

POSTMASTERS

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for immediate release:

May 12 - June 16, 2012

RICHTERIANA

**GREG ALLEN
DAVID DIAO
RORY DONALDSON
HASAN ELAHI
FABIAN MARCACCIO
RAFAËL ROZENDAAL**



Postmasters' new exhibition *Richteriana* attempts to examine the current canonization of Gerhard Richter, presenting six artists whose works pre-date, update, expand, and subvert "the greatest living artist's" own.

It feels interesting, even vital, to pause, to take a deep breath, and seek some perspective at this moment in Richter's career. When the hagiographic momentum builds from full-scale, museum retrospectives in London, Berlin and Paris. When spiraling auction records are deployed by financial advisors to commodify the artist, not just as a brand, but as an "asset class" unto himself. While the reverential documentary film casts its heroicizing glow. And while eminent scholars and curators Benjamin Buchloh and Robert Storr continue to jockey for position under the master's anointing hand.

The exhibition is not a snarky repudiation to Richter's work, which over the decades has rarely failed to reward close looking or to inspire invigorating discourse. Nor is it an impertinent insult to the artist and his practice. Instead, *Richteriana* contests the critical, aesthetic, commercial, ideological, and political implications of the institutional, academic, and market forces which seem to be attempting to disengage Richter and his art from his context, in furtherance of their own imperatives—and it must be acknowledged, with a certain degree of acquiescence by or complicity of the artist himself.

While long skeptical of the so-called "victor's narrative" and Great Man [!] Theory of art history, my motivation to organize this exhibition now was triggered by three additional, synchronous occurrences:

1. **Felix Salmon**, a business blogger for Reuters, who often brilliantly ventures into art, wrote an important post on commodification of Gerhard Richter and the relationship of his market value to his historical importance. Salmon's text was precipitated by a buy recommendation published by Citibank Art Advisory's Jonathan Binstock, because "it is clear that Richter is in the process of being catapulted to a rare and illustrious realm of authority." <http://blogs.reuters.com/felix-salmon/2012/03/04/the-commodification-of-gerhard-richter/>

2. **Greg Allen**, a filmmaker, writer, artist and art spy par excellence wrote about a previously unknown cache of early paintings Richter had destroyed, which Der Spiegel lamented, "would probably be worth at least half a billion euros." Appropriating Richter's own photo-based tactics, Allen reconstituted the lost pictures by commissioning what he terms a "Chinese Paint Mill" to reproduce images taken from the Gerhard Richter Archiv. http://greg.org/archive/2012/02/09/on_repainting_gerhard_richter.html <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,812515,00.html>

3. A recent conversation with **David Diao** – whose own abstract works preceded Richter's so-called "squeegee" paintings – reminded me of *Synecdoche* (1993), a multi-panel work we exhibited at Postmasters in 1995. In it, Diao reprints Benjamin Buchloh's catalog essay for Richter's 1985 exhibition, replaces the images with his own paintings from 1968-73, and crosses out Richter's name, writing in his own. <http://artasia.org/documents/4700> (Ostrow, Saul. "David Diao: Two Acts in One: a Footnote on the Critical Problems Raised by David Diao's 'Richter's Fracture Between the Synecdoche and the Spectacle' by Benjamin Buchloh." NY Arts (Dec. 2000): 19-21.) *Richteriana* offers a visual feast and a conceptual springboard for considering both Richter's context and legacy, but more importantly, re-examining larger issues of constructed history, influence, and value.

In addition to *Synecdoche*, we will exhibit *Wealth of Nations*, **David Diao's** painting from 1972. (It is the large, horizontal painting on the fourth panel of *Synecdoche*.) About this phase of his work Diao says: "Like many others, I was looking for mechanical means to circumvent the tyranny of the painter's hand. Moving past sponges and window scrapers by early 1969, my instruments of choice were cardboard tubes readily available from the curbside of the neighborhood. My thought was to marry the size of the mark with the size of the support and by scaling up the "brush" enlarge the scale."

Greg Allen's *Destroyed Richter Paintings* channel the elder artist's own private documentary images back into the photo-based painting feedback loop he once deemed "photography by other means." They reproduce the experience of encountering Richter's lost originals, while becoming new objects themselves. By engaging the sprawling Chinese photo-painting industry that has grown up in Richter's wake, Allen forefronts the market's incredulous perception of the artist's autonomy—and his right to declare or destroy his own work.

Fabian Marcaccio's vibrant, three-dimensional works, which the artist calls "paintants," combine an over-amplified materiality with politicized subject in what might be considered Richter on steroids. The paintant in the exhibition, titled *Militia*, contains an image of a Michigan paramilitary group encoded in its tangled structure of hand-woven rope, silicone, and alkyd paint. Marcaccio's disintegrating marriage of abstraction and politicized photo-

representation recalls Richter's own controversial *Baader Meinhof* series. <http://paintantscorporation.com>

Rafael Rozendaal's www.colorflip.com site presents a digital monochrome abstraction which transforms with a touch into sheets of color. The virtual stack, theoretically infinite, lasts as long as the viewer keeps turning. Rozendaal's motif echoes Gerhard Richter's *Umgeschlagenes Blatt (Turned Sheet)* series of 1965-67 <http://www.gerhard-richter.com/art/search/?title=blatt> one of the artist's earliest forays into both monochrome and the relationship between representation and abstraction. After at least 15 paintings, Richter's *Turned Sheet* series culminated in an offset print, which the artist intended to be unlimited edition, but which he terminated after signing 739 copies.

Like Richter's *Atlas*, **Hasan Elahi's** *Tracking Transience* is an enormous personal archive he established after being put on FBI list of suspected or potential terrorists. He countered this inclusion by publicly surveilling himself: logging his location and activity 24/7, and releasing a database of hundreds of thousands of images. In the show there is a monumental 18 feet long photograph of 672 toilets Elahi visited since the project's inception. The site itself will be presented live in automode. <http://trackingtransience.net/>

In his works from *Shared Roadway Ahead* series **Rory Donaldson** explores the space in which photography and painting can overlap. Bearing a strong resemblance to Richter's paintings, each of Donaldson's works begins as a digital photograph of a landscape, cityscape, or other urban motif. The image is then manipulated through an emotive selection process until what remains takes on a look of paint that has been dragged, dripped, poured on and wiped off; a digital painterly process that results in stunning abstraction.



Postmasters Gallery located at 459 West 19th Street between 9 and 10 Avenues is open Tuesday through Saturday 11 – 6
Please contact Magdalena Sawon or Paulina Bebecka with questions and image requests
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<http://www.postmastersart.com>