

Richard Caldicott Script

Maximum difference: Repetition and transformation, precision and intuition, in the work of Richard Caldicott

Derek Horton

One of the many achievements of the 2004 exhibition, <u>A Minimal Future?</u>
<u>Art As Object, 1958–1968</u> in Los Angeles, was to give some prominence to John Chamberlain's 'Rock and Roller' paintings from the mid 1960's.

Named after performers of the time from the Beach Boys to the Shangri-Las, Chamberlain made over fifty of them between 1963 and 1965. Small, flat and contemplative, they are the antithesis of the monumental welded sculptures made by assembling and spray-painting twisted and dented automobile panels for which Chamberlain is much more well known. Built up of as many as a hundred layers of transparent colour, the paintings use the medium of sprayed lacquer too, but applied to flat square panels of masonite or formica to form variations on a square grid pattern, with a simplicity of form that is in direct contrast to the richness, subtlety and depth of their colour.

Several aspects of these paintings are significant to my response to Richard Caldicott's latest work, and all have to do with repetition and its capacity to generate difference: their repeated grid structure; their serial production, and their manipulation of multiple transparent layers to create translucent blocks of colour. "What would life be like if there was no repetition?" asked the 19th century philosopher Kierkegaard, and subsequently the productive relationship of repetition and difference has itself repeatedly occurred as an important field of exploration for many practices rooted in modernity and modernism. That it continues to offer rich potential is evidenced in the endlessly subtle play of repetition and difference in Caldicott's work.

In writing previously about Caldicott, I have emphasised his work's relationship with architectural and musical structures deriving from the values of modernism as much as its connection with painting. My reading of the <u>Untitled Constructions</u> of 2003, first shown in 2004, for instance was primarily through architectural references.³ This stems in part from my insistence on the status of his works as 'objects' rather than 'pictures'. This gives them a direct relationship to other objects in the world, and a concomitant connection to the utopian aspirations and social values of modernism as a model for life rather than merely to the formal and self-referential aesthetic 'style' of modern art. Such points of reference, both for the artist in making the work and for an audience in engaging with it, remain in my view profoundly significant. Caldicott's current preoccupation

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with the sound world of contemporary musicians and sound artists using digital technologies to extend this tradition like Taylor Deupree, Richard Chartier (who speaks of decisive forms slowly shifting and evolving), Alva Noto/Carsten Nicolai (who describes looping transformations within the space of precise structures) and Steve Roden (who aims for a rigidity that still leaves space for intuitive decisions) is evidence for this. The emphasis in such work on combining repetition with minute change and layering subtle new intersections into patterns of stillness and minimal movement can clearly be seen as central to Caldicott's concerns.

In looking at his latest work though, particularly from the perspective of its exploitation of the potential of repetition, it is difficult not to refer to aspects of modern art, and specifically painting, more strongly than to these other aspects of cultural production. Much, contemporary painting increasingly itself looks back to aspects of the formalism and geometrical rigour of its modernist antecedents; in the work of Jens Wolf, Tomma Abts, Katja Strunz and Terry Haggerty for example and their obvious debt to artists like Barnett Newman, Frank Stella, Ellsworth Kelly, Blinky Palermo, Agnes Martin, Robert Ryman and others of their generation.

Repetition is important both within the work itself and in the work's repeating echo of the tradition of repetition in art making. "If a thing is worth doing once, it's worth doing over and over again, exploring it, probing it...", observed Mark Rothko.⁴ And Jasper Johns' frequently quoted instructions to himself: "Take an object. Do something to it. Do something else to it", ⁵ can now be seen as an immediate precursor to the ubiquitous presence and most explicit manifestation of repetition as a strategy for art making in the late-modernist moment of Minimalism in the 1960's. "One thing after another", ⁶ was Donald Judd's deceptively simple take on the work and working processes of this period; and Carl Andre built a substantial career on his belief, repeating Rothko's words almost exactly, that, "if a thing is worth doing once, it's worth doing again and again". ⁷ Yet more evidence of the centrality of strategies of repetition in this period might be found in Robert Morris's "continuous project altered daily", ⁸ and Mel Bochner's use of the phrase, "the serial attitude". ⁹

