

DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE...

Passages through the Phantasmagoric World of Scenic Wallpaper

In the first chapter of his classic children's novel *Alice in Wonderland* (1865), Lewis Carroll describes how the book's eponymous young heroine crawls into a rabbit burrow and then tumbles down a seemingly endless shaft to arrive in a fantastical world. The rules of logic and reason are suspended here: Not only does Alice grow larger and smaller when she eats and drinks, she also encounters extremely strange figures in her wanderings, such as a talking caterpillar smoking a hookah, the melancholy Mock Turtle, and the choleric Queen of Hearts, who ceaselessly condemns her subjects to death. Like the layers of an onion, each fork in the path opens up a fantastical new tale featuring even more fantastical figures and characters.¹ It is because of this multi-layered quality and playful appeal to the reader's imagination that *Alice in Wonderland* offers so many points of connection even today – especially for an artist like Patricia Lambertus, in whose work the imaginary and the seemingly absurd play such an important role.

For more than ten years now, Lambertus has been creating expansive installation works in which the rules of Euclidean space are turned on their heads. Much like Alice's tumble down the rabbit hole, one feels, upon entering her (panoramic) spaces, that one has stumbled or been transported into an unreal world that cannot be easily comprehended by the rules of mathematics and reason. Imaginary landscape views and photographs of classical buildings and interiors printed on the wall panels alternate with physically present faux-terrain elements such as cloth curtains, hunting trophies, and pieces of furniture; cracks in the wall and tears in the wallpaper, some tangible and others mere semblances, open into deeper semantic, pictorial, and spatial layers; representations of mythical beings are placed on an equal footing with depictions of the species *Homo sapiens*, not

uncommonly as a way of conjuring apocalyptic or surreal scenes. Layer by layer, object by object, we are afforded a view into a world that grows more and more convoluted, which the artist brings into being before the viewer's eyes with a great love of narrative detail, and which seems, on account of its multilayered quality – the treachery of objects – to elude any unambiguous reading. This impression is reinforced by enigmatic titles that are virtually indecipherable without additional information, such as *strawberrypanic*; *Career Girl, live at ease*; and *Kiss me, Hardy*.

And yet there exists one factor, in this deliberately arrayed chaos of spatial and other ambiguities, that ties everything together. It is the investigation of the history of interior decor, of the different ways of designing rooms and living spaces. The artist is quite taken with one form of wall decoration in particular: French scenic wallpaper from the early nineteenth century, which, with its all-over narrative scenery and landscape views, epitomizes the erstwhile artisanal superiority of French wallpaper manufacturing. To understand Lambertus's illusionary spaces, whose effect depends to a significant extent on the iconographic agenda of such *papiers peints panoramiques*, it is therefore worth taking a look at the history of paper wall decoration.

A QUESTION OF TASTE: WALL DECOR IN THE HISTORY OF INTERIOR DESIGN

In our current era, in which monochrome walls and white in-grain wallpaper represent the pinnacle of interior design, the fact that plain, unornamented, solid-colored wallpapers are a relatively new invention is often deliberately overlooked. In fact, they are a legacy of the discussions of the modernists, especially the architects of the movement known as Neues Bauen (new build-

ing), who, in the 1920s and 1930s, argued over the ideal form of wall decoration in their housing projects and developments. As economical alternatives to paint produced for a broad customer base, the monochrome wallpaper collections produced by the Bauhaus (specifically, by the Rasch company) grew in those years to become top sellers, as did the solid-colored wallpapers Le Corbusier designed in 1931 for the Swiss wallpaper manufacturer Salubra, which were based on a sophisticated color system he called *polychromie architecturale*.² A glance at the history of wallpaper shows, however, that earlier generations – and some later ones as well – were much more liberal with imagery and ornament, when it came to the decoration of their own four walls, than either the classic modernists or our contemporaries. One may recall the magnificent ornamental gilt-leather wallpapers of the Baroque era, the Oriental exoticism of the eighteenth century's chinoiserie landscapes and floral motifs, the stylistic and ornamental pluralism of historicism, the overflowing profusion of Art Nouveau's floral wallpaper designs, and the geometric formal language of Art Deco wall decor.

