

GERHARD RICHTER

PANORAMA

6 JUNE – 26 SEPTEMBER 2012

'I pursue no objectives, no system, no tendency; I have no programme, no style, no concern. I like the indefinite, the boundless. I like continual uncertainty,' wrote Gerhard Richter. This retrospective exhibition celebrates the 80th birthday of this German artist, today recognised as one of contemporary art's most important figures. The painter, whose approach to art is classical, explored new relationships between painting and photography in the early 1960s. He pioneered new forms of abstraction from the early 1970s. In the 1980s, he engaged in an erudite and innovative reinterpretation of various art history genres (portraits, historical paintings, landscapes). Richter demonstrates a startling capacity for reinvention,

as well as an ability to transform - with each change of direction in his work - the history of painting.

The 'Panorama' exhibition is organised both chronologically and thematically, highlighting the tension between figurative and abstract works. It was produced in conjunction with the Tate Modern in London and the Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, taking on a different aspect at every stage. The Centre Pompidou scenography was inspired by the 19th century panorama: around a triangular, central promontory room, the visitor will discover - as in a landscape - the themes by chronological order, starting with an overview of the use of colour in Richter's work on a long wall.

**Centre
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PAINTING PHOTOGRAPHY

(room 1)

Richter was born in Dresden in 1932 and educated in East Germany. He fled to Düsseldorf, in the German Federal Republic, with his wife Marianne Eufinger in 1961. He enrolled in the Arts Academy, where he met Sigmar Polke, Blinky Palermo and Konrad Lueg, with whom he founded the Capitalist Realism group. They defined themselves as 'German pop artists'. Richter made his mark on the European scene at the beginning of the 1960s with works directly inspired by photographs, which he called 'photo-paintings'. His pictures, painted from his own photographs or from press pictures, were imbued with a strict expressive neutrality. The fidelity to the original image is the result of a classic duplication procedure: after squaring up the photos, the image is enlarged by means of an episcopo, then copied onto the chosen medium. The final blurred effect is obtained by rubbing the still-wet paint with a brush.

INHERITING A TRADITION

(room 2)

'I do see myself as the heir to a vast, great, rich culture of painting which we have lost, but which places obligations on us.' Richter disagreed with Marcel Duchamp's proclamations on the end of painting as an artistic medium, stressing its powerful link with reality. With his large canvases representing landscapes, mountains, clouds and seascapes, he has established himself as a worthy heir to the German Romantic tradition. The portrait of his first wife, *Ema (Nude on a staircase, 1966)*, is a reference to the famous *Nude Descending a Staircase* painted by Marcel Duchamp in 1912. However, while the French artist's painting is characterised by a futuristic, abstract style, Richter's canvas retains the harmony of a classical nude. The delicacy of the blurring effect and the shimmering colours give this canvas a sentimental, sensual aspect, both intimate and familiar.

LIBERATING ABSTRACTION

(rooms 3, 4, 5)

From the late 1960s and through the 1970s, Gerhard Richter's pictorial language moved toward abstraction. The scope of his experiments always remained open. For example, in the *Colour Charts*, inspired by the colour samples available in paint shops, the artist suppresses any figurative element, gesture or message. The rectangles are faultless, the colours smooth and uniform. The layout may be random but the rectangles are laid out according to a strictly determined protocol. Following the non-figurative experiments of the 1970s, the works of the 1980s displayed more lyrical compositions: shades of colour burst forth, the gesture surges with energy. Splattered paint, brushstrokes and flat sweeps of colour collide, creating breath-taking contrasts on canvases of frequently monumental size. Rapid movement alternates with more careful work with the aerograph and brush; the process of creation is long and painstaking. The artist often allows several months to pass between each paint layer. This pictorial space is designed to be complex rather than harmonious. Richter's paintings function like models 'of a varied and constantly changing world'.

AT THE CENTRE OF 'PANORAMA': REFLECTIONS, MIRRORS...