Though not necessarily in Bochner's sense, Caldicott is an archetypal adopter of a 'serial attitude'. All of his works, those represented here and all their predecessors, have been made in series: successively evolving works linked by common and repeated elements and collectively identified by some kind of overall categorisation and series title. Primarily, as here, the central characteristic of each of these series is of geometric elements serially transformed through a kind of 'slippage' inherent in their sophisticated and progressive regrouping, rearrangement or reorganisation; and the sequential

unfolding of sometimes subtle and sometimes dramatic changes in their chromatic range and the intervals between them. (Incidentally, such terminology suggests why musical analogies come so readily to mind: the infinite variety of melodic and rhythmic invention that the best jazz musicians can extract from the multiple repetition of a defined chord sequence, for example.¹⁰)

The nature of the viewer's encounter with serial art works like these adds another dimension to the inter-relationship of the individual components of this kind of sequential production through the experience of seeing them, even if only peripherally, 'all-at-once' in the simultaneous context of their installation in a gallery space. This experience might be seen to mirror the relationship between the elements within each separate work in the overall relationship between the individual works in a series.¹¹

There are, as Deleuze has identified in a philosophical context, not one but many registers of repetition. The more or less subtle variations within the repetitions of rectilinear, grid-structured or otherwise geometrically organised abstract paintings are often significantly dependent upon differences of surface. But in the unattenuated surface of a photographic print, no such textural variation is possible. And photography is in and of itself a serial, multiple process, so a further register or dimension of the repetition that is particular to Caldicott's work is inherent in this, its means of production. Another layer of complexity is added of course when the photographic printing process is a digital one: the pixel-by-pixel matrix of one/zero, on/off that determines it is fundamentally and exclusively repetitive. Barnett Newman always insisted that 'what the artists makes' is colour. Denied the subtleties of surface open to painters (even ones whose surfaces are as expansively flat as Newman's), Caldicott's endless search for the possibilities of infinite difference within prescribed structural repetitions can rely only on precisely that 'making' of colour, together with the constant manipulation of the structural pattern that contains it.

In considering these procedural limitations on Caldicott's process for exploring variation, colour and geometric structure, the first can be seen to be primarily informed by the interaction of the artist's aesthetic judgement with a particular technological process (the manipulation of light through photography and its printing processes); the second by the interaction of that same judgement with a particular manual process (the largely intuitive manipulation and assemblage of the material blocks of colour that are photographed). ¹² There is a performative aspect to these strategies that embodies yet another register of repetition. Construction, deconstruction and reconstruction; overlaying, separation and adjustment; shifting, fixing and revision: all of these repetitive actions are endlessly multiplied in the

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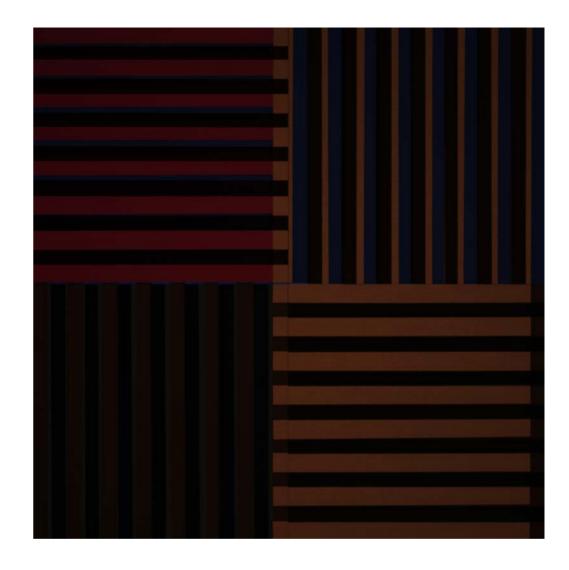
constant generation of serial difference and of difference within series. Together they figure a constructive process of repetition as performance in the act of making the work. ¹³ In this way an index of human agency and physical action remains present in work that might otherwise be doubly disembodied by its structural formality and the distancing effect of its technical (re)production.

