

RICHARD CALDICOTT

GOSS GALLERY

RICHARD CALDICOTT

LOOP

Foreword

Elton John

I have been a great admirer of Richard Caldicott's work from the time I attended his first solo show at Hamiltons, London in 1998. His large-scale, colorful still-life photography caught my attention at a time when I was exploring the art of photography in its entire spectrum, from vintage black and white to the productions of contemporary artists like Richard Caldicott. His work immediately became an important part of my collection. I have added pieces to my collection from each series that has been exhibited worldwide. Richard has the unique ability to transform the medium of photography, creating something new, but still using the most traditional technique. Richard is one of those artists who elevates photography to an important and recognized form of contemporary expression. I am honored to have been asked to write a foreword to the catalogue of his show at Goss Gallery in Texas. I feel certain this will mark the beginning of a long-lasting relationship between Richard and my dear friend Kenny Goss. I wish both Richard and Kenny much success for this new and exciting project. I have had the privilege to preview this body of work and I am confident that Richard Caldicott's first exhibition in Dallas, at Goss Gallery, will be received with a great deal of enthusiasm and interest.

Richard Caldicott

Fragmentation, Abstraction, Post-abstraction and De-abstraction

Jonathan Bell

At first glimpse, the work of Richard Caldicott speaks little of modernism's century-long journey and appears concerned instead with creating detached, ahistorical compositions. Yet within these fragmented views one can discern multiple interpretations, the most central of which is modernism's contemporary role and image. Following early experimentation with collage, Caldicott experimented with work that fell broadly into the still life genre, with compositions that were constructed – literally – from a series of everyday objects, most memorably Tupperware containers. There was a playful irony in this particular source material, given the way in which consumer aspirations appear to follow unlikely yet ultimately predictable routes through the past strata of material culture, elevating the everyday into contemporary fetishes before moving on to something else, and underlying subtle conflicts remain central to his work.

Caldicott still works with collage and recent pieces have demonstrated a deliberate honesty about making reference to, say, modernist architecture, using dissembled floor plans, or fragmented diagrammatic elements. For the lateral-minded viewer these works superficially evoke a roll-call of celebrated modernist image-makers – Judd, Prouvé, Mendelsohn, Foster, Schindler, van der Rohe, Mondrian, Rietveld, Malevich, et al. However, one must consider that in the decades following their signature works, these artists have themselves been abstracted, reduced to a series of signature works, frozen images that illustrate a long-accepted – and largely unchanging – story of modernism.

Classical art provided the viewer with a fixed perspective, an overall view that cannot change in order to give the artist complete control over the viewer's response: the composition *directs* the viewer's gaze. Classical architecture played a similarly dominant role, providing key vistas and alignments that set out scale, hierarchies and social structure; Versailles as a physical manifestation of the Sun King's divinity, or a law court as an imposing source of order and power. Abstract art was primarily a challenge to this hierarchy, a means of testing the previously accepted limits of artistic representation. At first, it was an aesthetic movement, one which evolved into an intellectual discussion, then a visual paean to the nascent machine age that was to be irreparably scarred by the chaos of the century's conflicts. From then on, the abstraction generated by the machine – be it the printing press, the camera, the railway, automobile, aeroplane or even the explosion of a 1,000 pound shell – was constrained by politics, a series of ideas that

strove for some kind of theological consistency in the turbulent inter-war period, often marshalled for conflicting ideologies.

Modernism began in opposition to classical formality but quickly evolved its own hierarchies. For the most part, the movement evoked rigour and stasis, with no room for expressionism or emotion. In common with several contemporary practitioners of art and architecture, Caldicott has chosen to explore the potential for modernism to evoke emotion through pure form. In a culture predicated on chaos and unpredictability, his work incorporates one of the most precious contemporary commodities – time – and gives it a central role in how an object or place is perceived. Time, conveyed through the devices of fragmentation, multiple viewpoints and long exposures, opens up the formality of static compositions.

Caldicott acknowledges that there is a certain luxury in the creation of pure composition, a luxury denied even the most avant-garde architect or designer. It's been said that his work is a reaction against the post-modern excesses of the late 80s and 90s, and part of a general movement towards the reclamation and reappropriation of the imagery – and to a certain extent – the aims of the modernist programme. But Caldicott's work goes further. Over the course of the twentieth century, modernism revealed itself to be a chimera, rather than a straightforward and unassailable doctrine representing the intersection of form, function and a social programme. Chimeric modernism began with the almost immediate evacuation of the latter, as art and architecture became harnessed in the service of covert American foreign policy goals¹, or the International Style's evolution into a symbol of corporate might, and the Bauhaus-style villa's slow metamorphosis into an architecture of elitism.

Through his careful, deliberate fragmentations, Caldicott urges us to go beyond these static interpretations, exploring modernist form: a search, if you like, for the romantic. Such an approach has parallels with Peter Doig's paintings of early modernist masterworks in a romanticised, verdant landscape, or the epic architectural collages of David Thorpe. At its heart is the question of what it means to be modern, and what – if any – emotions can, and should, be sourced from such defined order. Why did modernist spaces find it so difficult to accommodate human scale and emotion? Despite the avowed intentions of many architects – some of whom Caldicott has previously drawn upon for his earlier series – modernism retains a dehumanised image. Caldicott seeks to return the fleeting moment to modernism, stripping away its rigour and apparent inflexibility in a series of glimpses. He acknowledges contemporary architects and designers taking a similar approach, and Caldicott is sympathetic to their ambitions; he shares the aim of re-appropriating modernism's formal language with his abstract

compositions. Perhaps this is heretical, but it's also defiantly anti-post-modernist, a means of eking further meaning from what have slowly evolved into static cultural landmarks. While other artists have explored this contemporary stillness – the depictions of Ed Ruscha and, more recently, Julian Opie, for example, Caldicott's sympathies lie with a more fragmented approach. There may be similar connections and inspirations, certainly, but Caldicott's sources are varied and eclectic. Even though the work has no nostalgic overtones – it's avowedly ahistorical – contemporary architectural themes prevail.

There are no underlying data sources in Caldicott's work, no extrapolations from telling statistics woven into the pattern, or symbolic colour palettes. Instead, Caldicott composes his imagery in a painstaking way, cutting and assembling paper in the physical realm before standing back and assessing, then clicking the shutter. There are further stages: the bringing together of two compositions in a single frame to create the densely layered structures, and then finally the proofing stage as a means of enhancing and trimming, fine-tuning the image before it is printed at scale.

This work seeks to reclaim abstraction's aesthetic roots, a means of generating art without overt agenda, carefully considered yet without an overbearing political or social structure, and also explore the multiple viewpoint and glimpses generated by fragmentation. For many, such an approach appears oxymoronic, counter to the inherent properties of contemporary artistic production; that it must be challenging and, if possible, overturn an old order in favour of something new. Caldicott's is an artistic response to modernism, a genre that has remained largely self-contained, hermetically-sealed against external critical thinking. One of the central themes of this work is the use of the modern house as a generator of form, rather than a fixed political statement or even, in line with more contemporary strands of thinking, as an additional element of 'lifestyle.' This approach is closer to the formal gymnastics of the 21st architectural avant-garde, which enjoys far wider dissemination with the culture at large.

The photographic pieces have a rare physicality, with layered structures that are ostensibly characteristic of painterly and sculptural abstraction, yet in a post-abstract age are allowed to stand alone. It wasn't until the Sixteenth Century that shadows and perspective began to make their contribution to painting, deepening the canvas in an allegiance of art and science, turning the flat pictorial plane into a space of wonder, with perspective considered a kind of cosmic confidence trick. Artists learned to master these devices. With new technology came the realisation that the machine age gave rise to inevitable abstractions, as the shutter jammed and the distorted effect of multiple exposure prints was transferred from failed photographic plate to

avant-garde canvasses. Self-conscious abstraction was a means of exploring the trials and triumphs of modernity, whereas Caldicott deals not in subverting reality, but in building up new forms from underlying geometrical constants. The resulting images are isolated from their sources, with bold colour palettes and a satisfying level of depth created by the overlaying process.

