



Gerhard Richter Painting

Corinna Belz

GERMANY, 2011
German

97 minutes ■ Colour/35mm
Production Company: zero one film/
Terz Film/WDR/MDR
Producer: Thomas Kufus
Screenplay: Corinna Belz
Cinematographer: Johann Feindt,
Frank Kranstedt, Dieter Stürmer
Editor: Stephan Krumbiegel
Sound: Gerrit Lucas, Sven Phil Lentzen,
Andreas Hildebrandt

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"Now there are no priests or philosophers left, artists are the most important people in the world."

— Gerhard Richter

"Richter has always believed in painting, just not in woolly philosophies about painting. He maintains a kind of cruel faith. The world is mean and absurd. Nature is sublime but indifferent to us. Mass culture turns thinking people into sheep. But beauty is still out there. We can see it only if we don't lie to ourselves. It's what is left after you strip away the clichés and false rhetoric."

— Michael Kimmelman,
The New York Times

The title says it all. Corinna Belz's documentary is an unprecedented and oddly dangerous journey into the studios of Gerhard Richter, widely considered among the world's most important living painters. Famously cranky and iconoclastic, Richter is an ideal subject to illuminate the deep fissures in the contemporary art world. His career has been a high-wire balancing act between eye-popping, colourful abstractions — seen in start-to-finish construction throughout much of the film — and enormously famous photorealist portraiture. He has also been an influential essayist on the subject of art-making and its place in the world.

Though we see the 79-year-old artist engaging in the world at large — talking with his legendary gallerist Marian Goodman, being feted at London's National Portrait Gallery, speaking with critics and collaborators — the bulk of the film lives in his

places of work: giant studios, with taciturn assistants preparing toxic brews and giant canvasses for Richter to attack. But the artist is no fan of the camera. Pithy, staccato barbs usher forth as his own endless self-doubt about his work and its value get transferred onto Belz and her presence. We too feel his wrath, his struggle with the demons of his (Nazi-era and East German) past. And that feeling is inescapably thrilling, like being acknowledged then silenced by a demigod of ancient mythology.

Richter will be much in the news this October as London's Tate Modern celebrates his career with his most significant retrospective to date.

■ Noah Cowan



Corinna Belz is a German actor, writer and documentary filmmaker. Her short documentaries are *Das Richter Fenster* (07) and *Porifera - Die wunderbare Welt der Schwämme* (09). Her feature documentaries are *Leben nach Microsoft* (01), *Drei Wünsche drei Frauen, ein Jahr* (05), *24 Hours Berlin* (segment, 09) and *Gerhard Richter Painting* (11).

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