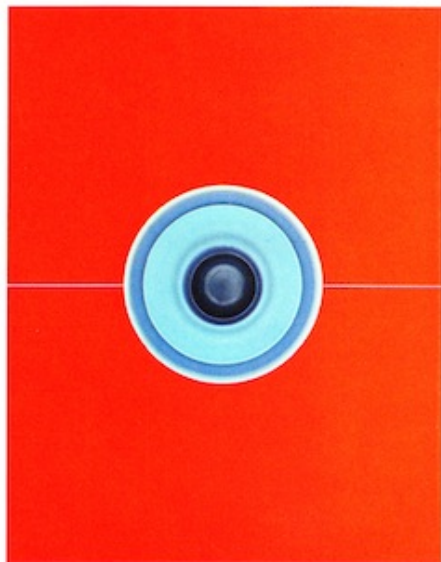
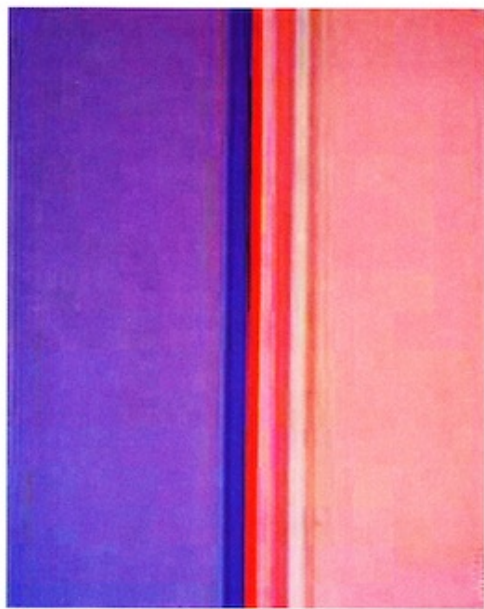


photography

FANTASTIC PLASTIC by sabine rothman



In the witty photographs of Richard Caldicott, Tupperware transcends its domestic origins



Cibachromes, above, made in 1998 and 1999, tweak the high ideals of post-WWII Color Field painting.

RICHARD CALDICOTT, an English artist, produces photographs of Tupperware that pursue the sublime with every bit as much ardor as Barnett Newman's Color Field paintings. His images also recall the paintings of Newman's cohort Mark Rothko and of second-generation Abstract Expressionists such as Kenneth Noland and Morris Louis. Yes, it is a joke. But is it a one-liner?

The juxtaposition is interesting, even fun to think about. Tupperware was introduced in 1946 by a manufacturer of plastic gas mask parts. Sales

took off in the late 1940s and, along with an exodus to suburbia and the canonization of the housewife, gained momentum during the next two decades. Simultaneously, Abstract Expressionism—of which Color Field painting is a sort of sect—thrived. Its myths include the purity of formalism, the artist as hero, and a schism between high art and the culture at large. Ironic, no?

However, while Caldicott attempts subversion—injecting the mundane into high art, content into form—he is ultimately seduced by the modernist's project. The saturated color of his cibachrome prints, which are made from positive transparencies (that is, slides, not negatives), offers great visual pleasure. His largest prints measure about 50 by 40 inches, big for a photograph, yet far smaller than a major Rothko. And, although they lack the physical presence of Color Field paintings, you feel that you could step through them, immersing yourself. As object and ground, lit indirectly, merge into abstraction, the whole seems to glow, even to pulsate. Caldicott creates a magical effect, and thus delivers more than just an extended gag.



RICHARD CALDICOTT (COURTESY OF HAMILTONS GALLERY); SOURCES: SEE BACK OF BOOK