

On Disappearing

Über alle Berge presents works from two series by the Dutch photo artist Marike Schuurman: *Expired* (2009–11) and *Alptrraum* (2018).

The series *Expired*, from which three works are on view in the exhibition, features oversized Polaroid photos with their typical white border. However, the square sections where photographic snapshots normally appear show abstract color gradients with a painterly effect. Thus, the viewer is confronted with large-scale works that, coated with shiny liquid gloss, have a fascinating effect as hybrids between objects, paintings, and photography.

Schuurman took the photos in 2009 during a three-month stay in São Paulo as part of a residency program. The city has 18 million inhabitants, and since 2007 advertising has been prohibited in public places there. The result is empty spaces where previously posters and billboards were as well as scaffoldings for neon signs that are no longer in use. The artistic project for Schuurman's stay in Brazil's business and financial center was to photograph what is no longer visible. In addition to conventional photos, she took pictures of the urban landscape with a Polaroid SX 70 camera using expired film, since even then it was no longer in production. The astonishing result of these instant photographs was color streaks in yellow, green, blue, brown, and orange. The artist recognized the disappearance of the subjects that she sought to photograph as a symbolic equivalent of what was no longer there and made it her subject.

In recent years the artist has continued to work with instant cameras after developing her own complex process of using bleach to create negatives out of Polaroid photos. The result of this process is photographs with a very unique appearance: bleached colors, black areas, and an almost soft, velvety surface. At first glance these pictures look like yellowed photos from the 1970s or even drawings.

The series *Alptrraum* from 2018 features photographs of various glaciers in the Alps. Due to global warming, they have already receded significantly, and for many years efforts have been made to protect them from the sunlight and thus from further melting with reflective foil. In light of the original size of the glaciers, Schuurman's photos show absurdly small lengths of foil in the expansive mountain landscape. The particular aesthetic of the photos evokes the nostalgic image of a past mountain idyll, the exact opposite of which is the actual subject of the photos: the destruction of nature by man-made global warming and the exploitation of nature for ski tourism.

Elke Giffeler, June 2019

translation Anthony DePasquale