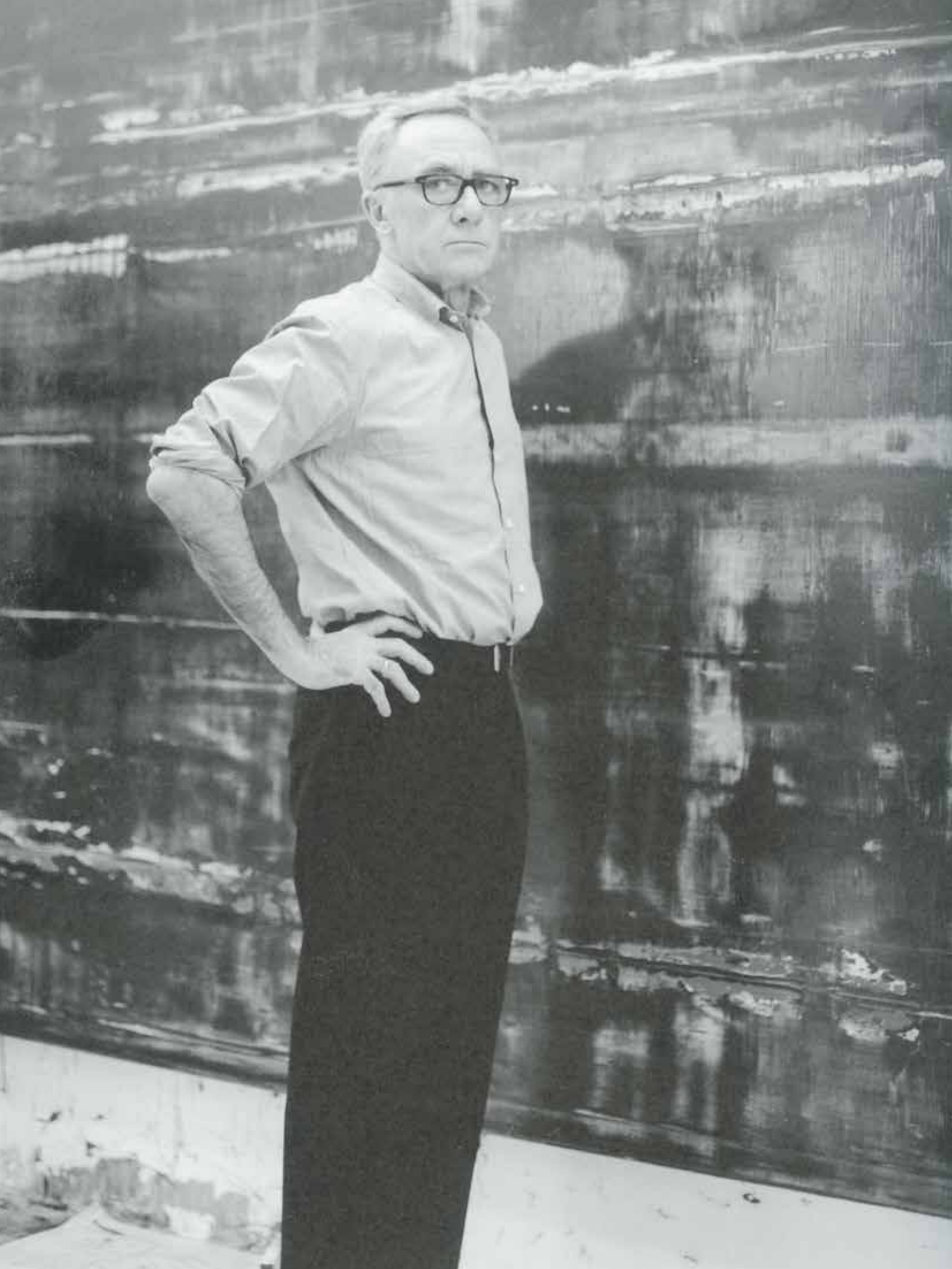




Mario von Lüttichau Between Coincidence, Inspiration, and Destruction – Gerhard Richter’s “Fuji” Series

“Although the serial works can be considered equivalent in terms of their production technique, material, economics, and aesthetics, they are by no means completely uniform; instead, their nature is that of individually crafted, one-of-a-kind pieces. Of the painting editions conceived in this way, the 1996 series entitled ‘Fuji’ is particularly favored by collectors.” (Hubertus Butin).

Working on his abstract paintings from 1976 onward, Gerhard Richter elaborated a concept of painting for himself that rejects all traditional rules of design and aesthetic strictures. He described the approach he had to take to accomplish this in an interview with Sabine E. Schütz in 1990: “I precisely don’t have a specific image in mind; what I want instead is to end up with a picture that I hadn’t planned at all. So although this working method, which involves caprice, chance, inspiration, and destruction, does result in a certain type of image, it’s never a predetermined one. The intention is for the image in question to evolve out of a painterly or visual logic, as if it were inevitable. And by not planning the resulting image, I hope to realize more of a sense of coherence and objectivity.” (quoted from Dietmar Elger: Gerhard Richter, Maler. Cologne 2002, p. 392).

This process, characterized by arbitrariness and destruction, can be clearly discerned in our painting “Fuji.” It arises when Richter spreads the colours over Alucobond panels with a painter’s scraper (a wide spatula made of wood, rubber or aluminum), and then, after perhaps interrupting this work in certain controlled steps, returns with the scraper in order to give the abstract composition a defined direction once again, in order to steer the coincidence. This is how he created the entire “Fuji” series: 110 abstract paintings in red, orange, green, and white on Alucobond panels of equal size, 70 of which are in landscape format. Each piece is a unique, self-contained statement, thanks to the manual application of paint by the artist and the varying painterly gestures he used. The painting process becomes visible and is placed front and center. “It’s always just about seeing, after all,” Gerhard Richter explains. “Physical action can’t be avoided, and sometimes there’s definitely a need to paint with your whole body.”

Repetitions, groupings of works, and sequences are integral to the artist’s oeuvre, reflecting his “interest in the multiplication of the image,” according to the Swiss curator and author Dieter Schwarz (quote from 2014, cited in Hubertus Butin: Unikat in Serie, Cologne 2017, p. 12). With his legendary “Fuji” series, Richter showcases this artistic calculus of his to perfection, creating a persistently fascinating balance between soft overlays of colours and a highly aesthetic sense of movement.

36 Gerhard Richter

Dresden 1932 – lives in Cologne

"Fuji". 1996

Oil on Alucobond. 29 × 37 cm (11 ¾ × 14 ⅝ in.). Signed in black felt-tip pen on the reverse: Richter. Catalogue raisonné: Elger 839-19 / Butin 89. One of 110 numbered unique works. Munich, Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, 1996. [3261]

Provenance

Private Collection, North Rhine-Westphalia
(acquired in 1996 at Galerie Fred Jahn, Munich)

EUR 350,000–450,000

USD 412,000–529,000



Gerhard Richter installing the series 'Fuji' in his studio in Cologne, 1997

