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MARTIN DENKER

“In the Stardust of the Detail: Pictures, like New-Mown Hay”
by Hans Irrek, May 2007
translated from German

To say the least, the eye could only ignore with difficulty this exuberant wealth of visual stimuli. With a virtuoso hand, the artist demonstrates how matters stand in the realm of visual possibilities now that the supply of any and every conceivable image is possible on the basis of bits and bytes. In contrast to many who have sworn undying allegiance to the camera as a medium on the basis of realistic depictability, Martin Denker is engaged in constructing his own worlds of images, forsaken the glue of reality. To do so, he draws on the virtually infinite stock of images that history and the present hold in store in the age of omnipresence.

Like a volcano, these images spew details and motifs continually and deposit them like optical stardust across the print format – a momentary visual sample of the world in up to fifty layers of sediment. The variety of possibilities in this process is breathtaking. Rotations, distortion, mirror images, grids and strata form a conceptual foundation for the incredible wealth of visual effects with which Denker charges his compositions. Picture titles such as *WelcomeToMandarinaBay* or *MedicineSquareGarden(ParisHilton Syndrom)* make explicit the routes Denker has tracked in constructing his image, to say the least. In content and in their aesthetics, these pictures testify to the explosion of popular culture rendered here as if it had been run through a filter. Denker’s technique of layering intensifies the effect, so that in more than one instance its witnesses might well believe they were standing simultaneously in Shinjuku, Times Square and Piccadilly Circus.

The backdrop for the inspiring input that culminates in such pictures is as banal as it is complex—film sequences, faces and people, fleeting impressions of place, pieces of music, shreds of literature, icons of the Age of the Media, cars, art, graffiti, architecture, childhood memories, Walt Disney, deformed physiognomies . . . everything is possible in this system that operates as a catalyst whereby interplay between these details catapults them onto a different plane of experience and visual readability.

Encounter Denker’s pictures, and you encounter an explicit and unrestrained pleasure in pressing the flood of images down into layers and to bring their fleetingness to a halt for a fraction of a second. You will also mark an immense hunger: for life, here and now, this very second! For the melding of past, present and future into a valid, static image into which its beholders can let themselves tumble as into new-mown hay.

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Beyond their vibrant surface, Denker's pictures convey a sense for the infinite possibilities inherent in art as a widening vital force. In the compositional power with which the artist brings together the individual elements of his pictures lies an innate wisdom that we find described long ago, in the Daoist philosophy of sixth-century BCE China: “. . . the wise man looks into space, and does not regard the small as too little, nor the great as too big; for he knows that there is no limit to dimensions.” (Laozi Lao-Tse)