



VISUAL ARTS

## Richter scales the heights 50 years on

Gerhard Richter: Colour Charts  
Dominique Lévy, London

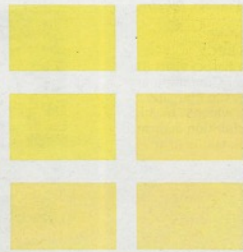
REVIEW BY ALISON COLE



Dominique Lévy's small, beautifully crafted show aims to crystallise a vital moment in Gerhard Richter's career, when he was on his way to becoming one of the most admired and collected artists of our times. The gallery has reunited for the first time a group of Richter's *Colour Charts*, most of which were exhibited in an uncompromising show at the Galerie Friedrich & Dahlem, Munich, in 1966. Not seen together for nigh on 50 years, they mark a shift in Richter's practice from his black-and-white photo paintings to the multicoloured abstract coloured paintings of the Seventies.

At the time of the 1966 show, Richter was quoted as saying: "In January I went to a paint store to buy something, and there I saw the usual sample cards, with the shades of paints in a collection, of the sort familiar to everyone. Suddenly I had to say to myself, 'You couldn't do it more beautifully yourself! They are already perfect paintings.'" Dominique Lévy's display includes an original Duocolour colour sample card for enamel paint from the Richter Archive, together with exhibition ephemera and derivative 1966 reviews: the original exhibition drew attention to the commercial Duocolour paint that Richter used to create his *Colour Charts*, which – like the sample card – are, as far as possible, devoid of aesthetic motive.

Richter's earliest realised *Colour Chart*, *192 Farben* (192 Colours), rendered in oil, succeeds more in theory than in practice. The colours may be chosen at random, and distributed as arbitrarily as possible against a white background that forms a characteristic white grid, but the overall effect is painterly, and the pencil lines around the squares are visible, as is the odd brush hair. Richter quickly abandoned this method, thereafter using enamels to achieve a more neutral, shinier, industrial effect, while focusing on a more limited spectrum. This still creates a compelling atmosphere, arising from colour's very intensity and luminosity and its



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By 1971, Richter had moved from inviting a fellow artist (Blinky Palermo) to call out the names of the colours on the sample charts arbitrarily to applying a mathematically based chance procedure to definitively remove any artistic engagement in the colour selection. The exhibition concludes with a monumental 20-panelled work (*180 Farben*) from 1971, which has only recently resurfaced after being "lost" for four decades.

Richter's *Colour Charts* are related to Minimalism, with its emphasis on "objecthood", but more tellingly to Pop Art – in the way that Richter manages, like Andy Warhol with his Campbell's soup tins, to render commercial multiples as originals. They also, as Richter himself acknowledged, refer to Duchamp's model of conceptual art – using readymades and found objects, allusion and illusion. They mine several deep veins in the history of modern art, while – as this exhibition brilliantly reveals – bringing their own pulsating light to bear.

To 16 January (0203 696 5910)

POP

Squeeze  
Royal Albert Hall, London

REVIEW BY DAVID TAYLOR



After a wry recorded introduction from Matt Berry, a suited and booted Squeeze are rapturously received on to the stage. But whether it's down to the formal surroundings, the audience's reverence, or that they are following a stellar performance from support act Sir John Cooper Clarke, it takes half a dozen songs before the gig really warms up.

Even after a singalong chorus of "Labelled with Love", the audience stays seated until Chris Difford invites them to be

upstanding. From then on we are treated to a beautifully polished set which weaves together Difford and Glenn Tilbrook's timeless back catalogue with highlights from new album *Cradle to the Grave*. Indeed, the eponymous single and "Only 15" get some of the biggest cheers in the early part of the show. Rightfully so as their first new material in 17 years is a cracking return to form.

Naturally, it's the hits from the late Seventies and Eighties which elicit the warmest response. "Tempted" and "Pulling Mussels (from the Shell)" have simply got better with age but nothing can surpass the sublime "Up the Junction", still one of the finest pieces of pop ever recorded; a privilege to witness it live.

