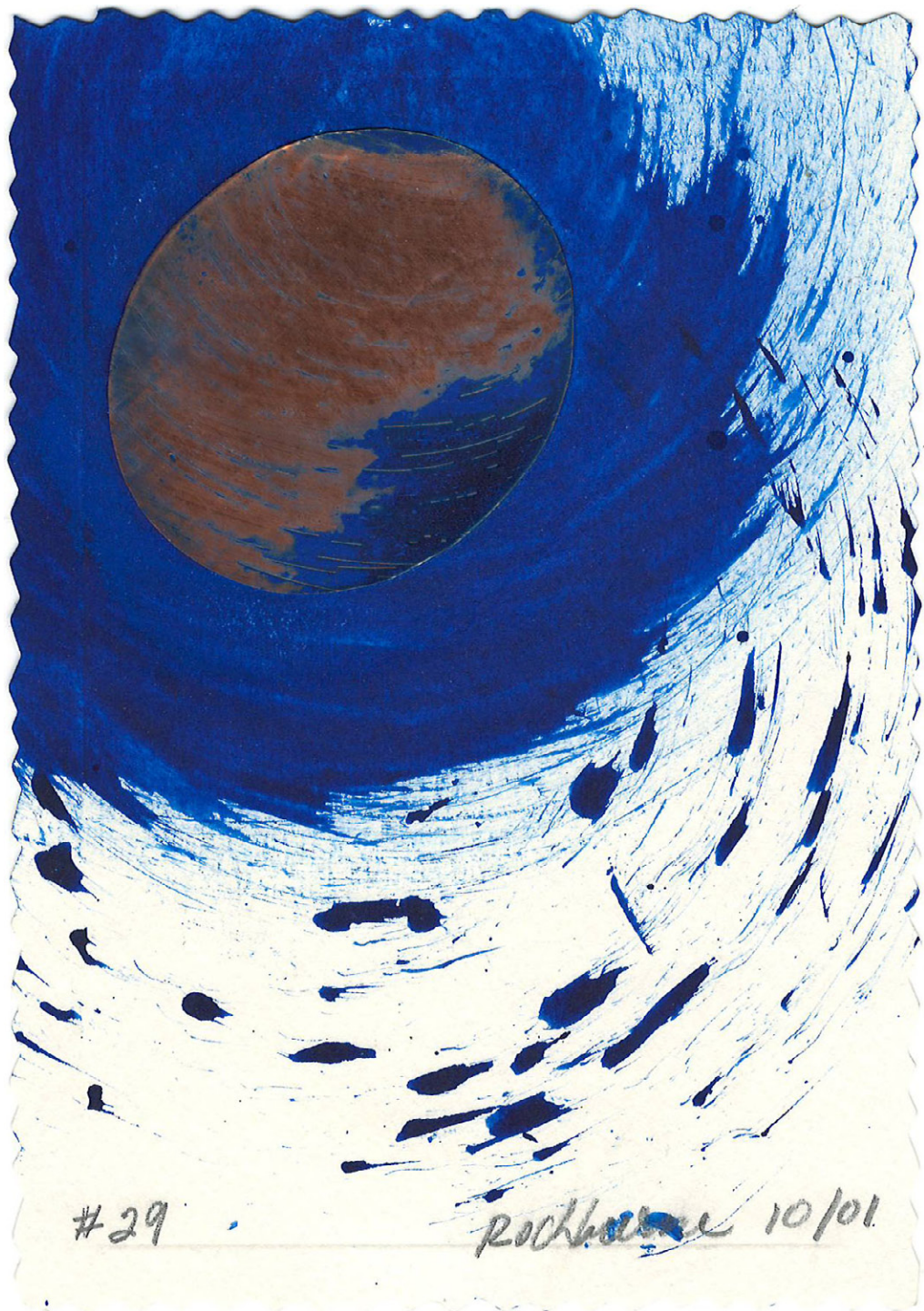
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#27



#127

Rollman 10/01

Reinventing the Elements:
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#29