At the public opening of the Centre Pompidou in February 1977, visitors were able to see not only the Marcel Duchamp retrospective but also a monographic exhibition by Gerhard Richter a radical proposal in which the *48 Portraits* shown five years earlier in the German pavilion of the Venice Biennale were hung side by side with large grey monochromes, the *Colour Charts*, a few landscapes and a glass sculpture.

The central room of 'Panorama' (**room 6**), which serves as a 'promontory' for the visit, displays grey monochromes and works made using panes of glass, hankering back to the first Richter exhibition at the Centre Pompidou. The room's triangular shape evokes the representational diagram of the eye's angle of vision. The works on display here - whether grey monochromes, mirrors, or works on, under or made from glass - all offer a radical questioning of the vision process. The central place given to these lesser-known and lesser-valued pictures and sculptures allows us to re-examine and reassess the artist's work. These mirrors, panes of glass, duplications and reflective surfaces form what in retrospect amounts to the most original series in Richter's work, astonishingly diverse and, above all, essential for its comprehension. As suggested by the artist on many occasions: 'It is the only image whose appearance is constantly changing. And perhaps the clue which shows that each image is a mirror.'

A PANORAMA OF THE HISTORY OF CLASSICAL ART

Most of Richter's monumental abstract paintings from the 1980s are true or false diptyches. Likewise, many of his figurative works are arranged as duplicates or pairs, as in a mirror. Since the beginning of the 1960s, moreover, in addition to reproducing his own works, unchanged or slightly amended, Richter has reproduced masterpieces - sometimes faithfully, sometimes interpretatively, but always respectfully. Apart from his regular nods to the work of Duchamp, it is also worth mentioning *Annunciation after Titian*, created from a postcard of the picture. During the 1980s, he paid tribute, in a much less direct way, to Chardin and Morandi with his apple and bottle still lifes, to Poussin with his large landscapes, to the *Valpinçon Bather* (1808) by Ingres, in the portrait of Betty turning away from him, and to Vermeer with *Lectrice*, where Richter's young wife adopts the same pose as the *Girl Reading a Letter at an Open Window* (1657). Among the genres of classical painting revisited by Richter, landscapes occupy an increasingly important place in his work (**room 7**). Always painted from photographs taken during his travels or of his surrounding environment, these canvases give pride of place to nature and to the sky, without any human presence. For the 1991 *Sketch* series, the sometimes misty, diaphanous, opaque atmosphere obtained through the use of various shading techniques heightens their melancholic and timeless nature.

REVEALING INTIMACY

(room 8)

The portrait gallery displayed in this room includes only individuals close to the artist, and, exceptionally, a self-portrait. In 1965, Gerhard Richter painted his uncle Rudi, his aunt Marianne and his father Horst. He painted his uncle in Nazi uniform, taking inspiration from a photograph in which he posed, smiling, taken shortly before he died in the war. The portrait of his mentally fragile aunt Marianne is based on a photograph showing her with Richter as a child, before she was killed by the Germans during the Third Reich's eugenics programme. The dark atmosphere of these first portraits brings us directly back to the traumatic experience of the war. Later, a feeling of intimacy both sublime and natural also emanates from the portraits of his wife and children, and of his friends and family. The *S. with child* series, assembled here for the first time, is both intimate and universal.

18 OCTOBER 1977

(room 9)

Following his indirect references to Germany's past in some of the 1960s photo-paintings, Richter spectacularly reverted to historical painting in 1988. The *18 October 1977* series, refers to the date of death of the leaders of the revolutionary Baader-Meinhof group in Stammheim prison. These fifteen paintings based on press photographs describe a series of events that took place over a longer period: the arrests, deaths and funerals of the founder members of the RAF (Red Army Faction).