Even the walls of West German living rooms of the late 1960s and 1970s proclaimed their inhabitants' stylistic fearlessness with the lurid colors of their Pop Art borrowings. Some readers may also recall the wall-filling photo wallpapers of that period, which invited viewers to embark on "exotic" visual journeys to New York or the palm-lined beaches of the Caribbean before later fading into oblivion – or, rather, being papered over – as unfashionable domestic accessories. Only in the wake of the current coronavirus restrictions does this form of wall decoration seem to be enjoying a certain popularity again, as a look at the home page of the Deutsches Tapeten-Institut indicates. There we find an advertisement for contemporary photo wallpaper designs from

Komar, Rasch, and Marburger Tapetenfabrik: "Wallpaper is not just a decorative wall covering. It carries us off to faraway worlds, inspires us to dream, and makes the current #stayathome situation a little more bearable. Photo wallpaper, especially, offers an incredible variety of ways to 'travel.' Images of palm-lined beaches, meadows, and wild animals lend a touch of the exotic to our four walls. Wallpaper takes us wherever we dream of being, anywhere in the world – without ever having to leave."³ Only a very few consumers, however, are likely to be familiar with the historical predecessors of these industrially produced photo wallpapers: the handmade scenic wallpapers of the nineteenth century. Thus it is all the more surprising that a contemporary artist like Patricia Lambertus has made an intensive study of this form of wall decor and even gone so far as to make it a point of departure and recurring referent in her works.

SCENIC WALLPAPER: VARIETY OF IMAGERY AND PLACE IN THE HISTORY OF IDEAS

The years between 1800 and 1860 were the golden age of scenic wallpaper production. Invented at the turn of the century in Napoleonic France, scenic wallpaper rapidly became one of *la grande nation's* most successful exports, distributed not just in Europe but also overseas (especially to the United States), and it remains to this day the epitome of artisanal mastery and perfection. Its uniqueness is undoubtedly the result of its lack of pattern matches – that is, of repeating motifs or patterns. Instead, the *dessinateurs* of scenic wallpapers created vast landscapes and narrative spaces measuring fifteen or twenty meters across, which could be made up of as many as thirty-two individual panels or rolls of wallpaper. [Fig. 1] While strongly narrative, stage-like pictorial spaces dominated by figures remained in vogue

¹ Because of this, *Alice in Wonderland* is sometimes categorized as nonsense literature; see, for example, Gabriele Schwab, "Nonsense and Metacommunication: Alice in Wonderland," in *The Mirror and the Killer-Queen: Otherness in Literary Language* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 49–70.

² On the significance of wall and wallpaper color in the context of Neues Bauen, and on today's countervailing demand for "white walls," see Helen Koriath, "Die Wand – zwischen Utopie und Wirklichkeit," in *baustapete – neu aufgerollt*, ed. Maren Waike-Koormann / Museumsquartier der Stadt Osnabrück (Brahmsche: Rasch, 2019), 173–85.

³ "Unsere Tapete des Monats. Auf Weltreise mit Tapeten," home page of the Deutsches Tapeten-Institut, accessed January 28, 2021, <https://www.tapeten.de/trends/tapete-des-monats/>.

into the late 1830s, these increasingly gave way to pure landscape depictions from the 1840s on. They were replaced by luxuriant gardens and paradisiac nature scenes, with plants or animals representing specific geographic regions and climate zones. The playful confounding of inside and outside – of imaginary landscape and real domestic space – that constituted the fascination of rooms decorated in scenic wallpaper was thus taken to an extreme. Therefore, during the period in which they were invented, scenic wallpapers were described as either *tentures* (scenic wall hangings) or *paysages colorés* (colored landscapes), depending on their design and aesthetic effect.⁴