#29

Rockwell 10/01

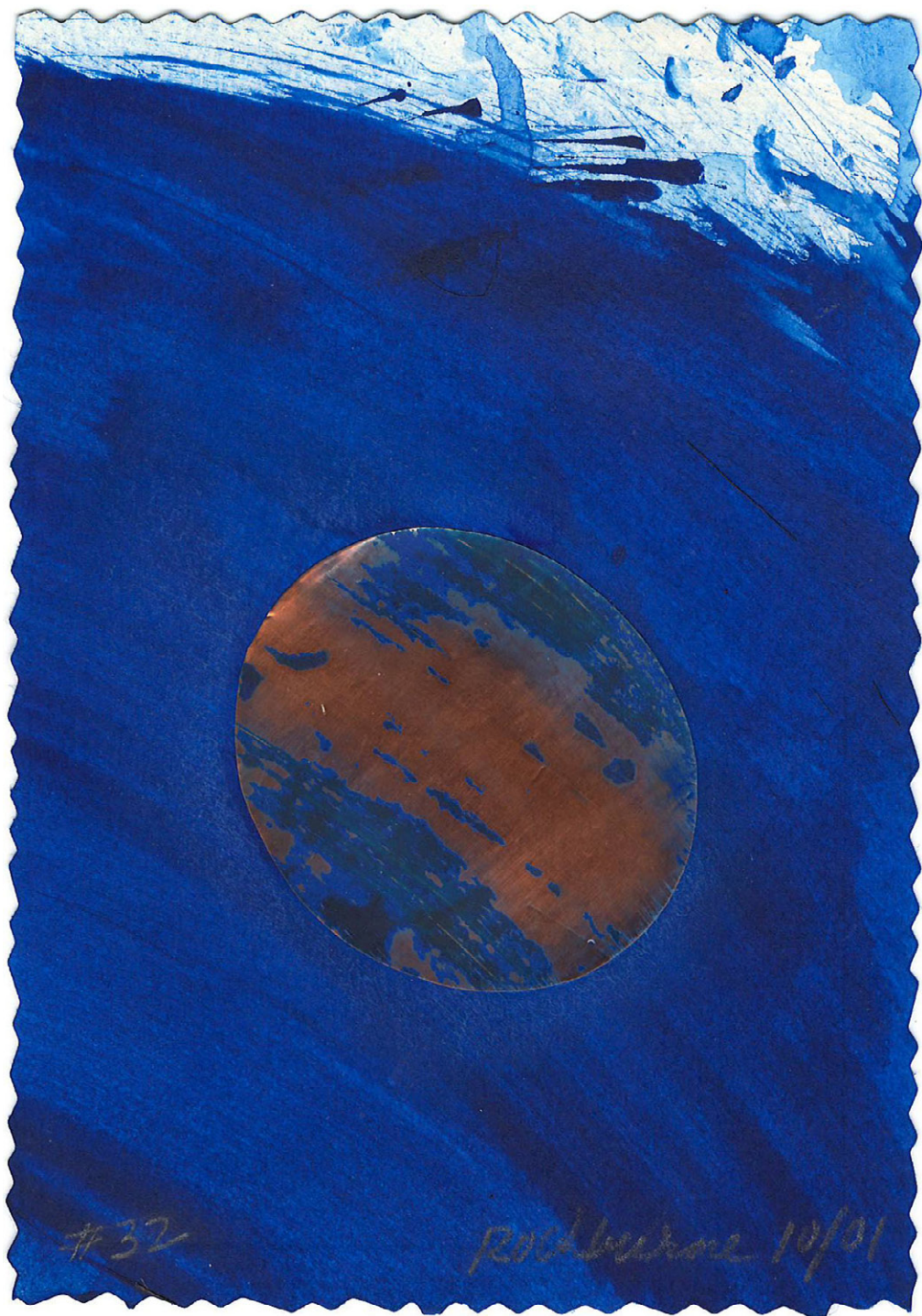
Reinventing the Elements:
Copper, Egyptian Blue, Isaac Newton Postcard Series
#30



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W. H. K. 10/01

Reinventing the Elements:
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#32



#32

Rocky shore 10/01

Reinventing the Elements:
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#33



