

Frauke Boggasch: tomorrow never comes IV

Text by Sasha Rossman

Frauke Boggasch's recent paintings are inhabited by both ghosts and stuffed animals. A pink creature's head faces the canvas, where it finds itself flat-up against the puddles and streaks of paint that are soaked into the surface. This unknown pink animal cannot be peeled off of the support without leaving its remains on the surface of the painting. Nor would its removal transpire without carrying away stains of colored paint. The painting and the stuffed animal are bound together at the threshold where the pink signifier of infantile projections merges with the entropic pull of sign-less paint. Can stuffed animals see themselves when they look in the mirror? Ghosts linger on top of Boggasch's abstract paintings – figurative ghosts, but also the ghosts of a painting practice that until now has remained firmly anchored in the world of abstraction. Boggasch's paintings were characterized by the kinds of surfaces on which the pink creature floats: layers of gestural marks that hover with a kind of violent spontaneity; the spectral remains of a painted struggle waged on a field of machismo. These layers now converge with elements drawn from a world of infantile joy (or is it the whimsical world of an old lady?) that either soften, or strengthen, the conflicts embedded in the pictorial structures on which they drift. These haunted grounds serve suddenly as screens. The abstract rectangle "degrades" into a surface of literal projection, e.g. for an adorable elephant, a phantom of cartoonish escapism, against a lush – and loaded – "jungle" of greenish painterly accretions.

When you lift the sheet off of a ghost, what do you find? Is there nothing underneath, or does a residue cling to the sheet's underside, a slimy, grubby gathering of remains? In 1971, Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen published the book *The Entropy Law and the Economic Process*, which would prove seminal for the degrowth movement. Georgescu-Roegen posited that neoclassical economics had not considered the second law of thermodynamics. Theories of degrowth claim that the expenditure of energy towards growth is balanced by degradation. Vitality has a flip side: expended energy transforms into dead matter, a useless heap, an 'inefficient mass' of leftovers. Yet dead mass takes on a life of its own, a ghostly presence that returns to prowl when 'unlimited' growth halts, as it has today. What follows? Regression?

Décroissance bears a structural relationship to the production of the modern self, in which regression and progression are yoked together like a broken yoyo. In *Emile*, Rousseau writes, "there is a term of life beyond which one retrogresses in advancing...In aging I become a child again." The imaginative projection into the world of the child builds the adult self through the retrieval of memories that were never experienced with self-awareness. "When I imagine a child I believe myself to be living from his life." Perhaps a certain expenditure is at stake here as well; this is the cost of autobiography ("why must I find obstacles to my desires?"). Rousseau's *Confessions* return to infancy with glee (anecdotes that "still make me quiver with satisfaction when I recall them.") This is an erotic *jouissance* that positively erupts with streaks and puddles of transformative fluid like the textures gathered on Boggasch's painted surfaces. Rousseau continues: "would one suppose that I, an old dotard...surprise myself sometimes by crying like a child." This zone in which self-production evolves into aesthetic form might be seen as a sort of entropy – growth tied to a sweet shroud of base matter. The degrowth of the market dribbles in a fluid that, like Rousseau's tears, can be frozen and shared on a park bench with a favorite friend. And why not share it with a stuffed animal, filled with personality and silent stories? Boggasch does just this in a poster she has made as part of an ongoing series of self-portraits that bring the artist's paintings and her 'self' as an image of a creative and economic producer together. We look at the back of her head and the back of her silent animal friend; they look stoically forward, frozen. Infantilism is a creative heterotopia.

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