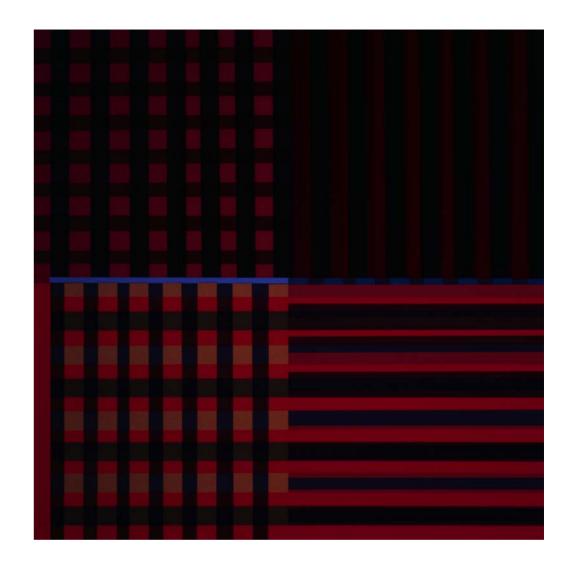
Repetition, in a culture of privileging the 'original', might be thought to be an unpromising route to generating the new. ¹⁴ But, "rather than constraining difference, repetition allows for maximum difference, exacerbating, even, the multiplication of variables". ¹⁵ Caldicott's work is the epitome of such a creative strategy. It is simultaneously stringent and flexible, because it is based on an insistently structural approach in which endlessly nuanced and differentiated forms achieve their visual complexity precisely because of their serially consistent geometric organisation. His precarious negotiations of repetition and difference, continuity and discontinuity, regularity and irregularity, precision and imprecision, accent and interval, are precisely articulated through series made up of the constant repetition of structural procedures within which the all-over surface is made up of these essential discontinuities and endless difference. Indeed, he creates a visually seductive and engaging world animated and invigorated by the recognition of a potential for the marginal difference to be the biggest difference.

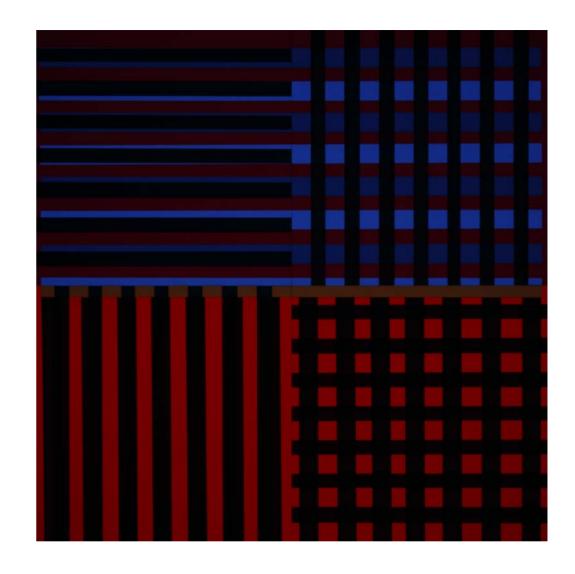
- Curated by Ann Goldstein, presented at The Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, 14 March – 2 August 2004, and fully documented in a catalogue published jointly with MIT Press, 2004.
- Søren Kierkegaard, <u>Repetition</u> (1843), reprinted in <u>Fear and Trembling / Repetition</u>, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1983 (p.132).
- See Derek Horton, 'Seeing Through Modernism: Transparency, Absence, Construction', in Richard Caldicott, London, Hamiltons, 2004 (pp.1–3), (and online at www.richardcaldicott.co.uk)
- Cited in James Breslin, <u>Mark Rothko: A Biography</u>, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1993 (p.329).
- Jasper Johns, <u>Writings, Sketchbook Notes, Interviews</u> (ed. Kirk Varnedoe). New York. MoMA. 1996.
- Donald Judd, <u>Specific Objects: The Complete Writings</u> 1959–75, Halifax/New York, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design/NYU, 1975 (p.184).
- Cited in David Bourdon/Barbara Rose, <u>Carl Andre Sculpture 1959–1977</u>, Austin, Texas, Laguna Gloria Art Museum, 1978 (p.41).
- 'Continuous Project Altered Daily' is both a Robert Morris work of 1969 and the title of his collected writings from this period, published by MIT Press in 1994.
- Mel Bochner, <u>The Serial Attitude</u>, in Artforum, vol.6 no.4, December 1967.
- 10. The arresting, 27-chorus tenor saxophone solo by Paul Gonsalves' in the middle of Duke Ellington's performance of 'Diminuendo and Crescendo in Blue' at the 1956 Newport Jazz Festival is but one legendary example. John Coltrane's lengthy and magisterial solo improvisations based on the unpromisingly banal structure of show tunes like "My Favourite Things" are another.
- Gilles Deleuze, <u>Difference and Repetition</u>, (1968), London, Athlone Press, 1994.
- 12. I have described Caldicott's working process in some detail in Derek Horton, 2004, op cit, p.2.
- 13. I am indebted to Briony Fer's insight into the significance for Blinky Palermo's paintings (themselves another good example of the serial regrouping, rearranging and colour modulation of regular geometric elements) not of his study of modernist abstraction but of the fact that Palermo was a student in Joseph Beuys' performance studio at the Dusseldorf *Kunstakademie* and his understanding of Beuys' own persistent making of paintings and drawings as part of a performative context. (See Briony Fer, The Infinite Line, New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 2004.)
- 14. Although Rosalind Krauss acutely challenged any such assumption in her <u>The Originality of the Avant</u> <u>Garde and Other Modernist Myths</u>, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1985.
- 15. Briony Fer uses this phrase in her account of the work of Agnes Martin (in Briony Fer, <u>The Infinite Line</u>, New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 2004. p.56) and it can be applied very aptly to Caldicott.