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Rothbusch 10/01

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Rockburne 10/01

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#35



H 35

Kochburne 10/01

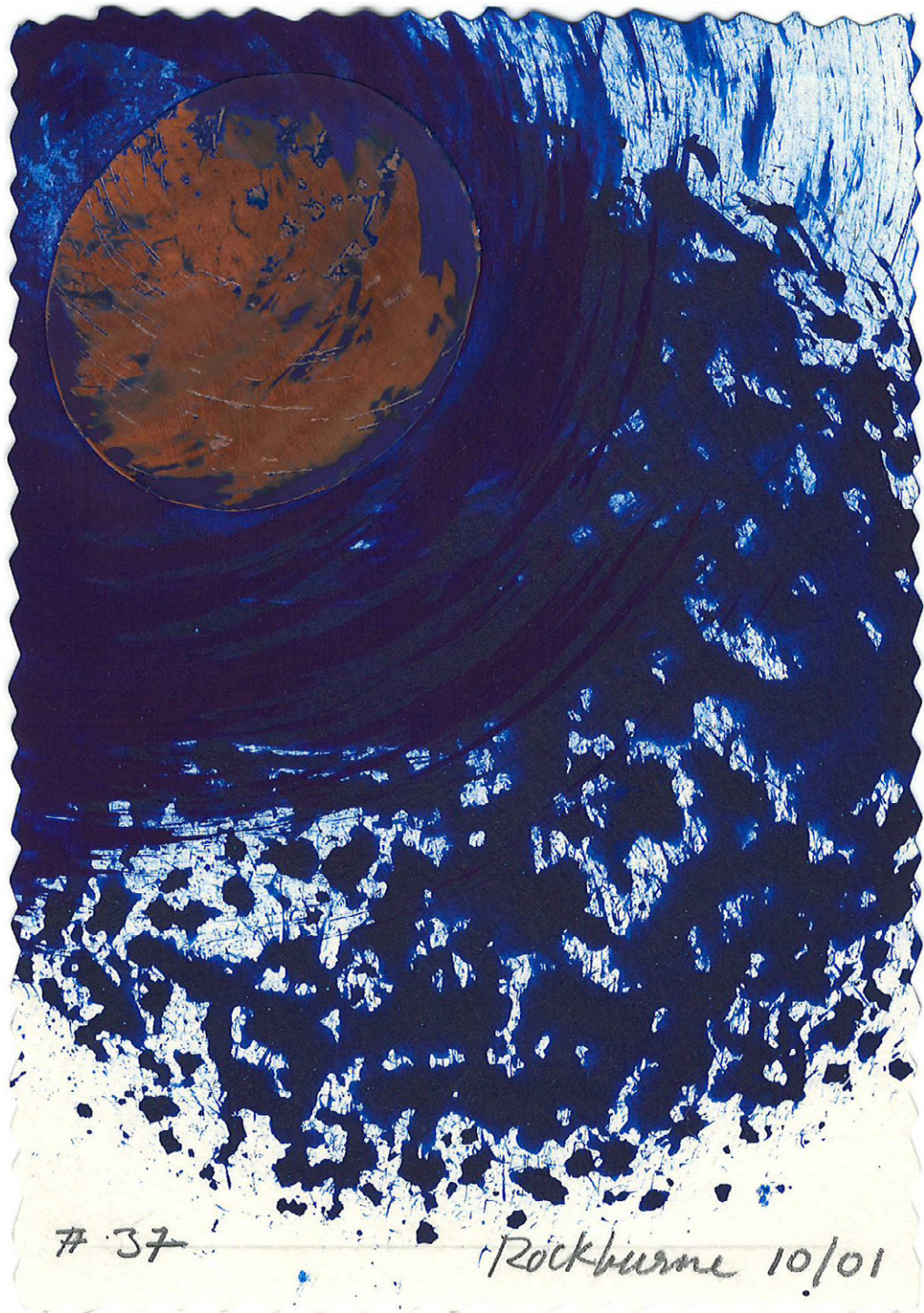
Reinventing the Elements:
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#36



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Rockwell 10/01

Reinventing the Elements:
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#37



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Rockburne 10/01

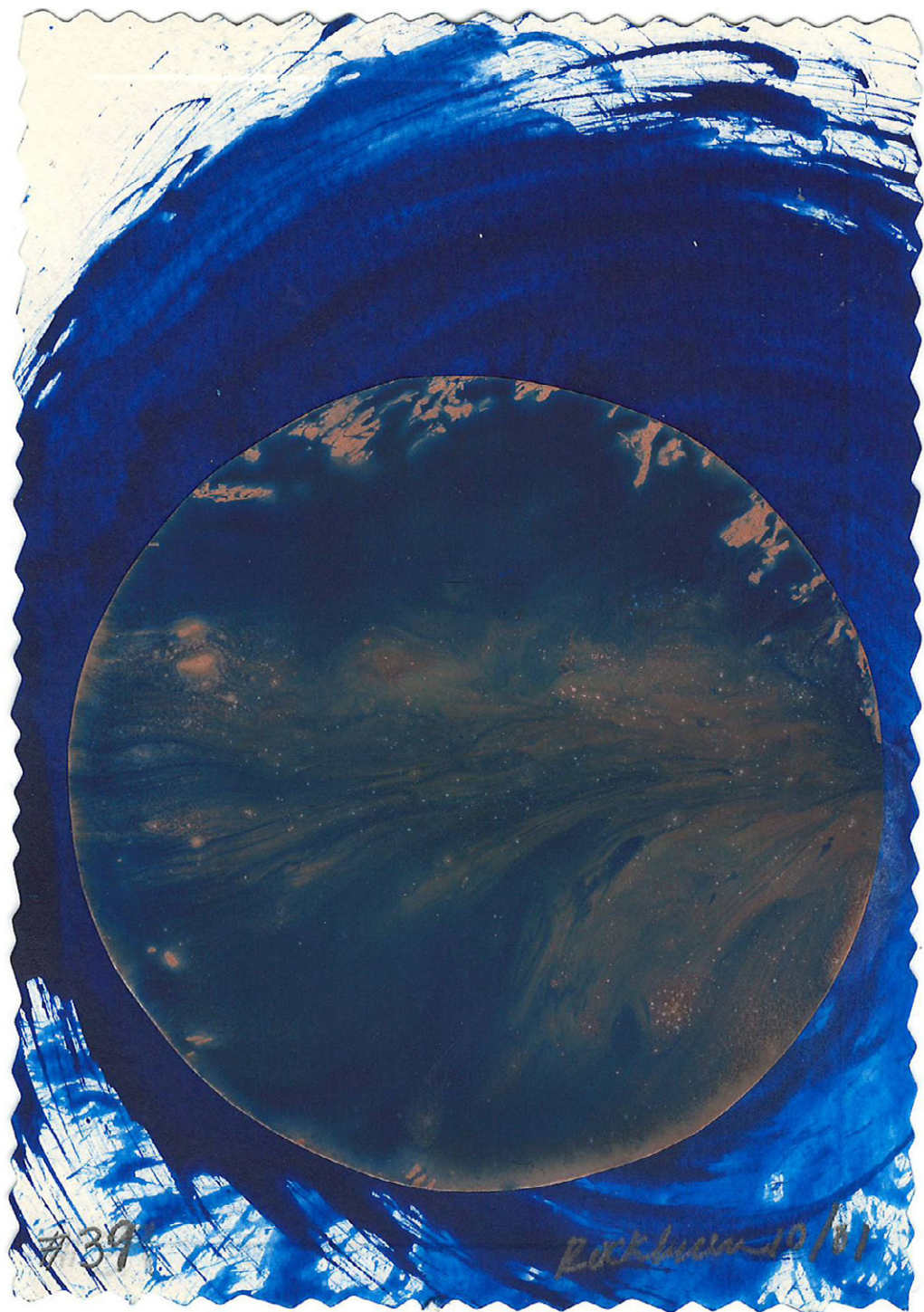
Reinventing the Elements:
Copper, Egyptian Blue, Isaac Newton Postcard Series
#38