The production of such wallpapers was extremely costly and time-consuming. This was due primarily to the wealth of color and detail they contain, since the printing process required several thousand wood blocks to be positioned and aligned by hand on the paper panels by specialized laborers.⁵ To ensure that the sale of these luxury goods would not result in complete financial ruin, leading wallpaper manufacturers such as Dufour, Jacquemart & Bénard, Délicourt, and Zuber & Cie. chose their subjects according to the tastes of their potential clients. Besides the aforementioned garden fantasies, which fit into the tradition of the eighteenth century's painted landscape rooms and can be read as the spatialization of Rousseauian ideals of nature,⁶ the themes that found their way into interior decor were primarily those most popular with the emerging (educated) middle class. In the age of French imperialism and colonialism, accompanied as it was by a heightened interest in learning about peoples and cultures outside Europe, these themes included views of exotic parts of the world, such as India, North America, and the Pacific Islands; however, depictions of historic battles also made incursions into private homes, not uncommonly as tributes to Napoleon and the French nation – for example, in the form of Velay's oriental wallpaper *La bataille d'Héliopolis* (1818). The contemporary predilection for classical literature as well as the (illustrated)

novel, at the time still a relatively young genre, was reflected in wallpaper adaptations of novels and scenes from mythology (including *Métamorphoses d'Ovide*, created between 1790 and 1800 by an unknown manufacturer; Dufour's *Psyché* from 1815; and Jacquemart's *Don Quichotte* from 1819). Nor can an interest in biblical and religious themes be disregarded, as evidenced by two subjects sold by Dufour: *L'histoire de Joseph* (ca. 1815) and *Renauld et Armide* (1831).

Such decorations were usually installed in publicly accessible spaces designed to convey their owners' status: drawing rooms, music rooms, billiard rooms, and dining rooms.⁷ Scenic wallpaper thus played a major role, via the motifs and subjects it depicted, in communicating bourgeois values in the years around 1800.⁸ While the battle scenes that had been brought into the living room illustrated patriotism and soldierly masculinity, for example, other wallpapers (such as Dufour's *Psyché* or *Paysage de Télémaque dans l'île de Calypso*) transported the home's inhabitants into a bourgeois lovers' idyll, through which contemporary heteronormative ideals surrounding gender and pair-bonding (both within and outside marriage) could be negotiated.⁹ Still others invited viewers on exotic visual journeys to faraway lands, where "wild" indigenous peoples could be imagined as antipodes to "civilized" Europeans within one's own four walls. In an age in which domestic space was increasingly conceived as both a site of privacy and the antithesis of the sphere of the public and political, rooms decorated with scenic wallpaper became spaces in which contemporary ideas about sex differences, as well as nation, culture, and cultural superiority – all conveyed by way of figurative scenes and subjects – could be staged and negotiated. To borrow a phrase from Michel Foucault, scenic wallpapers thus reflected those "little tactics of the habitat" that played an important role in the constitution of modern concepts of the subject, some of which remain quite widespread today.¹⁰

4 Even in the early nineteenth century, in other words, there was no consensus on what to call these decorations, which is reflected to this day in their many different names, which vary from language to language, including *tableau-tenture*, *papier peint panoramique*, *Bildtapete*, and the term used in this essay, scenic wallpaper. On this subject, see Odile Nouvel-Kammerer, "Der weite Himmel. Bildtapeten aus Frankreich," in *Die Tapete. Geschichte, Gestaltung und Techniken des Wanddesigns*, ed. Lesley Hoskins (Cologne: Parkland, 2005), 94–113 (in particular 96–98).

5 For example, the printing of *Vues du Brésil* (1830) at the factory of Zuber & Cie. involved 247 colors and 1,693 blocks, which it had taken twenty block cutters seven months to produce.

6 Sabine Thümmler, *Die Geschichte der Tapete. Raumkunst aus Papier* (Eurasburg: Minerva, 1998), 115.

7 Bernard Jacqué, "Eine Typologie der Präsentation von Panoramatapeten im 19. Jahrhundert," in *Papiertapeten. Bestände, Erhaltung und Restaurierung*, ed. Staatliche Schlösser, Burgen und Gärten Sachsen (Dresden: Sandstein, 2005), 15–21.

