

WORKS IN PROGRESS

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The feedstock of the “WORKS IN PROGRESS” series consists of photographic slides and color negatives showing masterpieces of art, which I photograph in museums and collections all around the globe. After duplicating the images with 35mm analogue film I then infect them with various bacteria strains, yeasts or fungus, time and time again, to finally reach an optimum in aesthetics and new content. I try to learn from every treated picture in order to apply previous experience, thus the result is no mere product of chance, rather forced coincidence.

The bacteria feeds on the gelatin layers of the photographs. They eat into the emulsion layers of the film, grind out all the hidden colors and rearrange them according to the particular strain of bacteria used. Each strain has its unique way of doing this. The impression of the bacteria on the photographic emulsion is the means of expression in form and content.

The growth is controlled and influenced on a daily basis. Finally, when I think the art piece has reached an optimum, I stop the process by means of dehydration. Under the microscope I then take up to 100 digital detail photos to cover the surface of the 24 x 36 millimeter sized piece of treated reproduction film. Using a computer the digital detail photos are then seamlessly stitched back together to reconstruct the complete image. In this way, it is possible to realize supreme quality prints in any size. The organic processes change the photographic grain of the film. As there is no grain limit anymore, it permits the possibility of enlarging a 35mm film into prints of some meters width. It is the only way to present the wider spectrum and detail of the work to the viewer. The prints are mounted with an acid free adhesive foil on wood under poured clear resin. The edges of the piece are also mounted with the sides of the painting frame in order to create the impression of a “trompe l’oeil” frame, transforming the photo print into an object.

The “WORKS IN PROGRESS” are my personal processing and converting of art history. It is simultaneously an attack on art and a doxology. It shows the beauty of decay, the necessity of change and can be seen as symbol of “Vanitas” or “Memento Mori”. Nothing is forever. Even masterpieces of art will pay their debt to nature one day.

The series indicates that decay is less disappearance but rather a change to something new. This transfer also touches the question of whether a piece of art is ever really finished.