



# David Colosi's 'Imaginary Numbers'; Gerhard Richter at Marian Goodman; Josée Bienvenu's 'Toluca Editions'

**By Robert Shuster**

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**Marian Goodman Gallery, New York** *David Colosi's Faith Is Like a Pickpocket Who Loans You Your Own Money on Generous Terms, 2008*

Details:

**David Colosi: 'Imaginary Numbers and Other Calculated Fictions'**

Cueto Project

551 West 21st Street, 212-229-2221

Through January 1

Let the viewer =  $x$ , David Colosi writes, introducing his gloriously dense and slyly comic "proof" of God's manmade existence. Guided by Wittgenstein's conjecture that one could construct serious philosophy from nothing but jokes, Colosi has created a kind of ontological vaudeville, filling numerous blackboards with philosophical quotes, mathematical equations, and humorous asides—all relating to attempts over the centuries to make a logical case for (or against) God. On the floor, 3-D mathematical symbols are scattered like toppled icons across the chalked names of mythological deities who perished. In the center of this chaos lies a smashed desk, implying that the proof's conclusion—imagination reigns supreme—brings on metaphysical burdens too heavy to bear.

Making the theme more personal, Colosi has turned the gallery's back rooms into dreamscapes: drawings of wild surrealism rendered with the inflated figures of underground comics, and several shrine-like assemblages of thrift-shop relics that suggest manic manifestations of Bruce Conner and Edward Kienholz. A wooden pterodactyl leads a rickety but extravagant chariot; a child's bedroom in nightmarish disarray features imaginary characters (Hobbes the Tiger, the Great Pumpkin) under the square-root sign. Colosi, who writes poetry and fiction with similar wacko abandonment, supports his proof with plenty of empirical evidence. His imaginative powers are fierce.

### **Gerhard Richter: Abstract Paintings**

In his long and celebrated career, painter Gerhard Richter has ventured into pop art, photorealism, and abstraction, but never with an interest in isolating the styles. His early work from the 1960s lent disquieting moods and stark contrasts to scenes that had been copied from glossy magazines. He applied blurs (his trademark) to more realistic portraits, over-painted photographs with abstraction, and, for works of purer non-representation, has frequently included recognizable forms, not to mention the bright, vibrant colors of pop.

Though almost exclusively abstract, this impressive show of recent efforts includes a little bit of everything. Interestingly, the largest works of pale aquamarine feature both blur and over-painting.

Dissatisfied with earlier incarnations, Richter covered them with white paint, but didn't entirely hide the original colors. The result is like viewing a city through a seaside fog from a rushing train; brushstrokes or scorings run over the surface like speed lines, and you catch only fleeting glimpses of light and life.

The sense of landscapes and windows is dominant here, for Richter (as he's often done) has dragged masses of paint up, down, or across, creating roughly parallel streaks that suggest natural or manufactured order. Outlines of trees do actually appear in one work, and other areas of mottled greens even recall the forests of Klimt. But plenty of paintings, too, radiate volcanic hues that verge on the lurid; formidable, smoldering, they dare you to look away.

But the most extraordinary works here are a series of diptychs titled *Sinbad*—9 x 11 inch glass plates painted with lacquer. Reds, yellows, and greens bloom into sublimely graceful organic forms that cover two walls. Look closely to discover hints of seafaring adventure, then stand back to give your eye a thrilling journey. *Marian Goodman Gallery, 24 W 57th St, 212-977-7160. Through January 9*

### **'Toluca Editions: 6 Projects'**

Photography has never had a more luxurious home than Toluca Editions, a Paris-based publisher of elegant volumes that pair images with literature on cleverly designed pages, all packaged unbound inside slick tray cases. Among six samples here, there's Nobuyoshi Araki's meditative *Tin Ashes*—oddly haunting black-and-white portraits of crushed cans found on Tokyo streets, supplemented on fold-outs with poetry, and given an angular container suggestive of the city's beveled towers. In another work, Thomas Ruff's solemn views of drab, utilitarian buildings in Düsseldorf provide landmarks for Fabio Morabito's wonderful story about a philandering subsoil inspector with prostrate trouble; its text lies inside planes that mirror the architecture's façades.

Elsewhere, the infamously gruesome portraits of the dead by Andres Serrano are juxtaposed with eerie silhouettes of internal organs, each of which contains observations—laid out in sinuous text—made by a fictional podiatrist. Edgier still, Finnish designer Harri Koskinen has modeled the metal case on the drawers found in morgues. *Josée Bienvenu Gallery, 529 W 20th St, 212-206-7990. Through December 19*

<http://www.villagevoice.com/2009-11-17/art/david-colosi-s-imaginary-numbers-gerhard-richter-at-marian-goodman-jos-e-bienvenu-s-toluca-editions/>