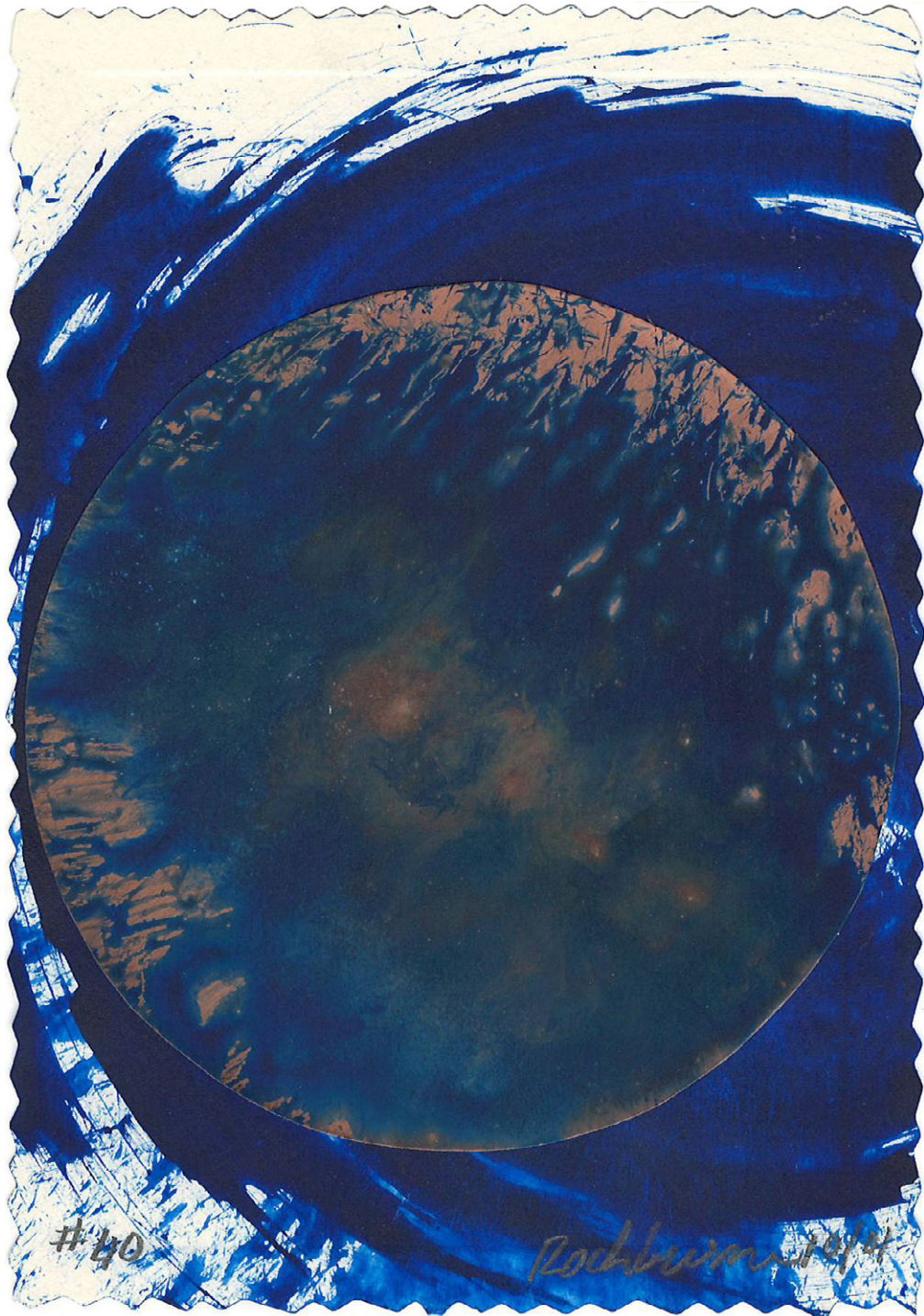
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Rokkusa 10/02