The mechanically-reproduced work of art has evolved considerably throughout the century, culminating in Walter Benjamin's mourned 'aura' – 'that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art'². A contemporary observer might note that electronic duplication is the primary means of visual communication, and that the original work of art has all but vanished. This is a world based on image, their novelty accelerated by digital processes. Society is seemingly hungry to consume – and generate – new imagery, adapting them for downloadable wallpapers, desktop themes, photo-sharing, weblogs, phone cameras, and countless other devices that promise infinite customisation. Yet it is also a visually degraded culture, where artefacts are squeezed and stretched to email, download and share. The object has become more transient, less reliant on the physical realm – some of them may indeed never enter the physical realm, just as the newer generations will never know the physical form of media that only a few decades before seemed permanent and unchanging – the compact cassette tape, VHS, vinyl record, even the CD. Just as the jpeg data format and mp3 audio format represent a sliding scale of quality, gradually clipping out levels of detail, grain and sharpness, so our cultural memories of slowness recede into the background.

Though Caldicott's work skirts around the edge of processes described above, the artist's primary aim is to deliberately evoke a dynamic fragmentary moment, translating the remnants of a physical object, once fixed and reliable, into something with a sense of fleeting impermanence. Admittedly, these works might have more claims to permanence than an image taken with a phone camera, for example, but in truth their survivability is an unknown quantity: in historical terms, digital-based imagery is embryonic. Humankind is moving into the future towing a vast accumulation of cultural production, products whose slender shelf lives are now turning into half lives of use value and exponentially longer centuries of potential decay. The things that mean the most to us – the least superficial – are those that face erasure. We are condemning ourselves to a future of eternal back-ups, constantly updating the means of preserving the past so as to take it with us. Yet paradoxically our digitised memories are combined with a disposable visual culture, guided by a constellation of slowly evolving symbols, colours, names, labels, logos, brands, trademarks, and signs.

Caldicott's artistic furrow is ploughed not in open revolt but in quiet opposition to this daily unspooling of imagery. Digital processes are used, but speed and cloning aren't the issue. Speed is now a universal experience, and while technology remains at the heart of the world's most-pressing problems, there are many who would counter that it also provides us with the best hope of salvation, a return to Modernism's initial, innocent, optimism. Instead, Caldicott has progressed from assemblage-style collage compositions through to the arrangement of real objects in space, focusing on pure form and colour, composing things in an almost notational, rhythmic way. This current series marks a departure from modernist serenity towards a focus on dynamism and force, compositions that mimic the forces of explosions and fractures.

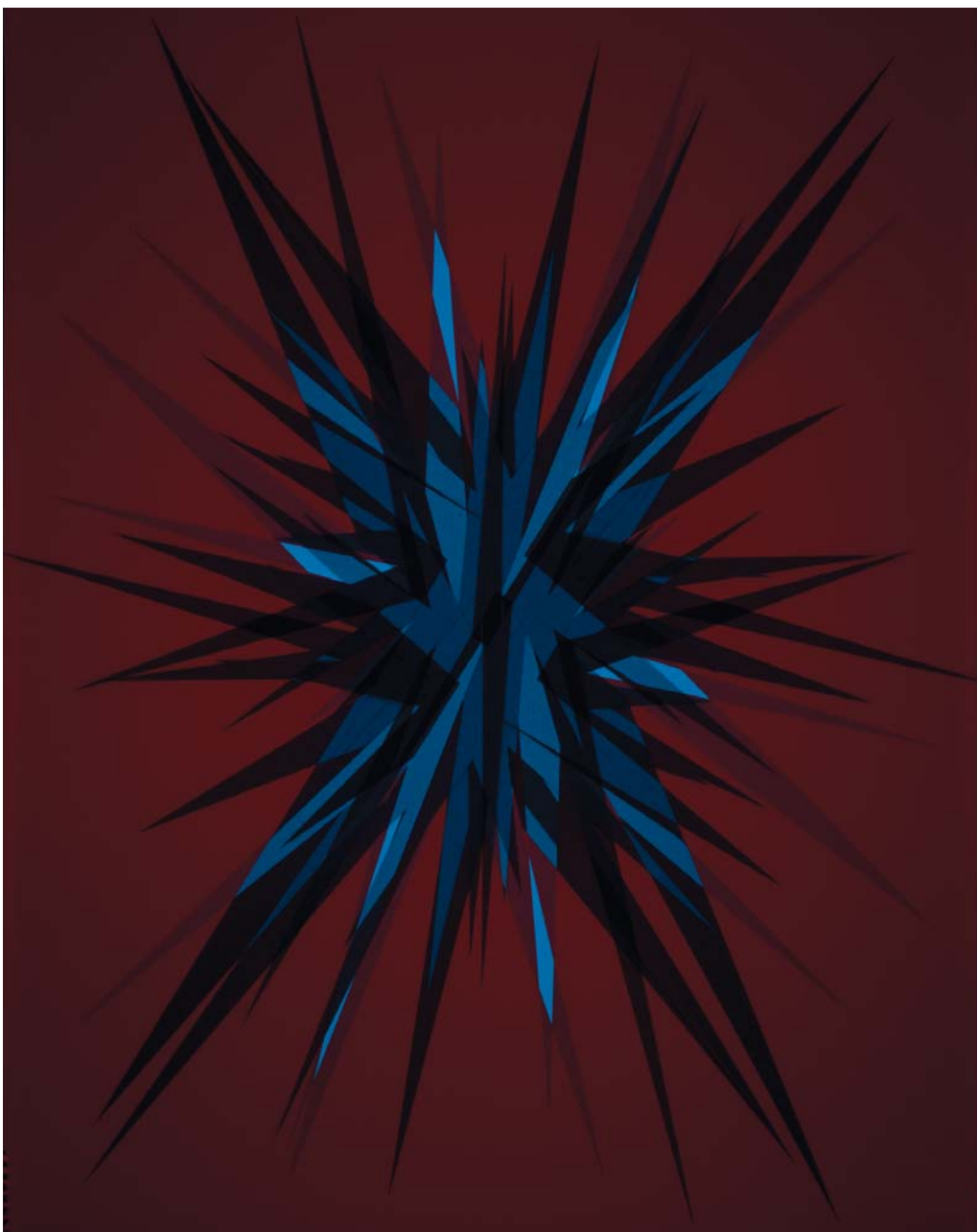
Today, abstraction serves many purposes. A daily paper is an abstraction, a filter, a barrier between the truth and the perceived truth, creating a series of individual realities. Today, we know that we can shape our realities, and that abstraction is just a means of mediating. Whereas when abstraction was a new concept, the masses saw it not as a new way of seeing, but as a deliberate destruction of the existing orders. Contemporary consumer culture treats the past like an assemblage, a giant *merzbaum*, that one can clip from like a shrub, then sample, copy, imitate, steal, pay homage to, and subvert. Caldicott is against such ostentatious novelty, instead inviting us to reconsider the tumultuous speed of cultural production and take a considered step back from the maelstrom. We now take abstraction for granted: it has been subsumed into popular culture.

