

As I walked into Trevor Richards' house, I was quickly reminded of the measurable differences between men and women in their cortical activity patterns during mental rotation tasks. This double-story, 1960s home once served as the showroom for the owner's terrazzo tile manufacturing business and almost every room features a unique, eye-popping terrazzo tile floor. Terrazzo tiles are highly polished, pre-cast squares of coloured cement with embedded aggregate that are either uniform in colour or divided into sections of different hues. A dazzling effect has been achieved in each room by laying the multicoloured tiles in tessellating patterns; either in a border, a centrepiece or across the whole floor. Some floors feature tiles that are only used in one room but Richards explained to me that, in others, utterly different effects have been produced by laying the same tiles in different arrangements. I attempted to rotate the tiles in my mind to follow his explanation but felt an anxious need for tracing paper and extra time.

The paintings, sculptures and the installation in Trevor Richards: Recent Works 2009-2012 build on the works he exhibited at Turner Galleries in 2009. Since then, the suspicion that living with these floors was perhaps influencing his work has become a certainty. In the same way that the circular elements in Richards' still life paintings of the 1980s became the geometric circles in his later works, the triangular and quadrilateral shapes in his own floors directly inform his current investigations. The "multistable" perceptual effects that are produced by geometric tessellating patterns have become of great interest to Richards and he seeks suitable patterns from a broad range of sources to explore these.

Siena, a large, acrylic on canvas triptych, is named after the Italian town that is home to the cathedral in which Richards found the design that underpins this work. He thinks of the pattern on the centre panel as the skeleton or "mother grid" from which the patterns on the outer panels originate. Whilst the centre panel has been hand painted, the others have been produced with paint rollers and masking tape as Richards selects whatever materials and methods best enable him to achieve the desired outcome for each piece.

Richards is curious about the rationale for the widespread use of geometric tessellating patterns in the tiled floors of medieval cathedrals and palaces. Such visual ambiguity could seem out of place in architectural settings that are designed to reinforce the unquestionable authority of Church and State. Perhaps they provide a metaphorical hint at eternity through boundless repetition across a Euclidean plane. It seems that whilst Richards' work can be understood as non-objective, his titles lead us to other, usually playful layers of questioning and understanding.

Much has been written about Richards' restricted palette. The works in this exhibition have been

produced with only five pre-mixed industrial paints. This self imposed limitation enables him to orchestrate the activation of the colours through their positioning and relationships. The greyscale versions of those five colours have been utilised in more recent works, allowing the structure of the pattern to become the central concern.

In recent years, Richards has utilised paint supports that are non-rectangular, or resolutely three dimensional, as well as more reflective, industrial finishes. These developments allow him to further exploit the physical and psychological aspects of perception as well as encourage the viewer to consider the paintings as the objects that they are. In addition, these structures can refer to architectural forms as well as actually reflect glimpses of the buildings in which these works are exhibited.

Having analysed floor patterns to produce the compositions of his paintings, Richards has employed one of those compositions to produce a site-specific installation on the floor for this exhibition. Using the floor as a support enables him to utilise actual spatial perception as an additional element in the viewing experience.

As I left his house, I noticed one of his still life paintings from the 1980s hanging on a wall. It's a slightly disorienting, grey-scale depiction of a carpeted floor as seen from above. Richards mentioned that the painting was initially in colour before he over painted it in tonal values. I noticed that the only remaining colour is in a repeating pattern of four coloured lines that are painted all around the frame. His interests in domestic interiors, spatial perception, the structures of patterns and colour relationships are constant yet the outcomes of his investigations range dramatically in form.

Louise Morrison, May 2012

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