## Last Night's TV Sean O'Grady



This Viking saga is less silly than 'Game of Thrones', and less exciting, too

THE LAST KINGDOM BBC2, 9PM • MY SON THE JIHADI CHANNEL 4, 10PM

I am pleased to report the word "turd" was uttered twice during *The Last Kingdom*. It's a good Old English word, short with it, and, like the expression "humping the servant girl", gave a satisfying earthy quality to this eight-part tale of Viking occupation of Saxon Northumbria. Only a pedant would point out that "turd" acquired its pejorative meaning much later, in the 13th century, and found its ultimate usage in the 1970s when it was applied to the Leyland Princess car, christened memorably by its detractors "the flying turd". But I digress.

This is the story of Uhtred, a young man who has what would nowadays be described as "identity issues" and is prone to dismissing his enemies as "turds". The plot, although less silly than *Game of Thrones*, is a little convoluted, so here goes: a millennium ago, princeling Uhtred loses his Saxon father in battle; his lands and inheritance are appropriated by scheming uncle Aelfric; Aelfric becomes a puppet-lord for the ruling Danes; Uhtred is captured/adopted by super-hairy Viking boss Ragnar, and grows into a (super-handsome) warrior. Uhtred's new "family" is murdered by a group of renegade Danes, and Uhtred finds himself alone. He can't work out if he's Saxon, Dane or both. I got all that, but still got a bit distracted by the likes of Scallion, Brida, Sven and Guthrun – and especially Ubba (actually I thought they said "Abba". How camp would that be?).

Bernard Cornwell's historical novels, and their TV adaptations such as this, have been highly successful – the Peninsular War saga *Sharpe* being a fine example – but the writing can be constrained by the stilted clichés of the genre, give or take the odd "turd". Thus: "Every man must be prepared to die"; "He fights like a Dane"; "You're a son to me now"; "Do not forsake England"; "I need to kill someone". Uhtred, with his mixed-up heritage, has the potential to

become a more emotionally complex Prince of Denmark; but so far *The Last Kingdom* is, well, a bit of a flying turd.

A more powerful real-life story of confused identities was *My Son the Jihadi*. Why Channel 4 insists on giving its public service programmes such trashy titles defeats me, but, anyway, this was the compelling account of how Thomas Evans went from pub-going electrician in High Wycombe to Al-Shabaab fighter in Somalia, complete with 13-year-old bride and big hunting-for-infidels knife. There were some clues; a vulnerable boy in trouble with the law; he lost his job after converting to Islam,

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growing a beard and developing attitude problems, thus giving him a grievance; and getting another job "through the mosque", a teenage lad looking for a group to join. Usually in High Wycombe it's the local mods or emos; for Thomas it was the al-Qaeda affiliate in East Africa.

After four years and four days away, his mum discovered on Twitter that he had been shot dead by the Kenyan army during a terror raid, but not before he'd slit a few throats. The only point of hope was the bravery of his mother, Sally Thomas, and the activities of Mike Jervis, a sort of jihadi-buster who has successfully deradicalised 37 young terrorists. In one of Thomas's last calls to his mum, she told him she'd been worried he had died in yet another terror attack, to which he replied, with impeccably twisted logic: "Well, I wouldn't be on the phone to you, would I? 'Cos they don't have phones in paradise." No one can write dialogue like that.



Mixed-up kid: Uhtred, played by Alexander Dreymon JESS BARRATT

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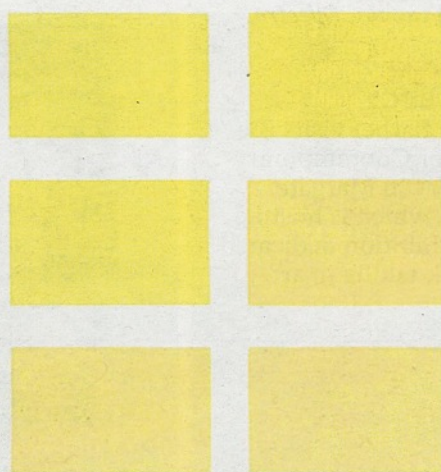
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