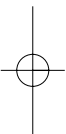
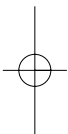
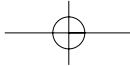
Caldicott's work strives against this new order, by acknowledging the role of the fleeting moment and the subconscious in the interpretation of space. Artistic Constructivism began by using form and composition as emotional resonator, an exploration of the power of pure form as opposed to the loaded narrative of the historian. Yet since abstraction ascended to the mainstream and followed modernist art and architecture to adopt a similarly dominant, static viewpoint, pure composition has lost its power to create a fresh angle. Richard Caldicott has taken what was once solid and static and urged us to re-visit it, a glimpse past the underlying framework into a more layered, complex state. This is work that requires a degree of self-interpretation, but rewards a new way of looking with fresh eyes on the forms that continue to shape contemporary life.

1. See *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters*, Frances Stonor Saunders, The New Press, New York, 1999, and *Building the Cold War: Hilton International Hotels and Modern Architecture*, Annabel Jane Wharton, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2001
2. Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', 1936

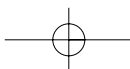
ATTRACTER
SEE-SAW
MOBILE
DOUBLE FOLD
STELLAR
CARTOON
ROTATE
LOOP
BLOCKER
GLYPH
BACKDROP
COUPLET
STEREO
RIFF 1
RIFF 2
RIFF 3
FILTER
TWISTER

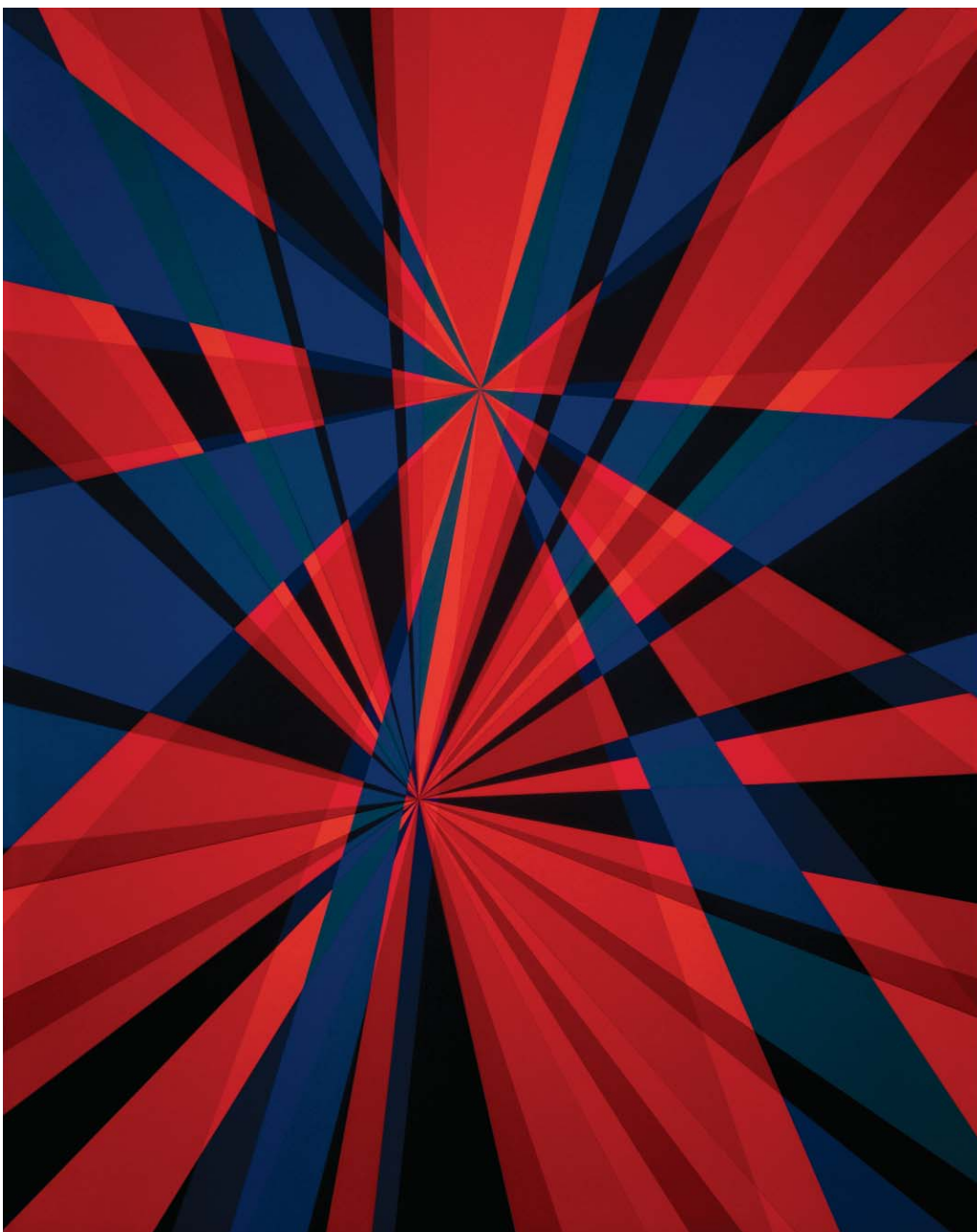
Attractor 2005





See-Saw 2004

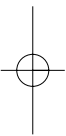
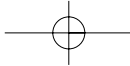




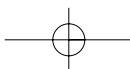


Mobile 2005

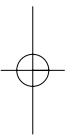
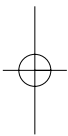
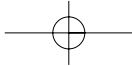




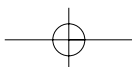
Double Fold 2005

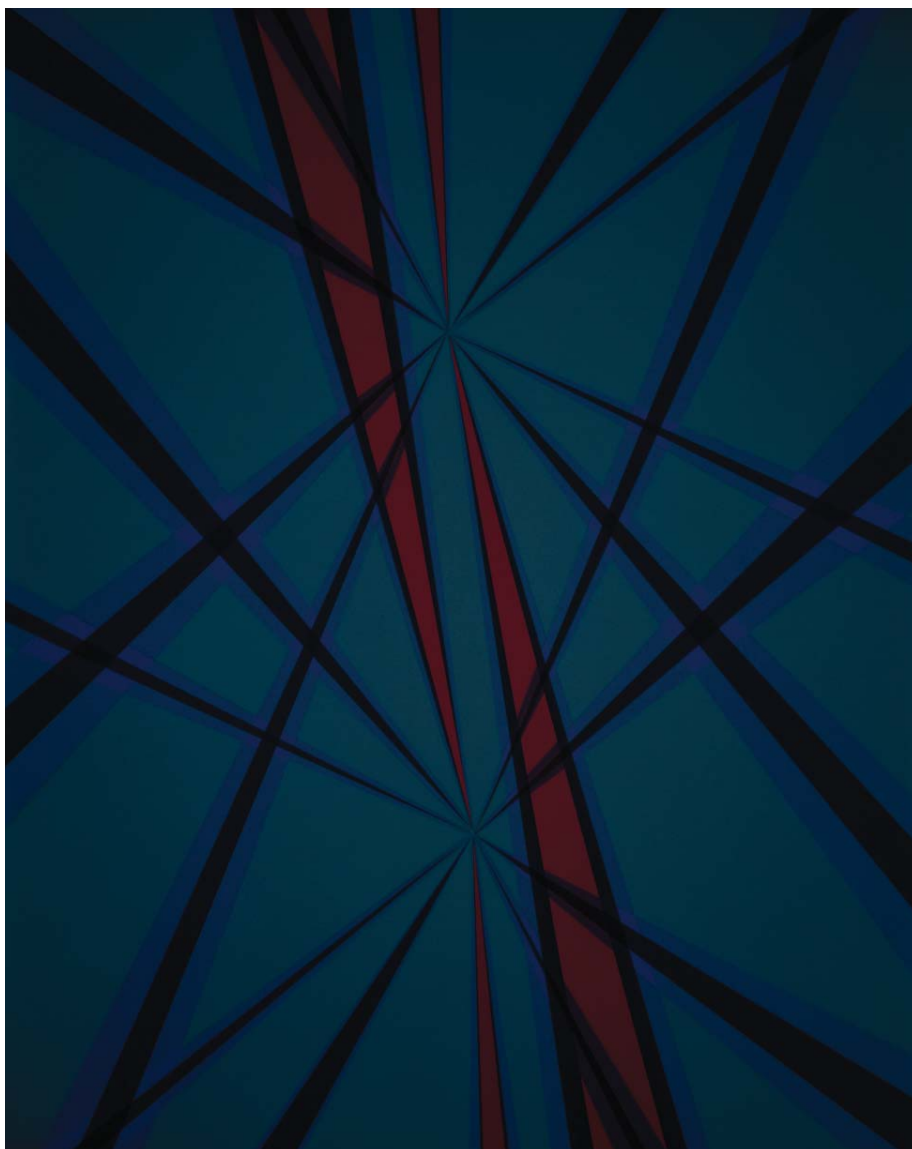


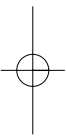
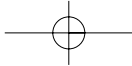