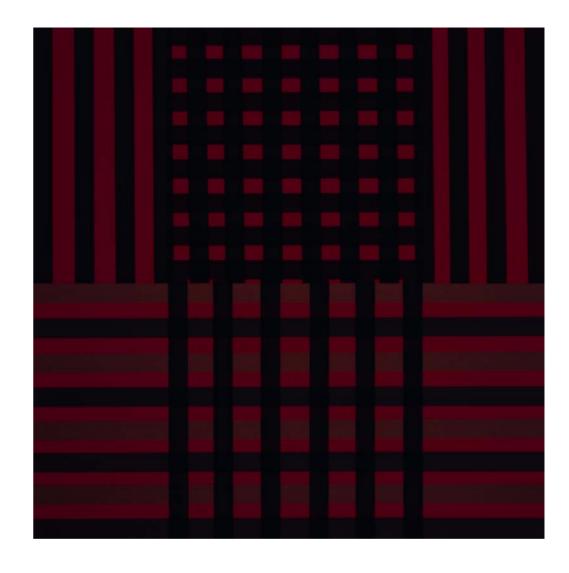
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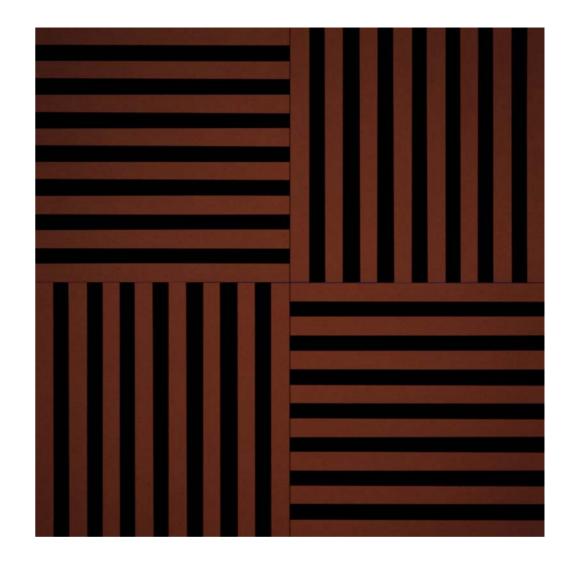
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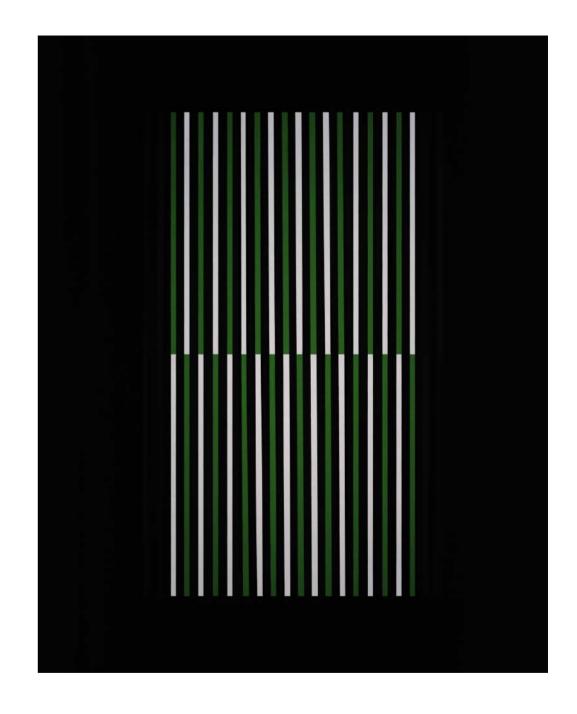




