

Color Rendered Jobless/Boris Groys

For quite some time now, the traditional painting in the spaces of galleries, private collections, and museums has been replaced by the large-format photographic picture or readymades and media art. Today it is above all photography that is given the traditional task of painting, something that painting itself is no longer capable of fulfilling. The painterly image gradually broke under the overblown expectations and demands with which it was confronted since the rise of the historical avant-garde. The history of the painterly picture in this century is the story of its long agony. In retrospect, we could perhaps say that the slow transition from the painted to the photographic image was the actual art event of recent decades, although, as with every significant shift, everything ultimately remained the same.

When the oeuvre of an individual photographer is discussed today, it is almost always in terms of content, the relationship between the photographer and the depicted subject—as was typically the case in traditional art criticism prior to the advent of the avant-garde. The new techniques of picture production rendered color jobless. And Matthias Lutzeyer's contribution consists of mercilessly and consistently depicting color in this jobless state. He isn't interested in demonstrating how color works but in what it looks like when it doesn't work. Marcel Duchamp himself pointed out that artists had already always worked with readymades when they worked with color. We most often overlook the readymade character of color when paint is used in the work process. But once color has been withdrawn from its function as a means for depicting the outer appearances of things, it itself becomes a thing, an inert mass that suddenly seems strange and unsettling to us. That's how color appears in Lutzeyer's works—and that's how it gains our sympathy in times of its social need.