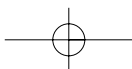
Stellar 2004

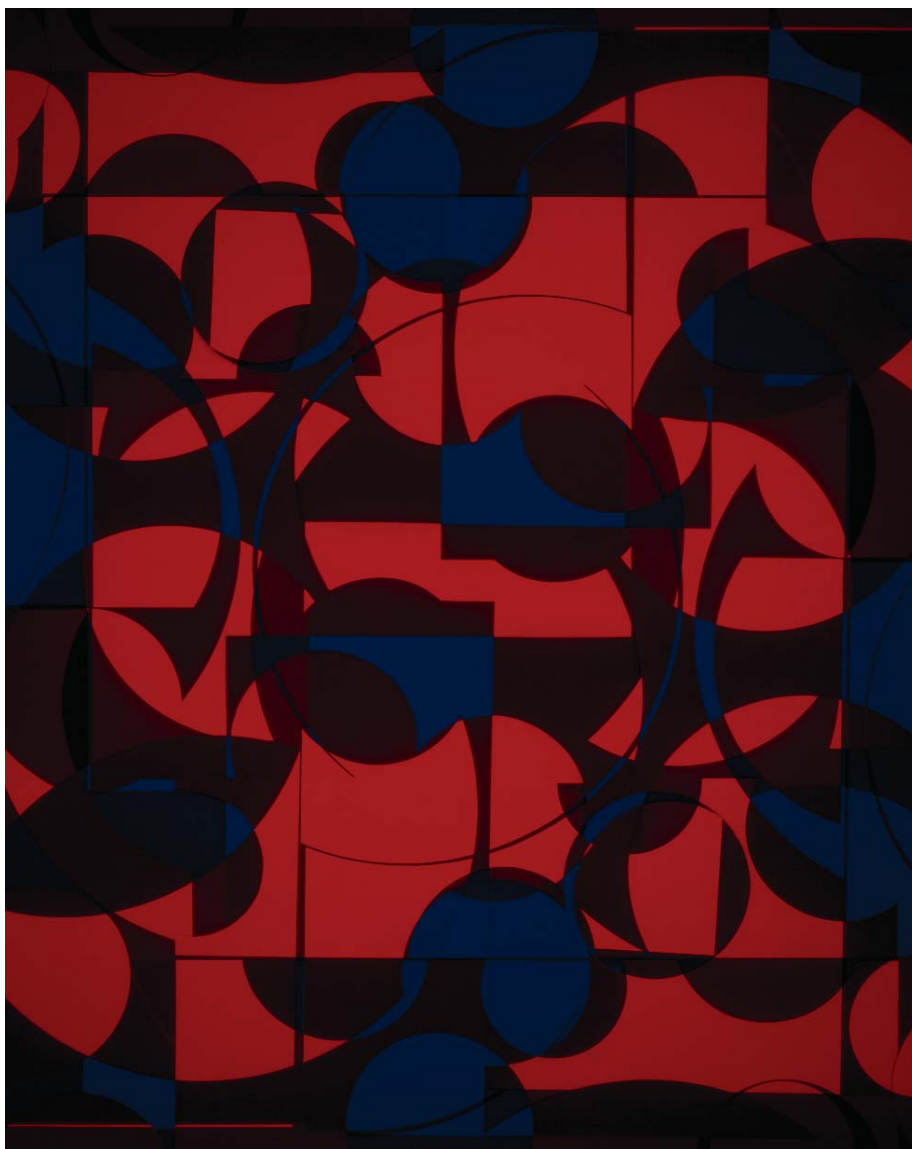






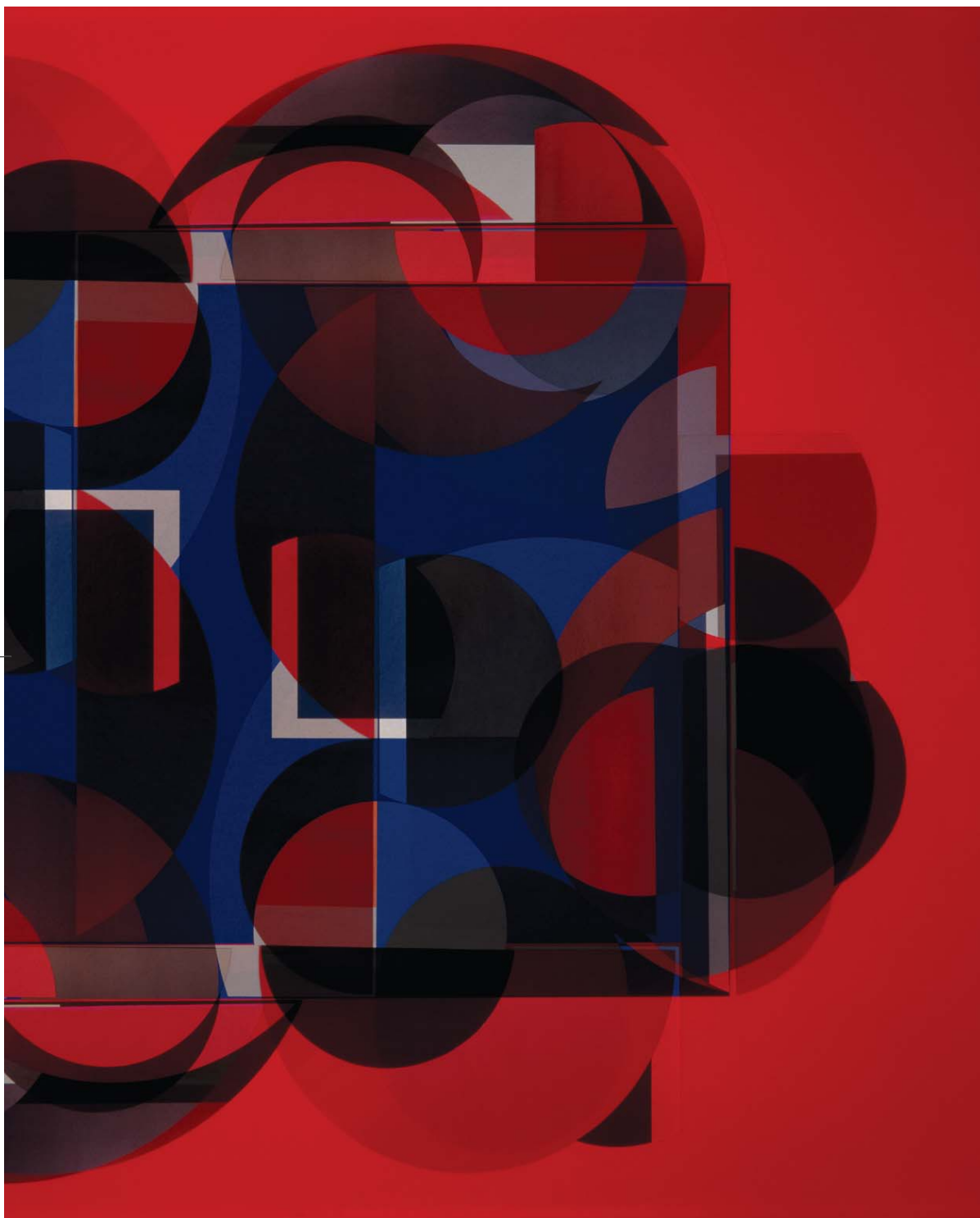
Cartoon 2005







Rotate 2005



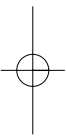
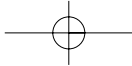


