

# REGEN PROJECTS

Vogel, Sabine B., "Daniel Richter," Artforum, December 5, 2009

## ARTFORUM

### Daniel Richter

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10.23.09-01.10.10 The Sammlung Essl Collection of Contemporary Art

One of Germany's most successful young painters, Daniel Richter made a name for himself in the 1990s with large abstract paintings. Since the turn of the millennium, he has become known for his large figurative works. Now, canvases from both these phases meet in an excellent exhibition at the Essl Museum.

One of the show's most captivating pieces is *Horde*, 2007. It is a frontal view of a group of people painted in cold blue hues, with black contours and a burning red cleft between them. Here, Richter channels aggression itself and our awe of it into a deeply powerful image. These people are not made of flesh, but rather pure energy. Their spectral forms, so typical of Richter, are formally similar to images generated by heat-sensing, infrared, and surveillance cameras. Richter, however, achieves much more by translating these imaging techniques into painting: He produces iconic images of society that show an unstable reality, a meeting of contrasts and emotions.

Although only some works from "Winterreise" (Winter Journey), 2009, are exhibited, the entire new series can be seen in the catalogue: Warm red bodies encounter white snowflakes, then swirl out of a black hole or just float in empty space. Simple movements become existential states. Also among the new works are his first small-format pieces, which take a different direction—devoid of people, they are steeped in a new forlornness. Relevant to the current, ubiquitous celebrations of German reunification, these paintings recall closed national borders. Richter depicts surveillance towers and border situations that he then enriches with a palette-knife technique and dismal colors. It is rare for an exhibition of paintings to engage with such contemporary topics while also featuring such complex works and moving subject matter.

Translated from German by Jane Brodie.