

under the covers, silent and still. He hears barefoot padding steps and the familiar groans of her wardrobe as it is opened and closed. Clothes fall to the wooden floor like feathers splashing in water. It is easy for him to map out her actions. Her bed is in exactly the same position as his. It creaks once and he immediately relaxes, feeling warmer. She is in.

He is sleeping now, dreaming of the touch of her bare foot and the smell of her sweet sleepy breath. His arm stretches across the pillow but it is empty and cold. Awakening, he hears the bed above creaking, again and again. He follows its rhythm, imagining Veronica lying face down, knowing that he is beneath her. He lies on his back, willing himself to elevate beyond the confines of his room. The ceiling dissolves and they are together. The noise of the bed is washed away by the rush of blood filling his head.

"I wasn't going to meet her. I was going to lock Julia in the little box in my head marked 'Nice memories' and just get on with life."

He is jolted by the sudden silence upstairs. He looks up, piercing the ceiling in the darkness. The bed creaks loudly once, and he hears footsteps, softer and louder. The toilet flushes and a tap runs. There are more steps and Dave is losing track of what is happening. He hears Veronica's door opening and footsteps that are light but swift descending the stairwell. The main door opens and Dave springs up, peering around the curtains of his bay window. A young man is getting into a car parked outside. He looks up at the window above before driving off down the street. Dave follows the rain drops on the window. Upstairs Veronica is standing with one hand holding open a slat in her blinds. After the car has disappeared she stares at the drips falling down the window pane. Some time later, Veronica and Dave go back to bed.

Waiting for Julia

Cally Taylor

It's dark and a red snake of tail lights winds into the distance. It would almost be beautiful if this wasn't the M25, if I was closer to Manchester. I want to take a photo and text it to Julia. I want to say, look, when I see beautiful things I think of you. I'm coming. Wait for me. Wait a little bit longer. Have another cup of tea.

The rain's so heavy my windscreen wipers are squeaking. I can see the road approximately one second in every three. I just have to grip the wheel and hope.

It seemed so romantic at the time, on the beach in Rhodes. Romantic and

sandy. There's a very good reason why you shouldn't make love on a beach.

"Let's meet in Manchester in five months time", Julia said.

"Why?" I said. "Why not meet in London, the week after we get back?"

She smiled, buried her toes in the sand.

"That's too easy," she said.

I threw handfuls of sand at her feet, shaped them into a castle, put a pebble on the top.

"Why make life difficult?" I asked.

"Not difficult," she said. "It's about hope."

"I've spent a lifetime hoping. It leads to nothing. I'm all out."

Julia leaned forward and stroked sand from my cheek. "You don't have to if you don't want to."

I pulled her to me, wrapped my arms around her. "Give me your number."

"No," she whispered. "Mac's café, Grey

Street, Manchester 7pm on November 12th. Don't forget."

We made love again, me repeating the address and the date in my head until my head emptied and I lost myself again.

"I'll be there," Julia said at the airport. "I'll be there. Don't forget."

I turn on the radio. The presenter's voice crackles to life.

"We're experiencing tailbacks on the M25 junction 11," she says in her annoyingly dulcet tones.

"Fuck," I say.

I wasn't going to meet her. I was going to lock Julia in the little box in my head marked 'Nice memories' and just get on with life. Thing was, she refused to disappear. She wouldn't be pushed away. I started to see Julia everywhere, in the reflection of tube train windows, in the street, sitting in the armchair in my living room, smiling at me.

There's a calendar on my kitchen wall. I hadn't turned it over since January but I found myself flipping over the pages, searching for November, putting a red ring around the 12th. I started getting up each morning, crossing off the day. I started to feel like a kid again, excitement building in the pit of my stomach, a feeling I didn't think I'd ever have again. I started to daydream, to let hope wash through me. I started to believe my life could be different.

Wait for me, Julia. Wait a bit longer. Have another cup of tea.

New Art Book Releases

Essential Art: The History of Western Art

Herbert Press

Essential Art provides an in-depth chronological account of the entire history of Western art from the grandeur of Mesopotamian sculpture to the industrial installations and vibrant colour palate of late twentieth century works.

A perfect resource for beginners, this book also introduces the key artists working in any given period, providing a succinct biography and timeline to trace the influences acting upon their art. Other sections feature information about iconic works in more detail, which allows any reader to develop an appreciation of the distinctive style of each artist. Works ranging from Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* to Andy Warhol's *Marilyn* are discussed, endeavouring to encourage the reader to understand the story behind the image and not just the technical composition.

As much a history text as an art book, *Essential Art* is complete with thousands of illustrations, which illuminate this petite volume with a dazzling variety of images to suit any taste.

Alice Roberts

Red-Yellow-Blue

Gerhard Richter

Prestel

Gerhard Richter is an artist who intentionally avoids classification, although he can frequently be seen as veering towards the abstract and minimalist conventions. This text takes Richter's large scaled series *Red-Yellow-Blue* as its starting point. Created during the early 1970s, these works represent a rare intersection of his diverse productivity and have never been exhibited outside of the BMW headquarters in Munich. The vast majority of the images included in this volume are preceded by photographic sources or sketches, nearly 800 of which feature in his collection *Atlas*, published in 2006.

Richter has aspired to develop a mode of painting that deviates from the traditional references of art history, culminating in an unrestrained assault on the visual senses.

Since his first solo exhibition in 1963 the German born artist's popularity has grown exponentially and his stature as one of the most innovative European artists of the twentieth century remains secure.

Alice Roberts