Loop 2005

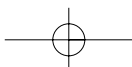


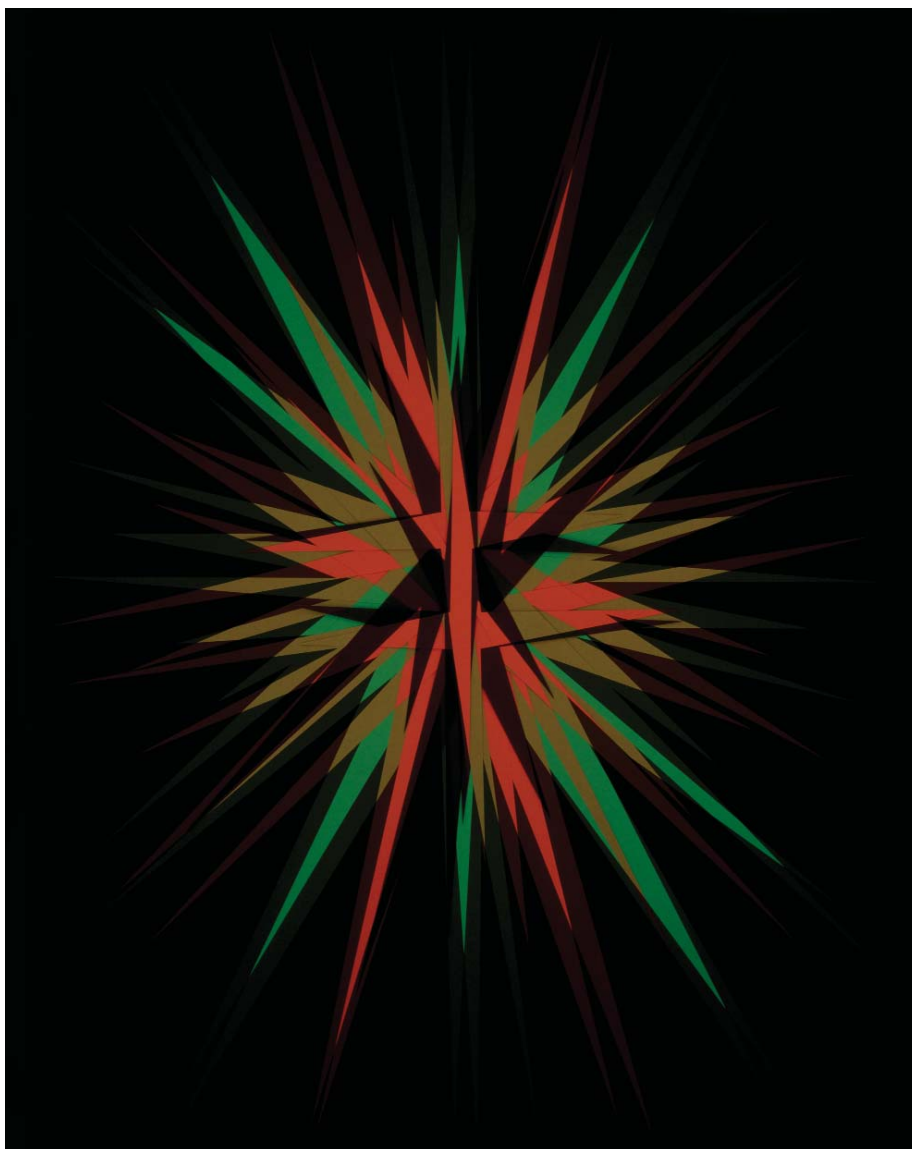
Blocker 2005

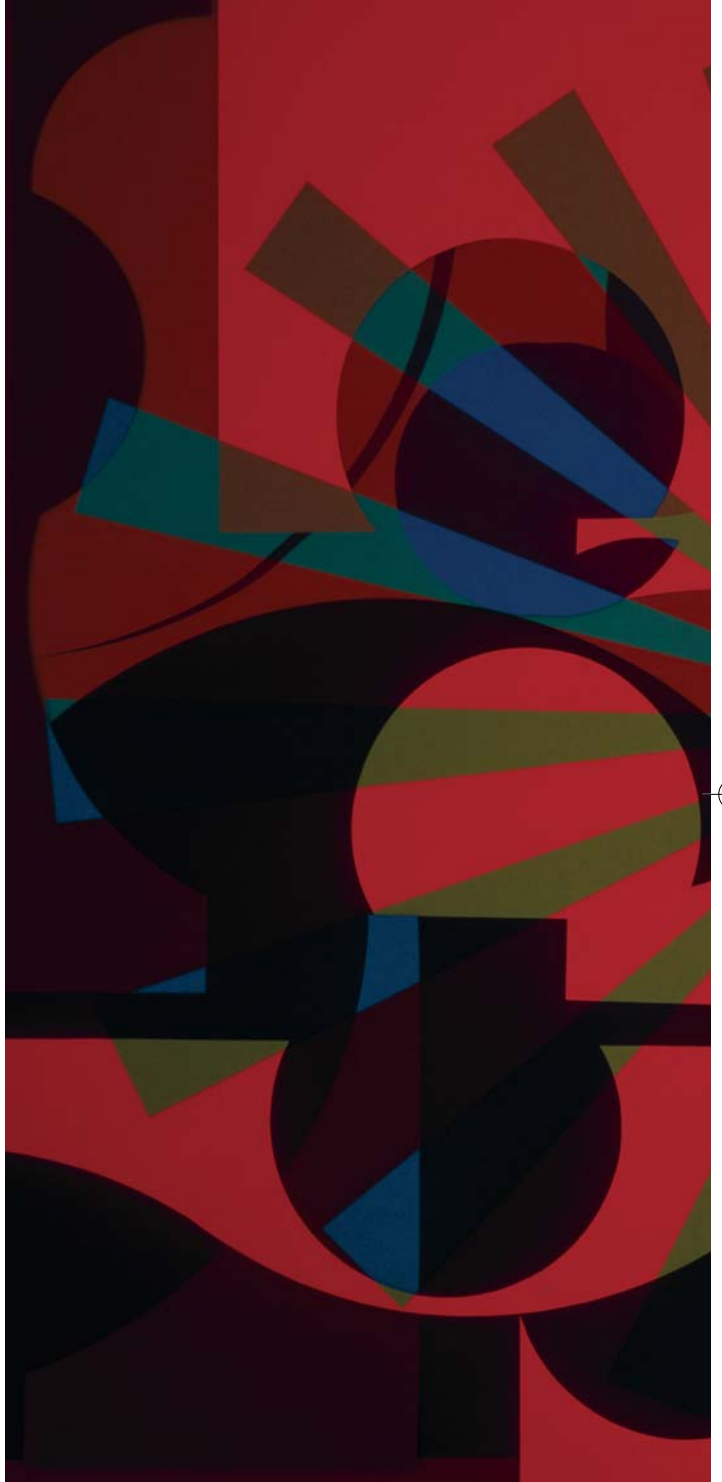




Glyph 2005





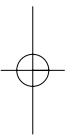
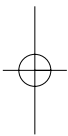
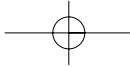