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#39



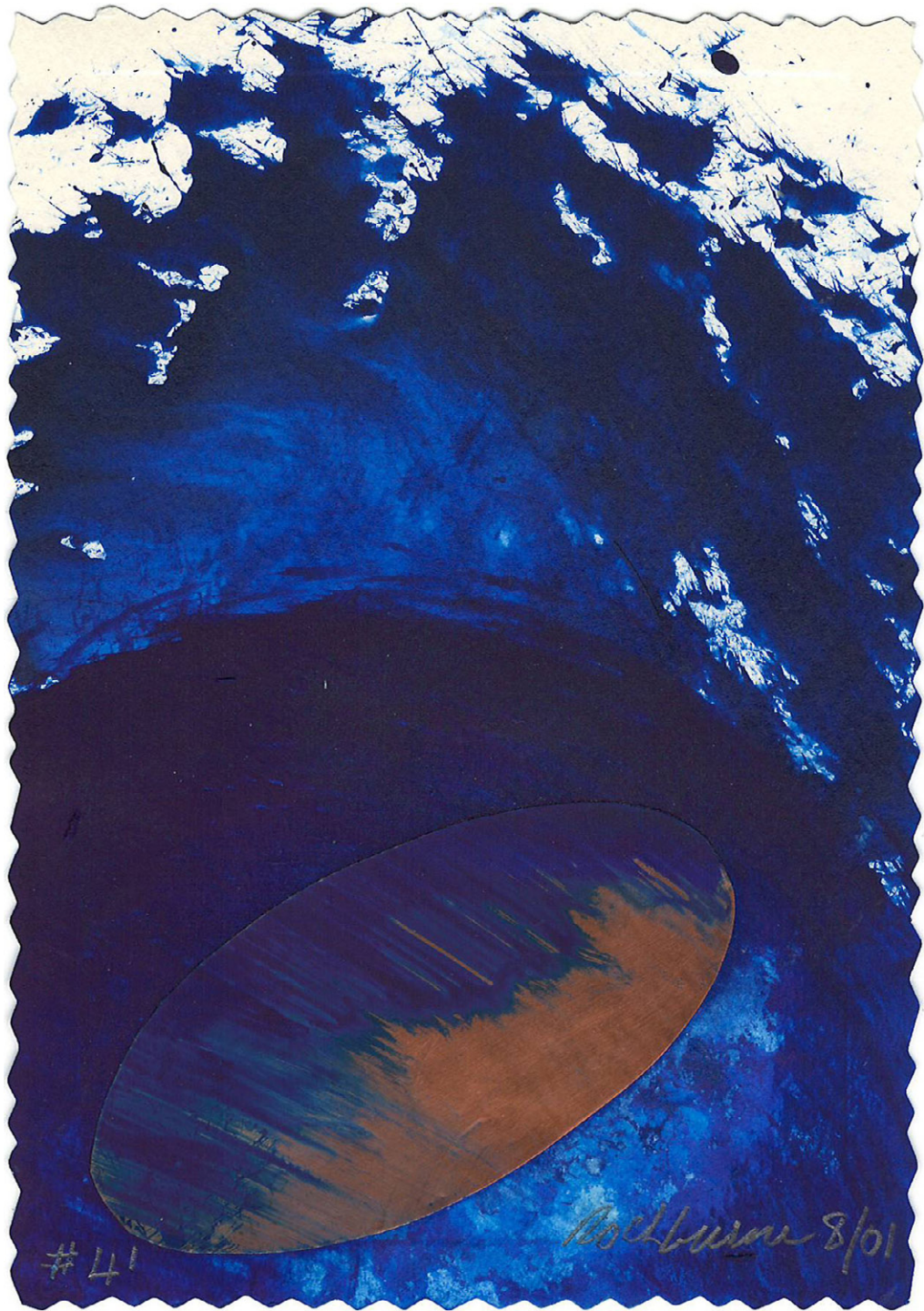
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#40

Rochester 1974

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#4

Boellman 8/01

Reinventing the Elements:
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#42

