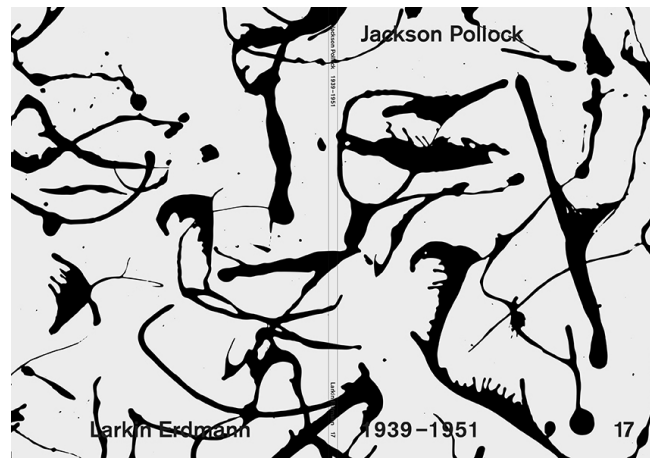


March 2024

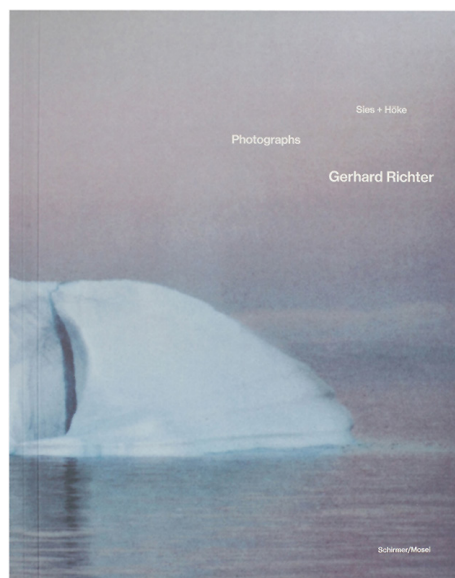
Two new publications: Jackson Pollock – Gerhard Richter



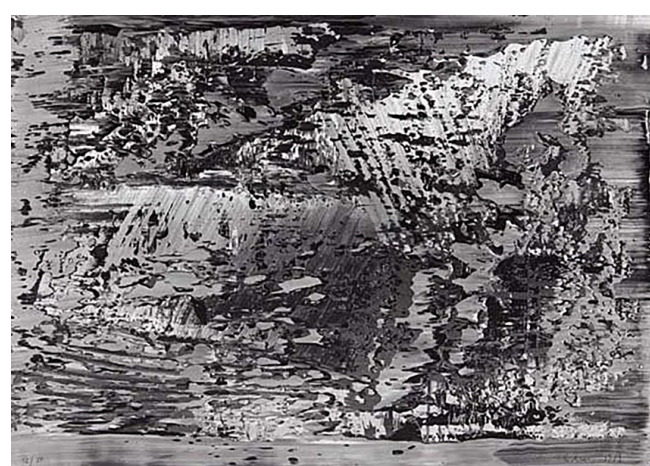
One of these catalogues is devoted to a group of drawings by Jackson Pollock, which have recently been shown at Larkin Erdmann in Zurich – nine sheets from the years 1939–1945, complemented by a painting, and an additional drawing dating from 1951. The opportunity to see Pollock's drawings in Europe is rare, and this significant occasion is documented in the catalogue. Drawing is fundamental to Pollock's practice, given that the line – whether rigid or dynamic – determines the appearance of all his works.



First of all, the drawings testify to the multifaceted impressions Pollock worked through in the early 1940s – the murals of the Mexican painter José Clemente Orozco, the pictorial inventions of Pablo Picasso, whose monumental painting «Guernica» received acclaim in New York in 1937, and finally, the art of the North American Indians and Inuit. On sheets packed full with sketchy figures and script-like elements, Pollock digested the vast plethora of what he had seen and adapted it for his own purposes. He showed little interest in Cubist constructions, but more in connecting figures at will, combining modernist and primitivist formal idioms blithely. A decisive factor in the progress of his work was that the freely flowing line began to detach itself from the figures and transform into a kind of calligraphic drawing. The visual eloquence of Pollock's late drawing vividly reveals his working method, now freed from cubist frameworks and symbols. The drawing is enlivened by the way the line constantly varies in strength, without being subject to any preconceived scheme, increasing and decreasing in intensity, swelling and phasing out. Donald Judd noticed here that Pollock's practice was no longer committed to rendering immediate feelings through expressive brushwork, but a way of bringing immediate sensations to the fore – namely, that which can be seen and perceived prior to any generalization.



The catalogue with Gerhard Richter's photos takes the focus on the artist in the context of a series of exhibitions at Sies + Höke in Düsseldorf further; these began in 2022 with the drawings and continued in 2023 with his overpainted photographs. Now it is the turn of the photographs, which for a large part are related to his work on paintings and prints. These rarely seen photographs prompt a few basic thoughts. Photography and mirroring are the two processes of representation that have fundamentally shaped Richter's practice. Photography and mirroring produce perfect images that are seemingly close at hand and yet equally aloof. Since Richter began to paint from photographs at the end of 1962, his work has been bound up with the medium of photography. A photo reproduces objects in a neutral manner, since the camera is not capable of conceptual recognition, but merely of registering. When painting from a photograph, something comes to the fore which the painter was not previously aware of: the picture gives rise to an epiphany. Copying photos in paint on a surface involves juxtaposing colour hues that ultimately combine to form an image, whether this be a figurative depiction or an abstract painting. It follows that Richter paintings based on photos and his abstract paintings are closely related, both types being based on a photographic way of thinking. This is the essence of the deep distinction between Richter's abstract paintings and all other contemporary abstract painting concepts: "I could do without the photograph without the result not again looking like a painted photograph. So reproductive or immediate are meaningless concepts."



A photograph is the reproduction of an excerpt from reality; while painting from a photo, Richter copies this reproduction. A further step in the same direction is when Richter photographs his own pictures and thus produces a copy of a copy. In this progression, there is no hierarchical relationship between the original and the copy, for the copy is granted the status of a new picture each time. There are just paintings from photos and photos of paintings – in an endless sequence.