Backdrop 2005

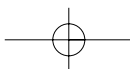


Couplet 2005

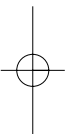
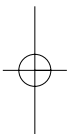
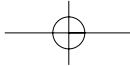




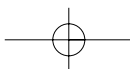
Stereo 2005

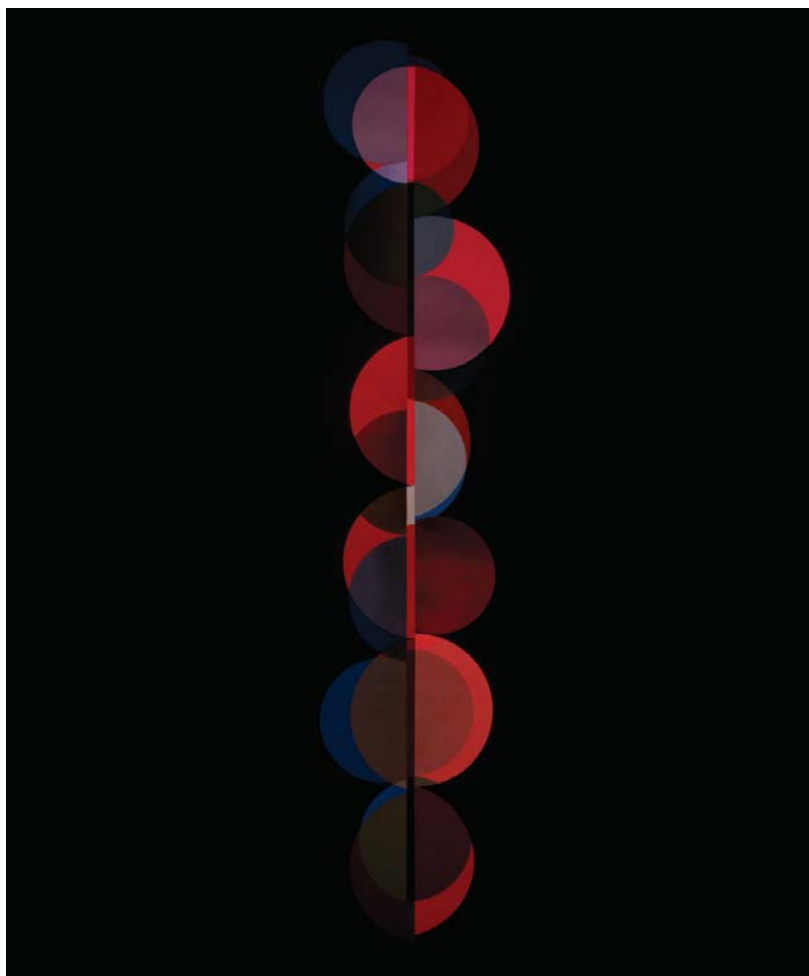


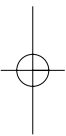
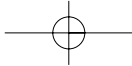




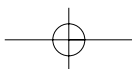
Riff 1 2005

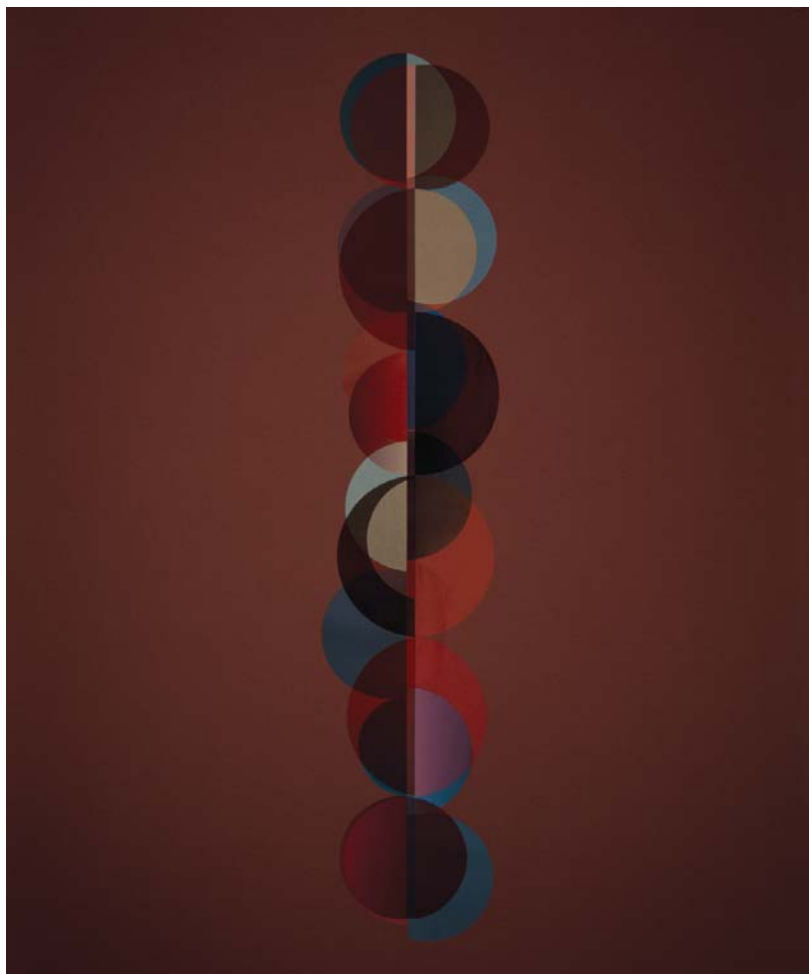


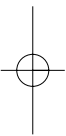
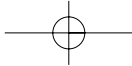




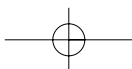
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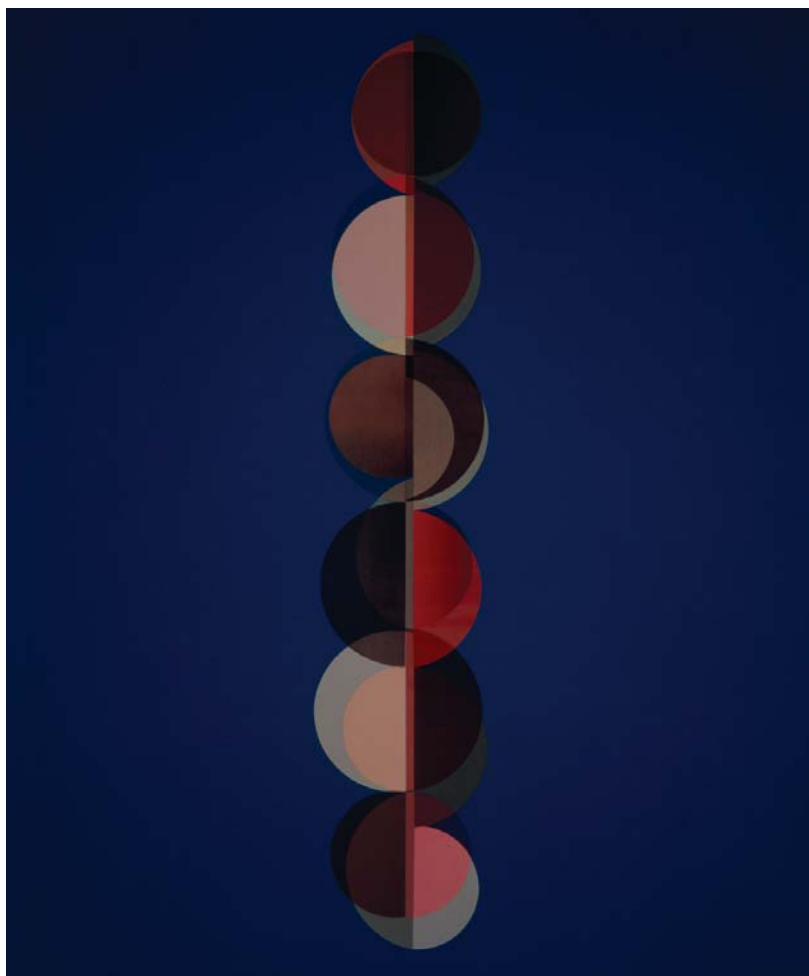