8 Katharina Eck and Astrid Silvia Schönhagen, "Imaginationsräume des (bürgerlichen) Selbst. Möglichkeiten und Herausforderungen kulturwissenschaftlicher Analysen des Wohnens in Bildtapeten-Interieurs im frühen 19. Jahrhundert," in *Interieur und Bildtapete. Narrative des Wohnens um 1800*, ed. Katharina Eck and Astrid Silvia Schönhagen (Bielefeld: transcript, 2014), 13–64.

9 For an in-depth analysis of heteronormative gender roles and relationships in the medium of scenic wallpaper, see Katharina Eck, *Tapete und Liebes-Reisen. Subjekt, Gender und Familie in Beziehungsräumen des frühindustriell-bürgerlichen Wohnens* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2018).

ZUBER, DUFOUR, ET AL. REVISITED: SCENIC WALLPAPER IN CONTEMPORARY ART

Patricia Lambertus, who has been deeply engaged with wallpapered interiors since completing a residency lasting several months at Schloss Hundisburg in Saxony-Anhalt in 2010, is interested in the deconstruction of precisely those "tactics of the habitat." Various forms of wall decoration had already found their way into some of her earlier site-specific works, such as the installation *Sophies Garten* (2007), which extended over several rooms in a vacant Bremen high-rise. The focus, however, was always on ornamental or geometric wall coverings, which were compiled, for example, into a kind of multicolored "wallpapered Proun Room." It was only under the influence of Schloss Hundisburg's Baroque gardens that the artist began to draw upon wallpapered garden panoramas and other scenic wallpapers. In the contemporary scene, she is thus one of a handful of artists who have discovered the artisanal product that is scenic wallpaper.

Most of these are installation or performance artists who have dealt with this form of wall decor in individual works or complexes of works. Only in the case of Lambertus has it developed into a completely unique and characteristic visual and formal language. This is particularly strikingly illustrated by her use of wallpaper motifs that invite the viewer on "armchair travels," escapist visual journeys to exotic, faraway regions. An example of these motifs is Zuber's *El Dorado* (1849), which depicts a paradisiacal garden landscape with stock architectural, botanical, and zoological elements representing the early modern era's four continents: Asia, America, Europe, and Africa. [Fig. 2] In Lambertus's first large-scale scenic-wallpaper piece, *Nature's Lullaby* (2011), the artist placed individual fragments of this wallpaper behind and in front of a photographic view of Schloss Hundisburg's gardens, like a collage of strips peeling off the wall. [Fig. 3] In combination with imaginary curtains, trees, a balustrade, and

10 Michel Foucault, "The Eye of Power," trans. Colin Gordon, in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977* (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 146–65 (quotation on 149).

11 Kristen Marek, "Eldorado – Topologien einer Projektion: Mythos, Tapete, Video," in *Agency, Ambivalence, Analysis: Approaching the Museum with Migration in Mind*, ed. Ruth Noack (Milan: MeLa Books, 2013), 110–26 (quotation on 125), accessed February 5, 2021, <http://www.mela-project.polimi.it/publications/1074.htm>.

12 The work's title is a reference to the transit of Venus, in which the planet moves across the face of the sun. This astronomical phenomenon, which had barely been studied before the eighteenth century, was documented on the island of Tahiti on April 3, 1769, by an expeditionary team led by Captain James Cook. In effect, this event marks the beginning of European colonization of Polynesia and the South Pacific.

other "scraps" of ornamental wallpaper, this created the impression of overlapping layers of space, constantly drawing viewers into new outward and inward views.

Just a few years earlier, the Bosnian-German artist Danica Dakić (b. 1962) had taken an entirely different approach to Zuber's garden panorama. In a piece for documenta 12, Dakić encouraged unaccompanied underage refugees to picture their hopes and desires, and also their fears, before the backdrop of *El Dorado* and other wall coverings on display at the German Wallpaper Museum in Kassel. [Fig.4] These staged interviews were later edited into a video projection as well as a sound installation, which was played in front of the museum's wallpapers for documenta's visitors. Unlike the fabled South American land of gold from which the wallpaper takes its name, Dakić's *EL DORADO* (2006/07) is therefore a symbol of the untrained performers' (unsuccessful) search for a better world beyond the very different countries they come from. Not only that, the artist gives the émigrés a voice – or rather, provides them with a stage – so that their bodies do not become mere "sites of inscription" for stereotyped ideas of foreignness.¹¹ Thus this performative exploration of the medium of scenic wallpaper is ultimately in the service of an artist-initiated exercise in spatial-pictorial self-empowerment for the young people involved.

