

GALERIE NORDENHAKE
mexico city

Colima 159
Col. Roma 06700
Ciudad de México
T +52 1 55 1313 8371
www.nordenhake.com
mexico@nordenhake.com

Elena Damiani

Great Circles

23 Nov – 15 Jan

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The exhibition *Great Circles* reflects on scientific facts, tools and the laws of nature. By promoting questions that recognize their impact beyond the field of science the exhibition seeks to illuminate the effects they have on our subjective ways of thinking, as well as on our culture more broadly. The exhibition is composed of sculptures and a series of drawings which refer to different navigational devices and instruments used to measure distance and time. The artist relies on notions of navigation, cartography, exploration, mobility, and location, to address the fundamental human search to understand our position in the world.

Damiani composes a poetics of the natural processes that remain illegible in order to create a bridge connecting scientific principles and facts with universal notions of existence and the search for meaning. In an attempt to grasp these scientific principles, the artist translates them into a sculptural language, using classic materials of this discipline such as marble and Onyx. The combination of black marble, white stone, and brass in many of the works illustrates how natural matter reflects light in its own unique way: dark bodies, bodies that reflect light and bright bodies.

Conventional, age-old techniques used to measure position on the Earth's surface are used by the artist to generate a poetic representation of distances and physical locations concerning an open system of references. Likewise, the works reflect on the movement of celestial objects in space and how they can serve as a system of references in space-time. Transits and occultations refer to the discontinuity of time, natural phenomena that alter an established order, and the dialectic between light and dark. The geometric assemblies of stone and metal represent the variations of a planetary transit between three celestial bodies that line up hiding one behind the other. The works try to materialise a phenomenon, that although we perceive as do distant or minute as to be intangible (for example as an image in the sky), in reality implies the movement of immense masses by natural forces.

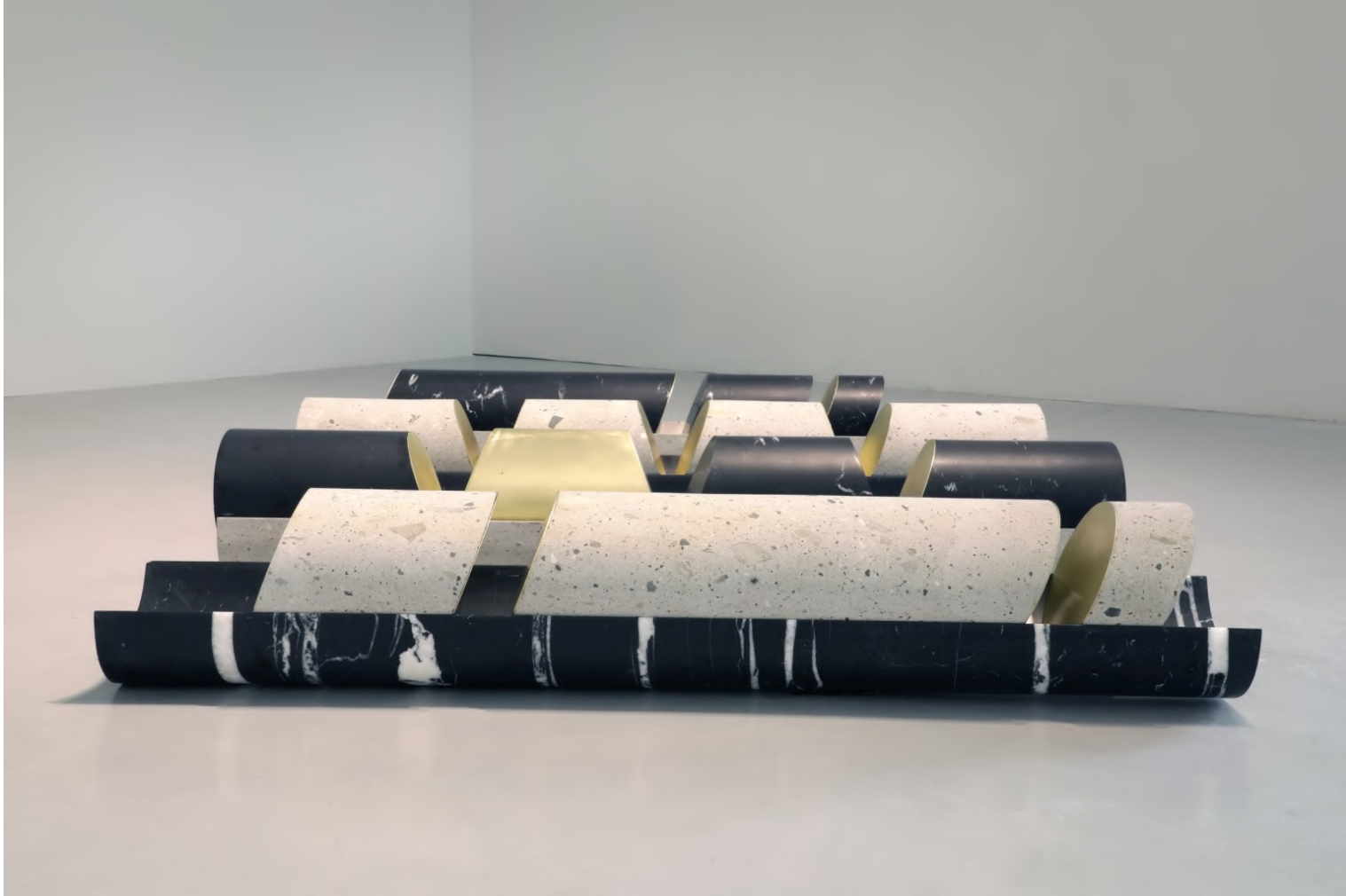
The exhibition gestures towards the importance of observing the celestial and the terrestrial, representing a context of interchange between the two fields. The works subtly affirm that our position responds to a system that obeys a higher order of magnitude that escapes the reality of human experience and that it is only by observing the relationships between the elements of this system that we can obtain knowledge of the physical world.