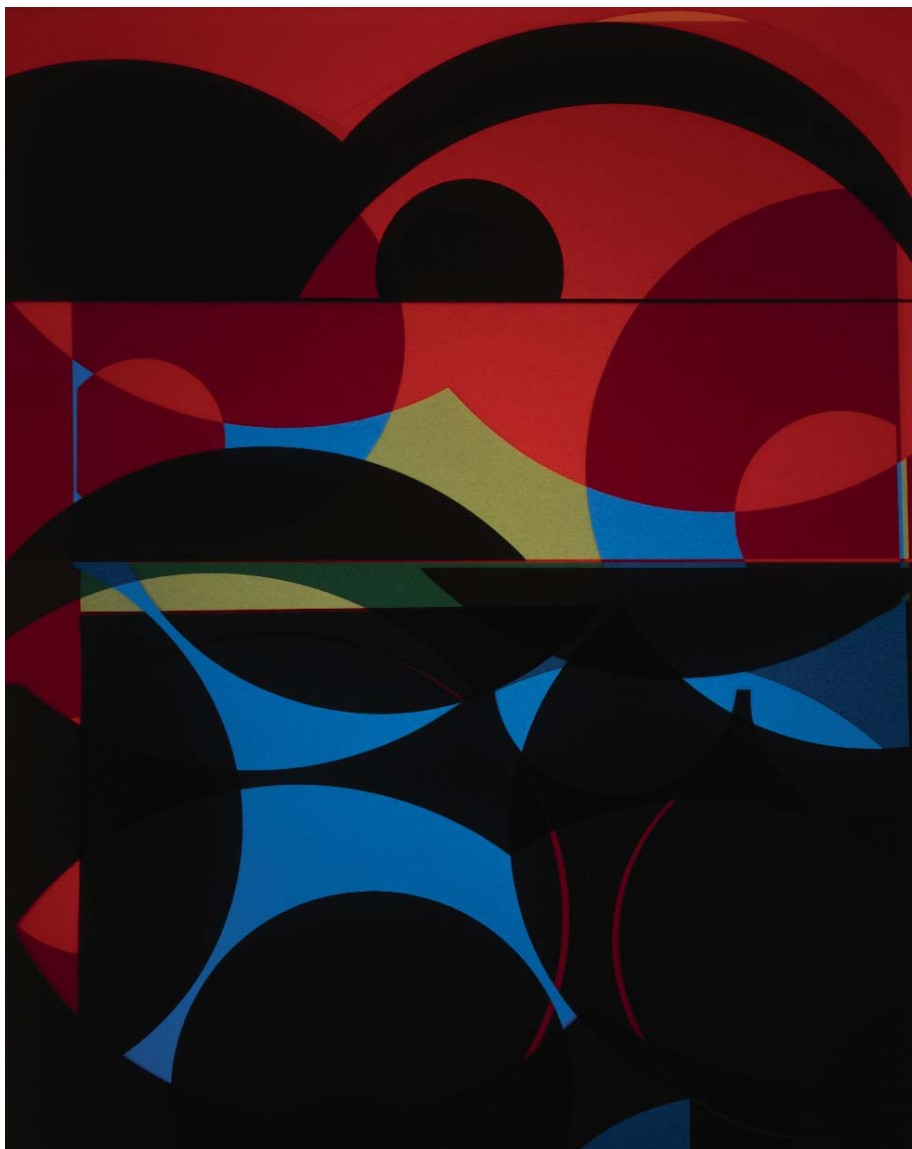


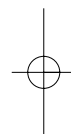
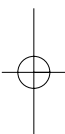
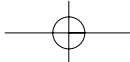
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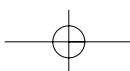


Filter 2005





Twister 2004





List of works

Attractor 2005
C-Print and Diasec
79 × 63 inches
200 × 160 cm
Edition of 3

See-saw 2004
C-Print and Diasec
79 × 63 inches
200 × 160 cm
Edition of 3

Mobile 2005
C-Print and Diasec
63 × 79 inches
160 × 200 cm
Edition of 3

Double fold 2005
C-Print and Diasec
50 × 40 inches
127 × 101.6 cm
Edition of 5

Stellar 2004
C-Print and Diasec
50 × 40 inches
127 × 101.6 cm
Edition of 5

Cartoon 2005
C-Print and Diasec
50 × 40 inches
127 × 101.6 cm
Edition of 5

Rotate 2005
C-Print and Diasec
40 × 50 inches
101.6 × 127 cm
Edition of 5

Loop 2005
C-Print and Diasec
40 × 50 inches
101.6 × 127 cm
Edition of 5

Blocker 2005
C-Print and Diasec
50 × 40 inches
127 × 101.6 cm
Edition of 5

Glyph 2005
C-Print and Diasec
50 × 40 inches
127 × 101.6 cm
Edition of 5

Backdrop 2005
C-Print and Diasec
40 × 50 inches
101.6 × 127 cm
Edition of 5

Couplet 2005
C-Print and Diasec
50 × 40 inches
127 × 101.6 cm
Edition of 5

Stereo 2005
C-Print and Diasec
50 × 40 inches
127 × 101.6 cm
Edition of 5

Riff 1 2005
C-Print and Diasec
24 × 20 inches
61 × 50.8 cm
Edition of 5

Riff 2 2005
C-Print and Diasec
24 × 20 inches
61 × 50.8 cm
Edition of 5

Riff 3 2005
C-Print and Diasec
24 × 20 inches
61 × 50.8 cm
Edition of 5

Filter 2005
C-Print and Diasec
50 × 40 inches
127 × 101.6 cm
Edition of 5

Twister 2004
C-Print and Diasec
50 × 40 inches
127 × 101.6 cm
Edition of 5

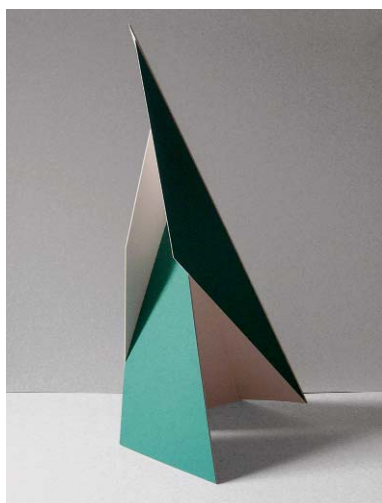
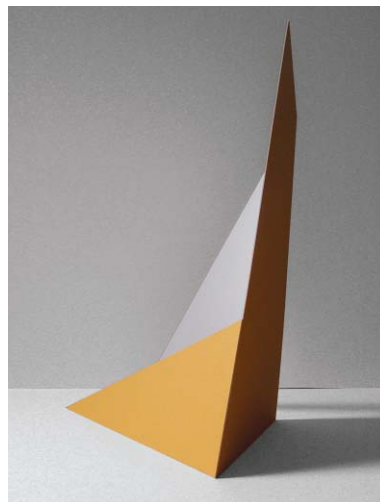
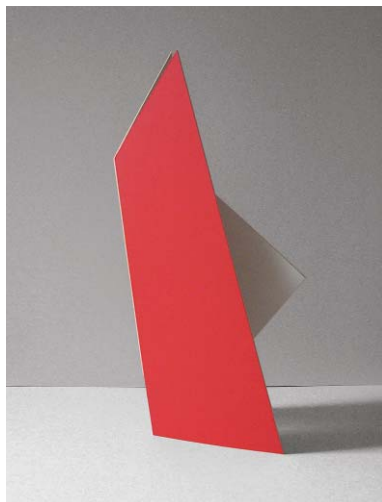
Models for sculpture:

