

## WILLIAM BALTHAZAR ROSE

*Coley Gate, 2014*  
Oil on canvas, 20 x 24 in



COURTESY WINFIELD GALLERY

## RICHARD C. RUTHERFORD

### Balance and Motion

The relationship between  
humans and the earth

I love it when earthquakes take place at night. Coming out of my sleep, I already know what wakes me. And I ignore the close vibrations: windows rattling, startled sounds from little girls. I feel for the signature that moves through me, rumbling secrets through my cells. I have become pretty good at identifying the quake's origin—how far away, what direction, how deep—and I can assign a close approximation on the Richter scale.

I'm obsessed with examining context, fascinated by evidence of the cycles in our universe: a leaf spinning on an autumn breeze; seasons, sunrises and sunsets that imply our blue world twirls around a star; images of our place on the trailing arm of a swirling galaxy. I like to imagine myself sticking my head out the window of the high-velocity ride called the Big Bang; I'm screaming out my ecstasy, my youth behind me like vapor. Am I significant just because I am capable of perspective? Sometimes I wonder if I'm just a trait poised along a cosmic double helix.

The mysteries of life are not always evident and I don't like to take things for granted. So I try to read the signs of minerals, creatures, and plants, lacing together disparate information with strings of memories until an observation suggests itself. I have nothing better to work with. I do my best to include myself in my observations because I need to feel close to the mystery.

I search for a formula that combines firsthand observation with belief. I need to create an equation that explains my existence, absolves me of sin, and at the same time, predicts my immortality.

Gaia.

I spent most of my life in a narrow pass—squeezed between two mountains—marking a boundary along tectonic plates: the Pacific and the North American. East of me, a sag called the Salton Sink holds putrid water. Just to my north, the sink's opposite, Mount San Gorgonio, defies gravity as rumpled granite with nowhere to go but up. To my south, Mount San Jacinto seems to strike a pose—her north side sheared off like split wood. Mount San Jacinto is leaving what is now known as Mexico, riding north along the Pacific Plate. If I pull back to a remote perspective, I can imagine that boundary, the San Andreas Fault, as one of Earth's battle scars, gnashed by a jagged set of molars. Close up, I put my hand on vertical shears and picture them continuing far below.