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Transits and Occulations
I 2019
Black Monterrey marble, white
Mexican stone and brass
4 cylinders of
21 x 16 x 120 cm each
8 1/4 x 6 1/3 x 47 1/4 in

Transits and Occulations I and II takes as its point of departure the solar eclipse. The piece considers how this natural phenomenon opens up the opportunity to witness the articulation of the universe through the brief interruption of time. The pieces reflect upon the discontinuity of time, light-dark dialectic and certain natural phenomena that alter an established order. The geometric assemblies of stone and metal represent an astronomical transit of three celestial bodies, lined up one behind the other resulting in them being hidden from vision. The pieces attempt to materialise a phenomenon that we perceive as intangible – an image in the sky viewed from an incommensurable distance – but which in fact affects the movement of immense geological masses.



Transits and Occulations I
2019
Side view



Transits and Occulations I
2019
Side view



Transits and Occultations II 2019
Black Monterrey marble, white
Mexican stone and brass
160 x 16 x 21 cm
63 x 6 1/3 x 8 1/4 in



Transits and Occulations II
2019
Detail



Installation view



Installation view



Orbital Resonances

2019

Volcanic stone, White Durango
marble, Black Monterrey marble
and brass

163 x 163 x 2 cm

64 1/4 x 64 1/4 x 3/4 in

The work is inspired by *Chant du couple en 16 temps*, 1965 by the Brazilian sculptor Sergio Camargo. In this case, however, what is expressed is not pairs of objects in a state of reciprocity with one another, but rather the complex choreography of three of Pluto's smaller moons: Styx, Nix and Hydra. These moons are joined by an orbital resonance and together orbit in an unstable, wobbly movement Pluto and its largest moon Charon, which is mutually tidally locked with Pluto. Their bizarre and unpredictable behavior results in the portrait of an incredibly complex gravitational dance that completely breaks with the universal principles established throughout the history of Science.