Rocky Mountain SPI

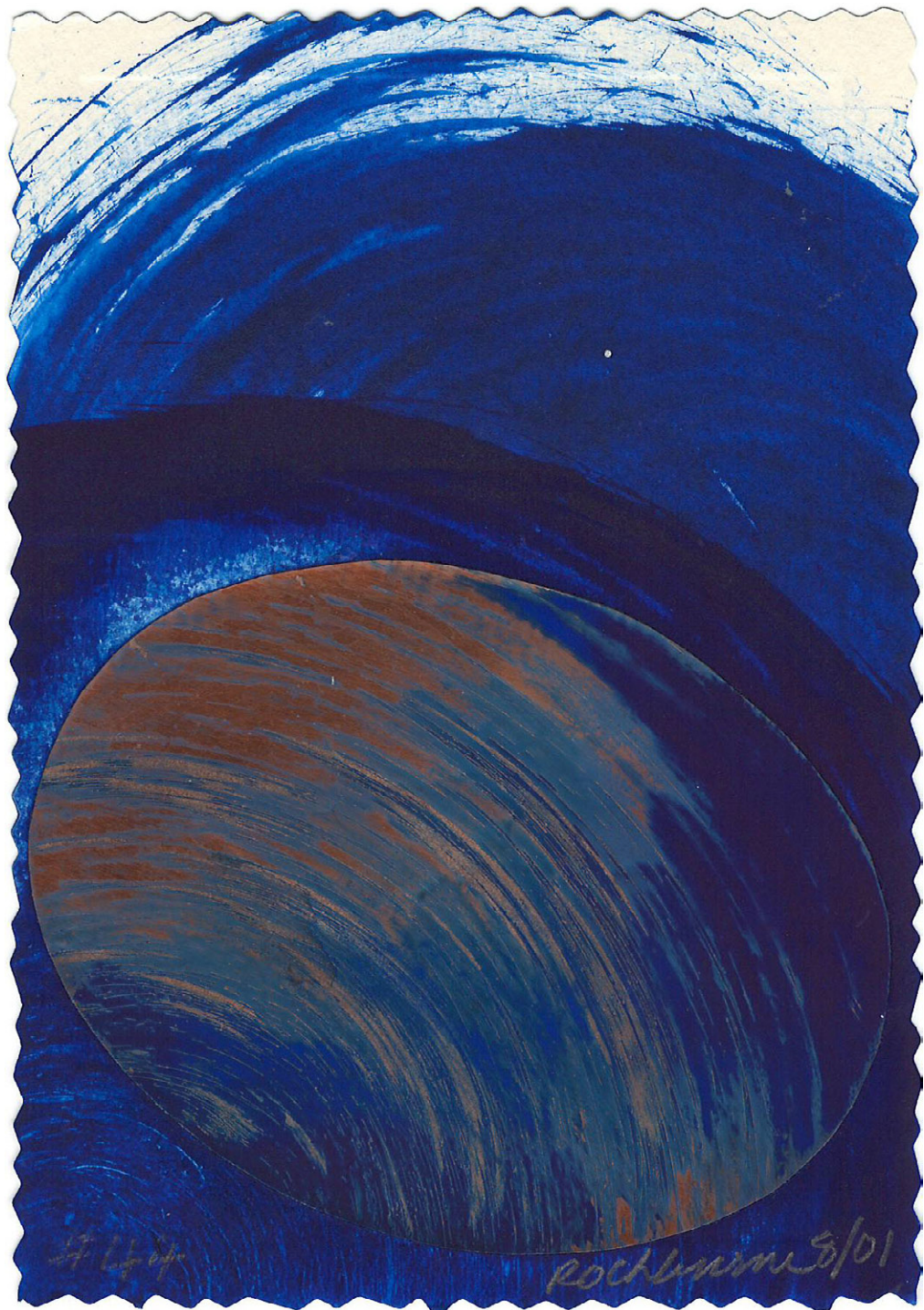
Reinventing the Elements:
Copper, Egyptian Blue, Isaac Newton Postcard Series
#43



#43

Robburne 8/01

Reinventing the Elements:
Copper, Egyptian Blue, Isaac Newton Postcard Series
#44