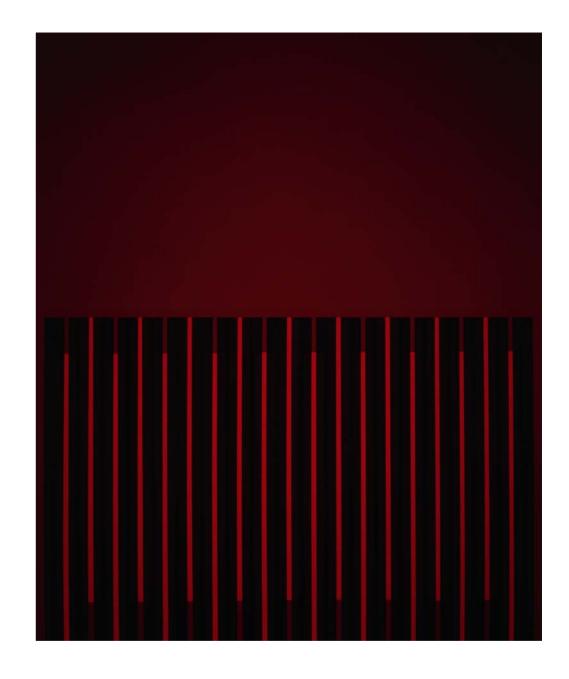


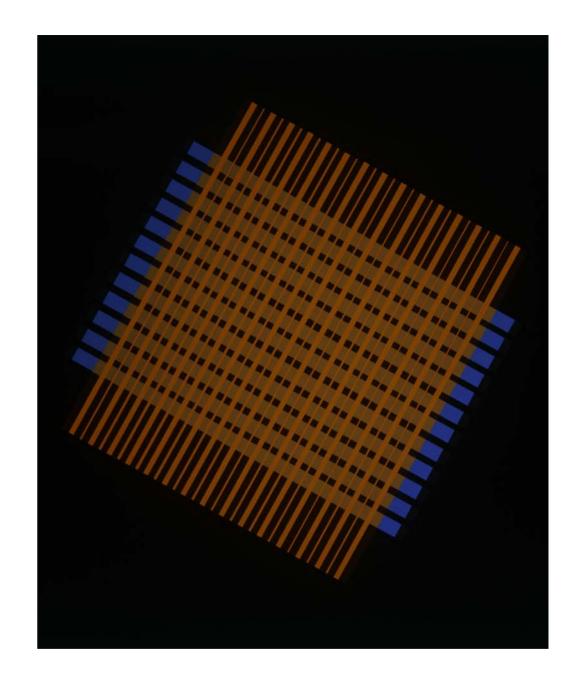




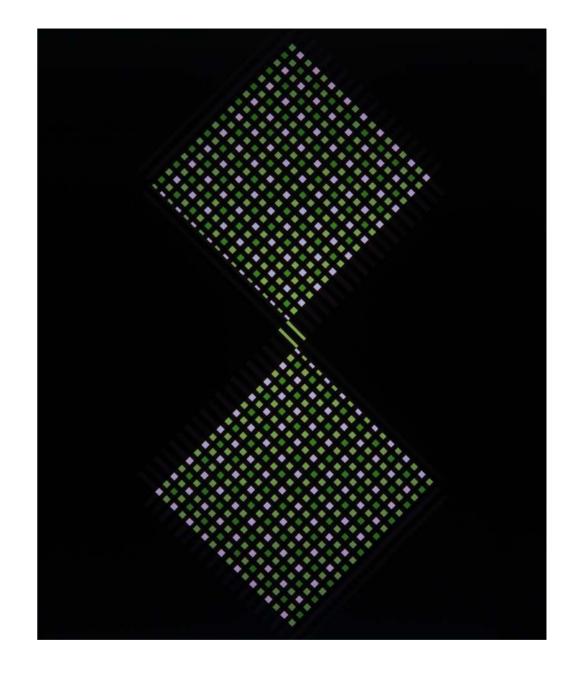












List of works

Script 2006 C-Print and Diasec 20 × 20 inches 50.8 × 50.8 cm Edition of 5

Through 2006 C-Print and Diasec 20 × 20 inches 50.8 × 50.8 cm Edition of 5

Shift 2006 C-Print and Diasec 20×20 inches 50.8×50.8 cm Edition of 5

Font 2006 C-Print and Diasec 20×20 inches 50.8×50.8 cm Edition of 5

Spacer 2006 C-Print and Diasec 20 × 20 inches 50.8 × 50.8 cm Edition of 5

Multiple 2006 C-Print and Diasec 50 × 40 inches 127 × 101.6 cm Edition of 5 Stretch 2006 C-Print and Diasec 50 × 40 inches 127 × 101.6 cm Edition of 5

Exit 2006 C-Print and Diasec 24 × 20 inches 61 × 50.8 cm Edition of 5

Full 2006 C-Print and Diasec 24 × 20 inches 61 × 50.8 cm Edition of 5

Go 2006 C-Print and Diasec 24 × 20 inches 61 × 50.8 cm Edition of 5

Figure 2006 C-Print and Diasec 24 × 20 inches 61 × 50.8 cm Edition of 5

Richard Caldicott			Selected Group Exhibitions		
		2007	Art Köln, Galerie f 5,6 – Galerie für		
			Fotografie, Munich		
			Photo London '07, Hamiltons		
Biography		2006	Photo Miami '06, Galerie f 5,6		
1962	Born in Leicester, England		Paris Photo '06, Hamiltons		
	Lives and works in London		Seeing the Light, Carl Solway Gallery, Cincinnati		
0.1.5.13.22			Art Anon, in aid of Terrance Higgins Trust,		
Solo Exhibitions			London Art Fair, London		
2007	Richard Caldicott, Galerie f 5,6 – Galerie für Fotografie, Munich		If it didn't exist you'd have to invent it: a partial Showroom history, The		
2006			Showroom, London		