Orbital Resonances
2019
Side view



Orbital Resonances
2019
Installation view



Orbital Resonances
2019
Detail



Orbital Resonances
2019
Detail



Horizon Ring
2019
Tepeaca marble and brass
5.4 x 61 x 57 cm
2 x 24 x 22 1/2 in

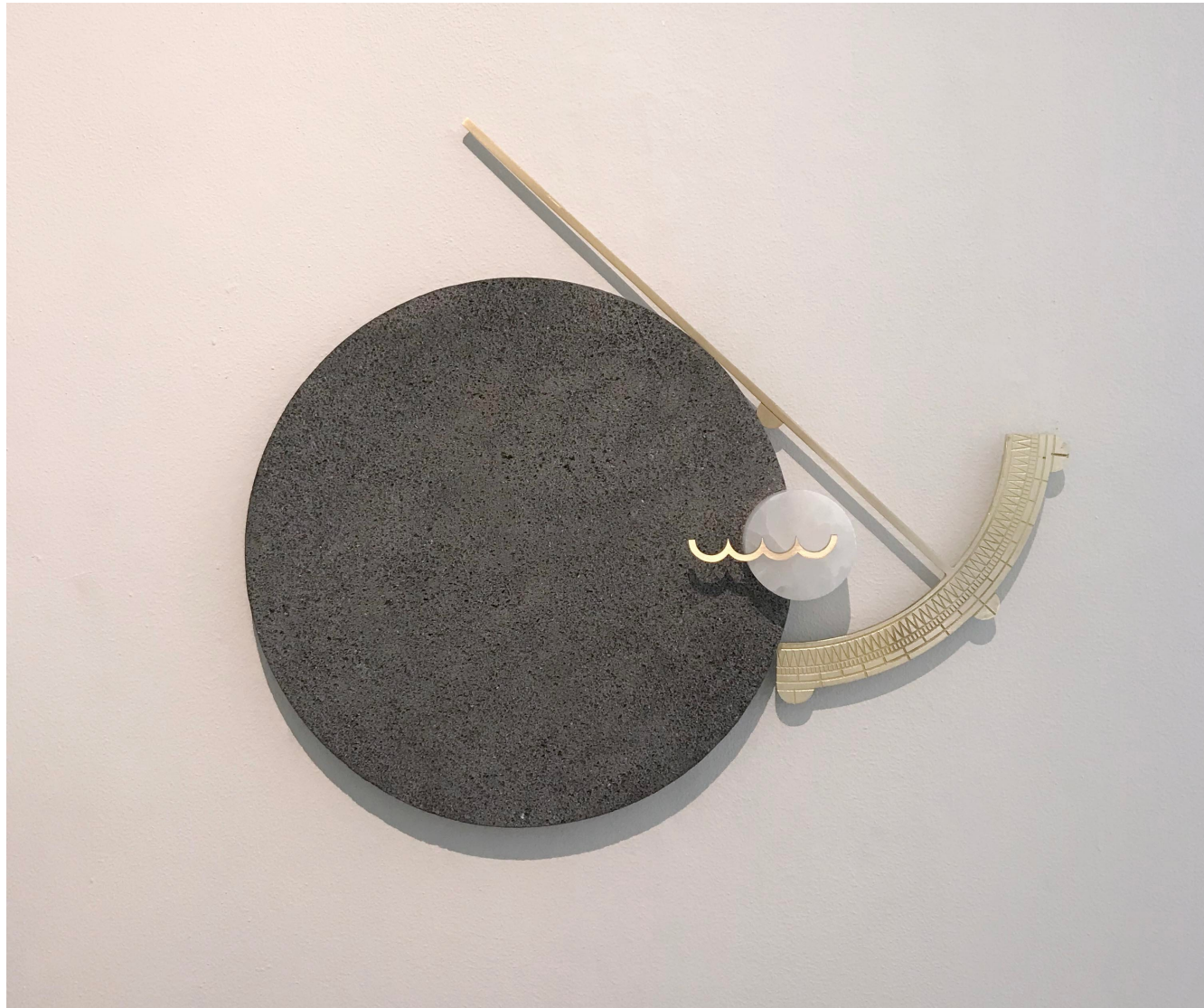
The sculpture in the form of a semicircle, composed of marble and brass, can be manually graduated to different degrees. The work evokes an armillary sphere; an archaic astronomical device whose rings represent the great circles of the heavens, such as the equator, the polar circles and the tropics.