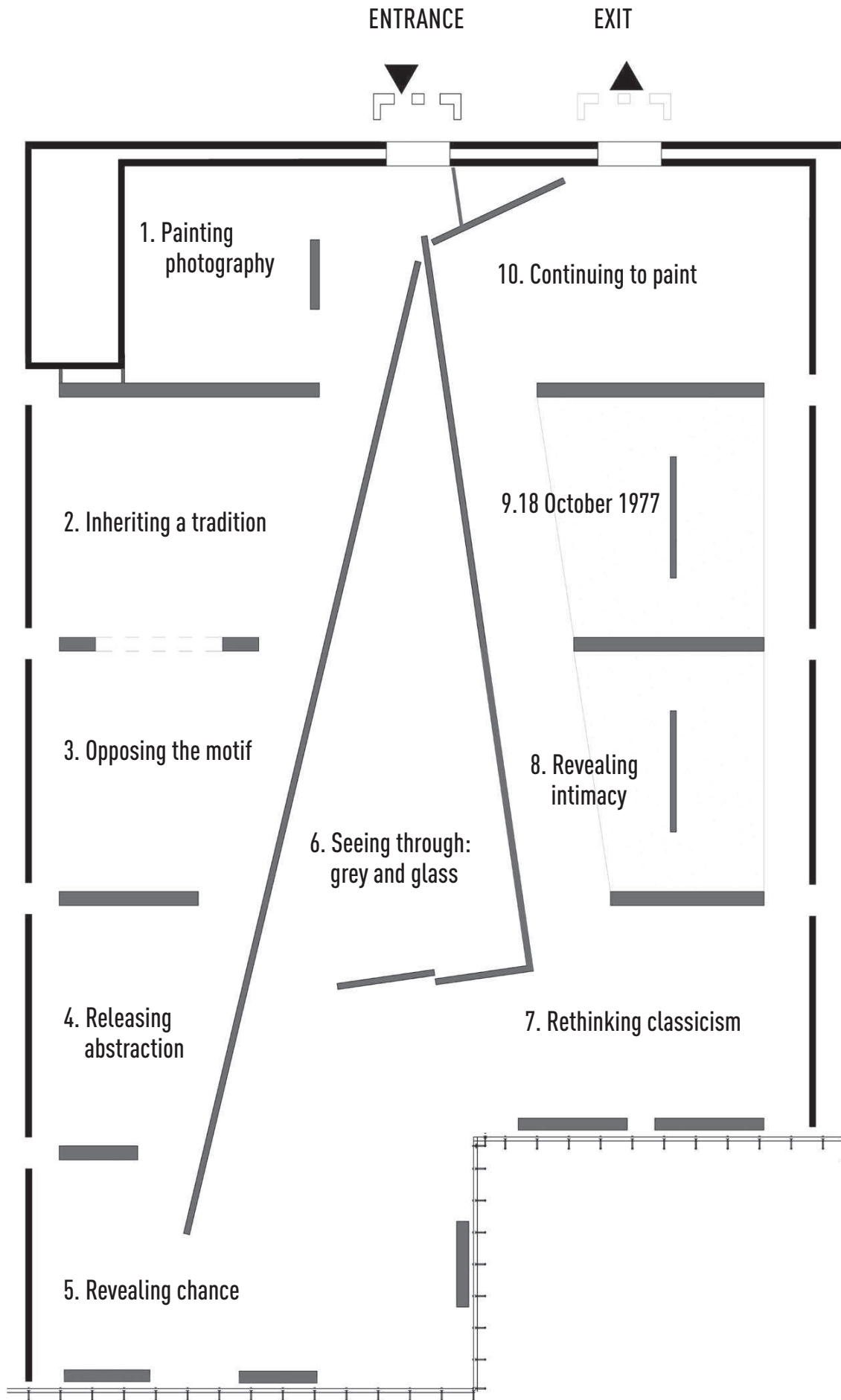
CONTINUING TO PAINT

(room 10)

In his most recent works, Richter considers how the painting can remain credible when confronted by recent developments in digital imagery. *Strip*, 2011, is part of a series of large digital prints. The starting point was an abstract painting, by the artist from 1990 (room 5). Using computer software, he divided this work vertically, firstly into two, then into four, eight, 16, 32, 64, 128, 256, 512, 1024, 2048, and 4096. This process led to the creation of 8,190 strips, whose length corresponds to the height of the original painting.