2000	Richard Caldicott, Casa Tua, Miami Blocker, Hamiltons, London	2005	Paris Photo '05, Hamiltons		
2005	Loop, Goss Gallery, Dallas, Texas	2000	2x2, Rachofsky House, Dallas		
2003	Richard Caldicott, New Work,		Concrete Photography, Museum im		
2004	Hamiltons, London		Kulturspeicher Würzburg		
0000	Ariel Meyerowitz Gallery, New York		Still Life and Stilled Lives, A Group Show,		
2002	Hamiltons, London	0004	Ariel Meyerowitz Gallery, New York		
0000	Ariel Meyerowitz Gallery, New York	2004	Paris Photo '04, Hamiltons		
2000	Finesilver Gallery, San Antonio, Texas		Photo London '04, Hamiltons		
	Hamiltons, London		'Cleanliness', Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York		
1999	Camera Work, Berlin Hamiltons, London		Group Exhibition, Hamiltons, London		
1999	Succession, London		The Photography Show, AIPAD/Ariel		
1998	Dorothée De Pauw Gallery, Brussels		Meyerowitz Gallery, New York		
1997	On the Entity of Objects/Vom Dasein der		Optic Nerve, Photofusion Gallery, London		
1007	Gegenstände (with C. Muller), curated	2003	Optic Nerve-Abstract Colour Photography,		
	by Stefan Gronert, Kunstmuseum Bonn	2000	curated by Roderick Packe, Wolsey Art Gallery, Christchurch Mansion, Ipswich		
			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 f 5,6 –		
		0000	Galerie für Fotografie, 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/		
			Dorothée De Pauw Gallery		
			Art Chicago 2001, Finesilver Gallery		
		2000	Art Basel 31. Hamiltons		
			Art Brussels 2000, Hamiltons/		
			Dorothée De Pauw Gallery		
			Art2000, 12th London Contemporary Art		
			Fair. Houldsworth Fine Art		