Horizon Ring
2019
Manually graduated



Installation view



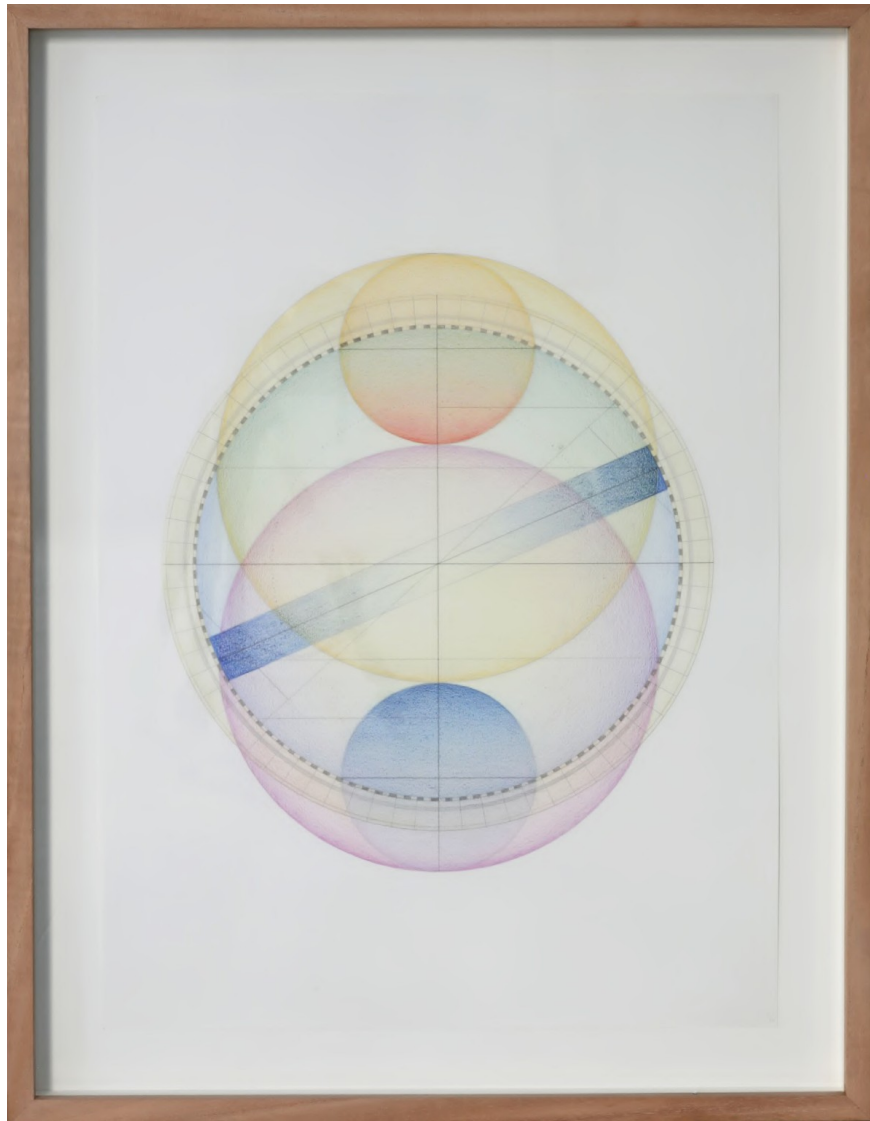
Protactor
2019
Volcanic stone, onyx and brass
64.1 x 75.97 x 5 cm
25 1/4 x 30 x 2 in

The piece responds to a technical drawing taken from George Wayouth's manuscript Jewell of Artes, presented to the King of England in 1604 as a present, in the hopes of receiving patronage and support for a new voyage to the American coast. The illustration the piece is based on depicts an instrument used to find the exact degree of the altitude of the sun and the sea's tide.



Great Circles I
2019
Color pencil and pencil on cotton
paper
59.4 x 42 cm,
68.4 x 51 x 2 cm (framed)
23 1/2 x 16 1/2 in
27 x 20 x 3/4 in (framed)

The artist translates a series of diagrams depicting scientific instruments, into geometric drawings to represent universal and recognizable figures. These figures imagine a new understanding of cosmology that rejects mathematical instruments of calculation to give rise to contemplation and mutual wonder.



Great Circles II 2019
Color pencil and pencil on cotton
paper
59.4 x 42 cm,
68.4 x 51 x 2 cm (framed)
23 1/2 x 16 1/2 in
27 x 20 x 3/4 in (framed)