'A lot of people find other media more attractive - put a screen in a museum and nobody wants to look at the painting anymore. But painting is my profession, because it has always been the thing that interested me most. And now I'm of a certain age, I come from a different tradition and, in any case, I can't do anything else. I'm still very sure that painting is one of the most basic human capacities, like dancing and singing, that make sense, that stay with us, as something human.'

EXHIBITION MAP



EXHIBITION

CURATOR

Camille Morineau

RESEARCH AND COORDINATION

Lucia Pesapane

PRODUCTION

Maud Desseignes
Bruno Veret

EXHIBITION DESIGN

Jasmin Oezcebi

Supported by:

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CATALOGUE

Gerhard Richter Panorama

304 pages / 250 illustrations
Price: €44,90

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Direction des publics,
Service de l'information des publics
et de la médiation, 2012

Guide based on Camille Morineau's essay
in the exhibition catalogue,
and on exhibition tour texts.

Graphic design
c-album

Printing

Friedling Graphique, Rixheim, 2012

AROUND THE EXHIBITION

EXHIBITION TALKS

Random adornments: Gerhard
Richter's digital abstractions
By Benjamin Buchloch
Wednesday 6 June, 7pm, Cinéma 1
Free entrance, limited seating

GUIDED TOURS

In French
Every Saturday at 3.30pm
Wednesdays: 20 and 27 June, 5, 12
and 19 September at 7pm
€4.50 / concessions €3.50
(+ Museum & Exhibition ticket at
concessionary rate, €10)
€3.50 with the annual pass.
Meet at exhibition entrance with
tickets

TOURS FOR DISABLED VISITORS

- 'Écouter voir' tour: blind and partially sighted visitors

Saturday 9 June at 10am
€4.50 including entrance; free for
one attendant.

Reservation required at least one
week in advance at 01 44 78 49 54.
Recommended entrance at corner
of Rue du Renard / Rue Saint-Merri

- Lip-reading tour: hearing-impaired visitors

Saturday 9 June at 11am
€4.50 including entrance; free for
one attendant.

Reservation required at least three
days in advance.

Fax 01 44 78 16 62 /
SMS 06 17 48 45 50 /

nicole.fournier@centrepompidou.fr
Piazza entrance, left-hand priority
queue, meet near Information desk.

- French Sign Language tour: deaf visitors

Saturday 9 June at 2.30pm
Meet at Educational Space, level 0
€4.50, free for one attendant

Reservation required at least three
days in advance

SMS 06 17 48 45 50 / nicole.
fournier@centrepompidou.fr

AT THE LOUVRE

'Gerhard Richter.
Dessins et aquarelles, 1957-2008'
7 June to 17 September 2012

AUDIO GUIDE

Languages: French, English,
Spanish, German and Italian.
Available for rental at the Centre
Pompidou, the audio guide brings
the creative process alive. Let us
guide you around the 'Gerhard
Richter' exhibition and discover
nearly 90 works from the Museum's
permanent collections. Special
tour available for children aged
8-12. You can also tour the building
and discover its history. For rental
at the ticket desk (level 0).
Pick-up at the Audio Guide booth,
level 0.
€5, reduced rate €4,
free for under-13s.

INFORMATION

01 44 78 12 33

www.centrepompidou.fr

EXHIBITION OPEN

From 6 June to 24 September 2012
Gallery 1, level 6

Daily except Tuesday
11am to 9pm

Ticket desk closes at 8pm
Late night openings on Thursdays
until 11pm

Ticket desk closes at 10pm

ADMISSION

with 'Museum & Exhibitions' ticket
Valid all day for single entry to the
Museum and all exhibitions,
€13, reduced rate €10
Free for under-18s and holders
of annual pass

BUY TICKETS ONLINE AND PRINT AT HOME

{Full price only}
www.centrepompidou.fr/billetterie

TWITTER

Information on the exhibition on
twitter #Richter hashtag, or [http://
www.twitter.com/centrepompidou](http://www.twitter.com/centrepompidou)