Pistol 2005
Cardboard model
 $15\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{1}{2} \times 6\frac{1}{2}$ inches
 $39.4 \times 11.5 \times 16.5$ cm

Acrobat 2005
Cardboard model
 $16\frac{1}{2} \times 6\frac{1}{4} \times 10$ inches
 $24 \times 16 \times 25.4$ cm

Trap 2005
Cardboard model
 $15\frac{1}{2} \times 7\frac{1}{2} \times 5\frac{3}{4}$ inches
 $39.4 \times 19 \times 14.7$ cm

Jargon 2005
Cardboard model
 $14 \times 5\frac{1}{4} \times 8\frac{3}{4}$ inches
 $35.5 \times 13.5 \times 22.3$ cm



Richard Caldicott**Biography**

- 1962 Born in Leicester, England
Lives and works in London
- 1988–92 Royal College of Art, Research Fellow
- 1984–87 Royal College of Art, MA
- 1981–84 Middlesex Polytechnic, BA
- 1980–81 Loughborough College of Art & Design

Solo Exhibitions

- 2005 Loop, Goss Gallery, Dallas, Texas
(catalogue)
- 2004 Richard Caldicott, New Work,
Hamiltons, London (catalogue)
Ariel Meyerowitz Gallery, New York
- 2002 Hamiltons, London (catalogue)
Ariel Meyerowitz Gallery, New York
- 2000 Finesilver Gallery, San Antonio, Texas
Hamiltons, London
Camera Work, Berlin
- 1999 Hamiltons, London
Succession, London
- 1998 Dorothee De Pauw Gallery, Brussels
- 1997 On the Entity of Objects/Vom Dasein der
Gegenstände (with Christopher Muller),
Kunstmuseum Bonn (catalogue)

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2005 Concrete Photography, Museum im
Kulturspeicher Würzburg, Germany
Still Life and Stilled Lives, A Group Show,
Ariel Meyerowitz Gallery, New York
- 2004 Paris Photo '04, Hamiltons
'Cleanliness', Sara Meltzer Gallery,
New York
Group Exhibition, Hamiltons, London
The Photography Show, AIPAD/Ariel
Meyerowitz Gallery, New York
Optic Nerve, Photofusion Gallery, London
- 2003 Optic Nerve-Abstract Colour Photography,
curated by Roderick Packe, Wolsey Art
Gallery, Christchurch Mansion, Ipswich
(catalogue)
Fresh Art Auction, Santa Monica Museum of
Modern Art, Santa Monica, CA.
Prima Facie, curated by Ellen Carey, Nina
Freudenheim Fine Art, Buffalo, New York
Paris Photo '03, Hamiltons
Lichtzeichnungen, Galerie f5.6, Munich
- 2002 The Armoury Photography Fair, Ariel
Meyerowitz Gallery, New York
Abstract Photography, Hunterdon Museum
of Art, New Jersey, New York
Supercellular! Galerie Valerie Cueto, Paris
Paris Photo '02, Hamiltons
- 2001 Fresh, Jane Jackson Fine Art, Atlanta,
Georgia
Paris Photo '01, Hamiltons
Art Brussels 2001, Hamiltons/
Dorothee De Pauw Gallery
Art Chicago 2001, Finesilver Gallery
- 2000 Art Basel 31. Hamiltons
Art Brussels 2000, Hamiltons/
Dorothee De Pauw Gallery
Art2000, 12th London Contemporary Art
Fair. Houldsworth Fine Art

- 1999 The Photography Show, AIPAD/Hamiltons, New York
Still, Houldsworth Fine Art, London
Vintage Show, Hamiltons, London
Art Brussels '99. Dorothee De Pauw Gallery/Hamiltons (catalogue)
Art Basel 30. Hamiltons (catalogue)
Silent Presence: Contemporary Still-Life Photography, Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden
Travelling to Kunstverein Bielefeld, March-April 2000 (catalogue)
FIAC, Paris. Hamiltons/Dorothee De Pauw Gallery (catalogue)
Paris Photo '99, Hamiltons
The Photography Show, AIPAD/Hamiltons, New York
- 1998 Art Brussels '98, Hamiltons, (catalogue)
Out of Frame, curated by Paul Hedge, Hamiltons, London
Under/Exposed, XpoSeptember Stockholm Fotofestival, (catalogue)
The Discerning Eye, Mall Galleries, London
Paris Photo '98. Hamiltons (catalogue)
- 1997 Ordinaire/Ordinary, Miller et Bertaux, Paris
Art Frankfurt, Almut Gerber Gallery, Köln
- 1996 A Glass of Water, Chelsea Arts Center, New York
The Art Exchange, Kagan Martos Gallery, 60 Broad St, New York
- 1995 Caldicott, Clegg & Guttman, Gussin, McDonough, Muller, Smith, Räume für neue Kunst- Rolf Hengesbach, Wuppertal
Art Basel 26. Räume für neue Kunst- Rolf Hengesbach
Art Köln. Räume für neue Kunst- Rolf Hengesbach
- 1994 Goll, Mark Boote Gallery, New York
Close Encounters, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham
Foto 1, curated by Christian Anstice, 152c Brick Lane, London
- 1993 Xenografia Nomadic Wall, (Video Installation Project) curated by Umberto Scrocca, 45th Venice Biennale
- 1992 Seventeen, British and American Artists, Greenwich St, New York (catalogue)
Love at First Sight, curated by Graham Gussin, The Showroom, London
In and Out, Back and Forth, 578 Broadway, New York (catalogue)
How Noisy Everything Grows, curated by Marigold, Royal College of Art, London (catalogue)
7th Australian International Video Festival (catalogue)
15th Tokyo Video Festival
- 1991 Five British Artists / Fünf Britische Künstler, curated by Christa Gather, Thomas Backhaus Galerie, Düsseldorf (catalogue)
- 1990 From a Position of Safety, Citicorp, London
Harvest Beige, Citicorp, London
Original Copies, Royal College of Art, London. Travelled:
National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto.
Axis Gallery, Tokyo, Century Plaza, Nagoya (catalogue)
- 1988 Project Title, Chrome Factory, London
- 1985 Whitworth Young Contemporaries, Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester
- 1984 Stowells Trophy, The Royal Academy, London (catalogue)
New Contemporaries, ICA, London (catalogue)
- 1983 Stowells Trophy, The Royal Academy, London (catalogue)
- Awards**
- 1991 Grants to Artists, British Council
- 1986 Cité International des Arts, RCA
Paris Studio Award
- Collections**
- Art Lab, Tokyo
BP Amoco, London
Dorothee De Pauw, Brussels
Electronic Media Arts, Glebe, Australia
Gert Elfering, Miami
Goldman Sachs International, London
Karl Blossfeldt / Albert Renger-Patzsch, Archiv Ann und Jürgen Wilde, Köln
Kenny Goss and George Michael, Dallas / London
Kunstmuseum Bonn
Leon Constantiner, New York
Merrill Lynch International Bank, London
Miller et Bertaux, Paris
Museo of Electrographie, Cuenca, Spain
Peter Svennilson, Stockholm
Richard James, London
Simon and Yasmin Le Bon, London
Sir Elton John, London
Tara Bernerd, London
- Commissions**
- BP Amoco, London

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