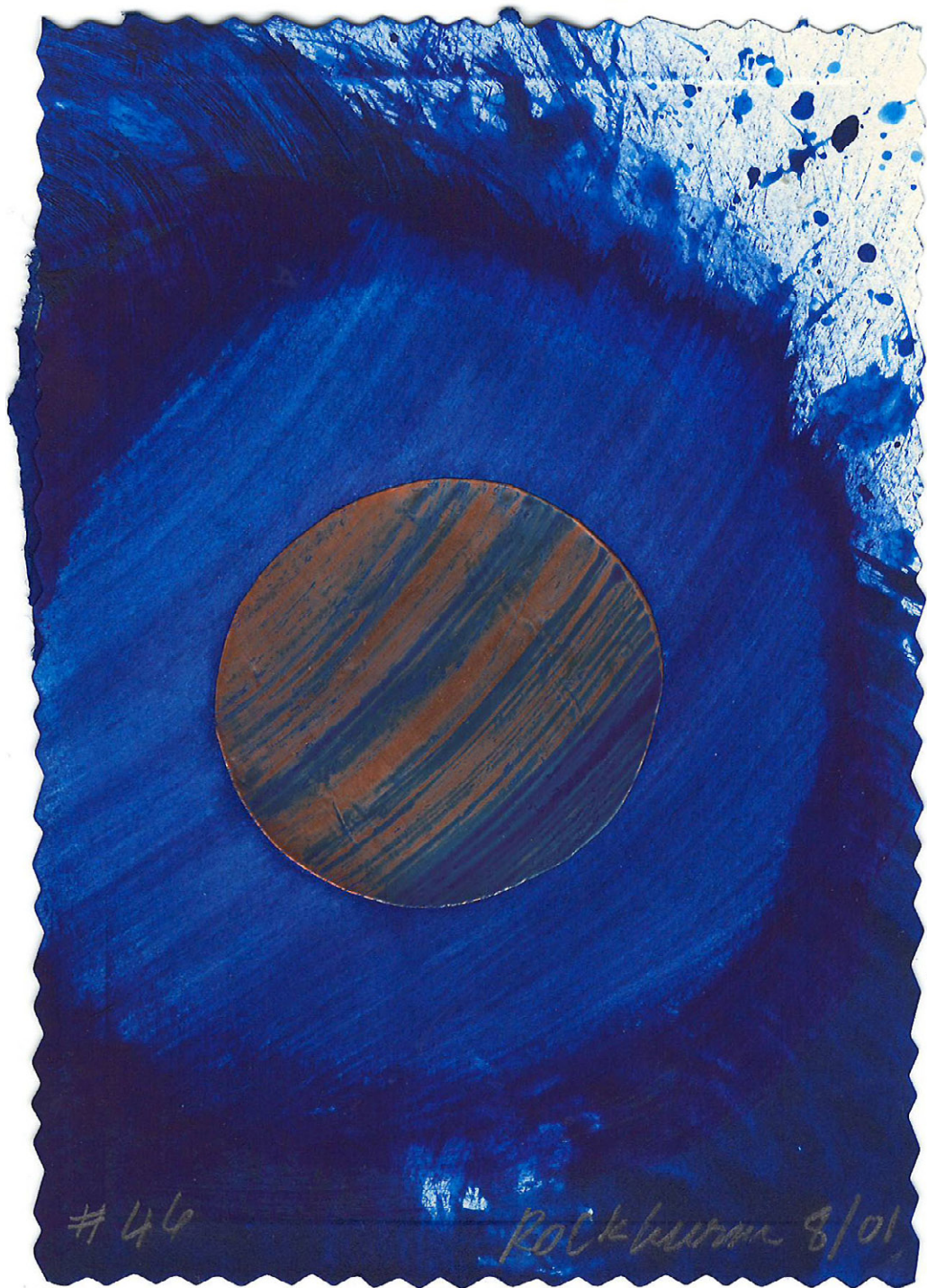
Rochman

5/01

Reinventing the Elements:
Copper, Egyptian Blue, Isaac Newton Postcard Series
#45



