

# M+B

## MARTIN DENKER

**“Martin Denker: Realität de Luxe”**  
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by Heide Häusler  
*translated from German*

Some of Martin Denker's works recall the countless visualised transformations in the films of a David Cronenberg: the slowly merging parts of two bodies, the symbiosis, as a process, of human and animal, human and machine, human and virtuality. At the end of this chain of mutations stands another, different, recomposed reality. A and B become C, an unpredictable, uncanny quantity.

Denker's works prompt the question as to what forms the point of departure and what the culmination of these transformations. Was there at some juncture a real pictorial model or source that artistic intervention then transformed? In many of his works almost no visible trace of objective representation survives. Foreground and background diffuse one into the other, spatial bearings are forsaken. Thus it becomes impossible to gain any reliable general picture of his motifs. Yet the eye will search for bearings and is eventually persuaded that it can make out at this point or that, the shadowy signs of space and figures – woven in shreds into the dreamlike landscape of the image.

Is the world not enough for Martin Denker? On the basis of both his own photographs and of found picture material, he picks up the fabric of reality and weaves on, into the domain of fiction. By means of a specific collage technique he mixes photographs taken on travels in distant lands, of foreign cities, of people and situations, with data material from the Internet and scanned snippets from lifestyle magazines. The outcome is a digitally controlled symbiosis of structure, texture and colour. Photography as the original ingredient has been so manipulated in its manifestation that it is as good as indiscernible in the intoxicating cocktail Denker serves us. And yet an intimation dawns as to how the image might be connected with the world. For, whether we intend it or not, photography by habit constitutes our key to engaging with the world – linked with the profound human longing for recognizability.

In the initial phases of development of photographic technique and technology, researchers and inventors strove to engineer lens shutter speeds to be as high as possible, so that a brief moment could be captured and isolated with the greatest possible precision, a moment, a minimum of time. This technical advance led to expectations of a yet more accurate record of reality and thence, ultimately, of being able to acquire steadily more certainty about the world.

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Denker extends this moment, he takes time – up to four months for a single motif. He plunges into the depths of the pictures, blows up details once photographed into the minutest, molecular entities, only to mount them on a monumental scale and let their structure become tangible. But the operative dimension now is not that of time, but of space.- What does the picture consist of? What lies behind it or forms its basis? It accords with these penetrating questions that one repeatedly finds in Denker's works overlapping, fragmenting layers accrued into interesting topographical formations with, sometimes, a phenomenal effect of depth.

As in a kaleidoscope, symmetrical shapes unfold and spread over the surface like a matrix. If the colours and patterns in these works look as if light were being refracted in prisms, one finds oneself thinking immediately of photography in the most literal sense of that compound coinage – of painting with light. Denker's origins lie in painting and he still has great affinity with it. In his works he combines the adaptive process of photography with the additive gestural procedure of painting, and in this way articulates his response to the apocalyptic deluge of images of the present day.