The Photography Show, AIPAD/Hamiltons,

New York

999	Still, Houldsworth Fine Art, London
	Vintage Show, Hamiltons, London
	Art Brussels '99. Dorothée De Pauw
	Gallery/Hamiltons
	Art Basel 30. Hamiltons
	Silent Presence: Contemporary Still-Life
	Photography, Staatliche Kunsthalle
	Baden-Baden
	Travelling to Kunstverein Bielefeld, March-
	_
	April 2000 FIAC, Paris. Hamiltons/Dorothée De Pauw
	Gallery
	Paris Photo '99, Hamiltons
	The Photography Show, AIPAD/Hamiltons,
	New York
000	
1998	Art Brussels '98, Hamiltons
	Out of Frame, curated by Paul Hedge,
	Hamiltons, London
	Under/Exposed, XpoSeptember Stockholm
	Fotofestival
	The Discerning Eye, Mall Galleries, London
	Paris Photo '98. Hamiltons
997	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 & Guttmann, 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
994	Gol!, 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
992	Seventeen, British and American Artists,
	Greenwich St, New York
	Love at First Sight, curated by Graham
	Gussin, The Showroom, London
	In and Out, Back and Forth, 578 Broadway,
	New York
	How Noisy Everything Grows, curated by
	Marigold, Royal College of Art, London
	7th Australian International Video Festival
1991	15th Tokyo Video Festival Five British Artists / Fünf Britische Künstler,
1001	
	curated by Christa Gather, Thomas Backhaus Galerie, Düsseldorf
	Dackflaus Galefie, Dusseldoff

Still, Houldsworth Fine Art, London

1999

Collections

Tara Bernerd, London

Ariel Meyerowitz, New York Art Lab, Tokyo BP Amoco, London Chris Erck, San Antonio Dorothée De Pauw, Brussels Electronic Media Arts, Glebe, Australia Elfering Collection, Miami Goldman Sachs International, London Ann and Jürgen Wilde Collection, 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

The Peter C. Ruppert Collection – concrete art in Europe after 1945 – museum im kulturspeicher, Würzburg Tim Jefferies, London

Mr and Mrs Vernon Faulconer Dallas TX

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Script has been published to coincide with the exhibition 'Richard Caldicott', at Galerie f 5,6 – Galerie für Fotografie, München, 21 April – 9 June 2007

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Design John Morgan studio, London

Reproduction work Grieger, Düsseldorf

Printer Healeys printers, Ipswich

Edition 500

Hamiltons
13 Carlos Place
London W1Y 2EU
T +44 (0)20 7499 9493/4
F +44 (0)20 7629 9919
art@hamiltonsgallery.com
www.hamiltonsgallery.com

Galerie f 5,6 – Galerie für Fotografie Ludwigstrasse 7 D-80539 München T +49 (0)89 286 751 67 F +49 (0)89 286 752 83 info@f5komma6.de www.f5komma6.de

Goss Gallery 2500 Cedar Springs Dallas Texas 75201 T+1.214 696 0555 F+1.214 696 0556 info@gossgallery.com www.gossgallery.com

www.richardcaldicott.co.uk