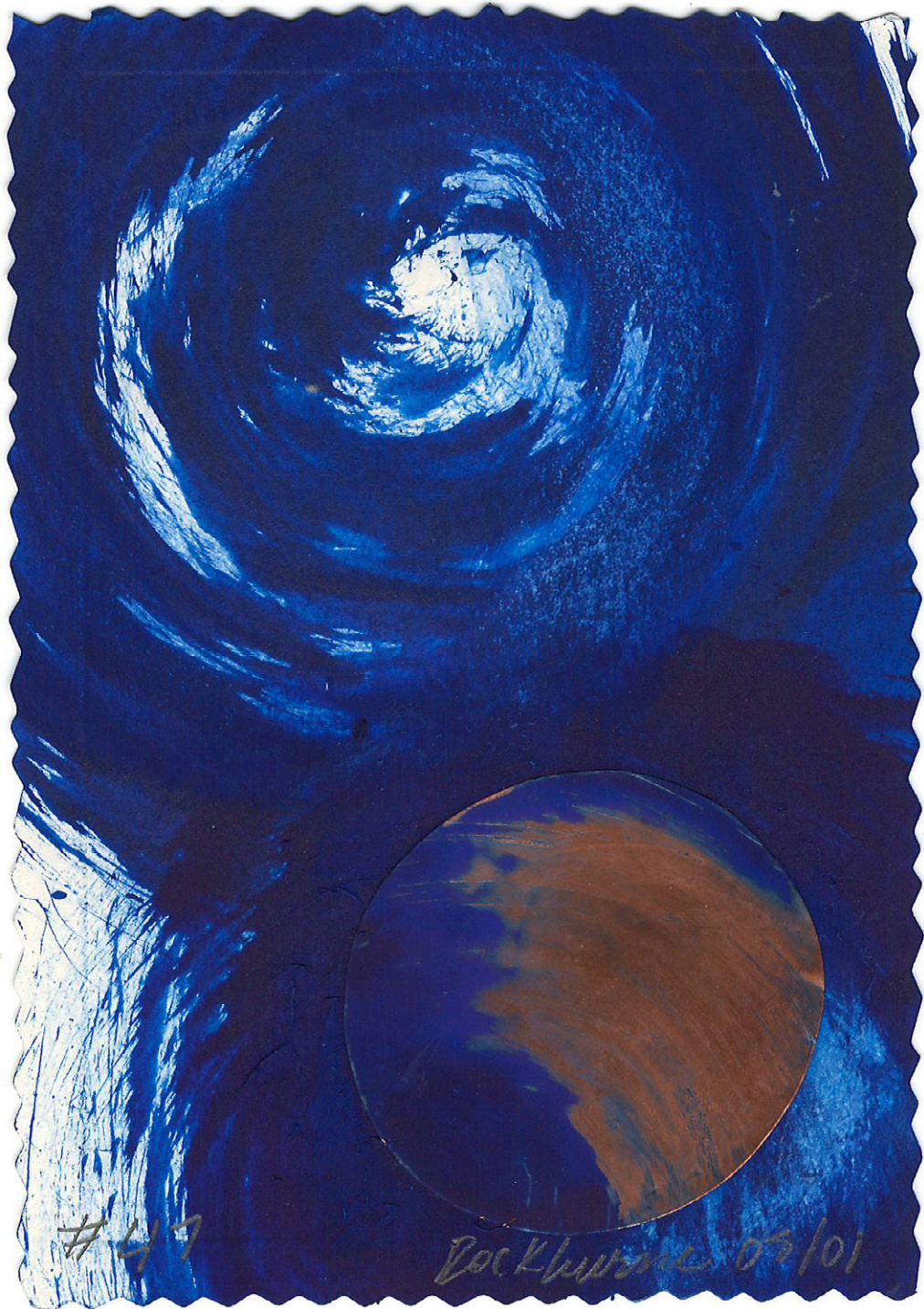
Reinventing the Elements:
Copper, Egyptian Blue, Isaac Newton Postcard Series
#46



#44

Rock-hunter 8/01

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#47



#47

Dochkurne 05/01

Reinventing the Elements:
Copper, Egyptian Blue, Isaac Newton Postcard Series
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#48

Rockburne 8/01

Reinventing the Elements:
Copper, Egyptian Blue, Isaac Newton Postcard Series
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#149

10/8/01

A.L. Barye Max Beckmann Pierre Bonnard François Bonvin Eugène
Boudin Rodolphe Bresdin Sir E.C. Burne-Jones Alexander Calder
Théodore Chassériau John Constable J.B.C. Corot Gustave Courbet
Edgar Degas Eugène Delacroix Charles Demuth Maurice Denis
André Derain Raoul Dufy Henri Fantin-Latour Lyonel Feininger Paul
Gauguin John Gibson Tom Goldenberg Henri Harpignies Erich
Heckel Wenzel Hollar Paul Huet Victor Hugo J.B. Jongkind Wolf
Kahn Paul Klee Gustav Klimt Oskar Kokoschka Georges Lemmen
Léon-Augustin Lhermitte Max Liebermann Aristide Maillol Edouard
Manet Lino Mannocci Wendy Mark Henri Matisse Adolph Menzel
J.F. Millet Claude Monet Georgio Morandi Graham Nickson Camille
Pissarro Maurice Prendergast Odilon Redon Pierre Renoir Enrico
Riley Auguste Rodin Théodore Rousseau Ker-Xavier Roussel Kikuo
Saito George Sand Andre de Segonzac Georges Seurat Alfred Sisley
Paul Signac Fulvio Testa Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec Edouard Vuillard
Luisa Waber Anthonie Waterloo A.L. Barye Max Beckmann Pierre
Bonnard François Bonvin Eugène Boudin Rodolphe Bresdin Sir E.C.
Burne-Jones Alexander Calder Théodore Chassériau John Constable
J.B.C. Corot Gustave Courbet Edgar Degas Eugène Delacroix Charles
Demuth Maurice Denis André Derain Raoul Dufy Henri Fantin-Latour
Lyonel Feininger Paul Gauguin John Gibson Tom Goldenberg Henri
Harpignies Erich Heckel Wenzel Hollar Paul Huet Victor Hugo
J.B. Jongkind Wolf Kahn Paul Klee Gustav Klimt Oskar Kokoschka
Georges Lemmen Léon-Augustin Lhermitte Max Liebermann Aristide
Maillol Edouard Manet Lino Mannocci Wendy Mark Henri Matisse
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Nickson Camille Pissarro Maurice Prendergast Odilon Redon Pierre

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