This strategy of self-empowerment through scenic wallpaper has been taken even further by Lisa Reihana (b. 1964). In 2017 the Maori artist, who is best known for complex video and photo works, presented her immersive video and sound installation *in Pursuit of Venus [infected]* (2015–17) in New Zealand's pavilion at the Venice Biennale.¹² Her source material was a scenic wallpaper from Dufour titled *Les sauvages de la mer Pacifique* (1805, also known as *Les voyages du capitaine Cook*), the earliest known example of European Tiki Pop, into which she breathed new life in a number of ways with the addition of moving images. While

the original shows a primeval island paradise populated by “noble savages,” Reihana overlaid the pictured landscape with scenes of cultural contact between the ship’s crew and the local inhabitants that might have taken place during Captain James Cook’s first South Pacific expedition (1768–71). [Fig. 5–7] In doing so, she intentionally broke with the stereotypical portrayal of indigenous people in Dufour’s “panorama of the peoples of the South Seas,” which harked back to the eighteenth century’s classicist ideals. In Reihana’s work, roles representing the various ethnicities and cultures are played by Maori, Aboriginal Australian, and Polynesian actors. Intercultural conflicts and misunderstandings find their way into the digital landscape as well, along with non-European narratives, all of which are completely suppressed in the wallpaper. Underlying it all is a sound design that interweaves conversation, traditional Maori singing, Hawaiian drumming, birdsong, and eighteenth-century European music. Reihana’s cinematographic reenactment of the Dufour wallpaper thus combines a critique of the colonial view of the “South Seas” with aesthetic strategies from the contemporary self-representation of the inhabitants of the Pacific region.¹³ At the same time, by highlighting history’s lacunae, she shows us that the “discovery” and colonization of foreign peoples and cultures was never a one-way street, but rather was always accompanied by processes of intercultural exchange.

Lambertus’s particular approach to the medium of scenic wallpaper stands in contrast to Reihana’s & Dakić’s positions, with their marked emphasis on questions rooted in critiques of representation. Whereas in the work of the other two artists, (scenic) wallpapers function primarily as backdrops for discourse, charged with the history of ideas, which invite negotiations around themes of identity politics, Lambertus allows the material itself to “speak” by investigating it as a material to be aesthetically reshaped and overlaid with new imagery. This certainly does not mean that her work is less socially critical or political –

quite the contrary! The historical wallpaper motifs she chooses are arranged in front of, next to, and on top of objects from trash culture and everyday life, iconic reproductions of paintings from European art history, photographic self-portraits, film stills, and pictures from recent news reports. At first glance, this mix of images and objects appears completely arbitrary, but upon closer inspection of the spatial settings – or rather, immersion in them – it becomes evident that the explosive power of Lambertus’s arrangements lies in precisely this disparate quality, for it is what creates new conceptual and formal relationships and “alliances” within the seemingly unconnected, enigmatic *mélange*. Here we experience what Michael Stoeber calls “the artist’s pleasure in visually overwhelming the viewer” and in “theatrical presentation.”¹⁴ We feel as though we have been transported “into a cosmos that is at once familiar and strange to us – because we know the motifs that are shown to us, and because their alliances present us with mysteries. Disparate worlds and realities collide. ... Inside and outside intertwine, and logical coherence is suspended.”¹⁵ In using the modernist technique of collage, Lambertus is thus consciously fracturing the illusionary quality of scenic wallpaper – the same aesthetic factor which, by contrast, is cinematically heightened into hyperrealism in Reihana’s *in Pursuit of Venus [infected]*.

“UNHINGED” WALLPAPERED INTERIORS IN LAMBERTUS’S WORK

The contextual investigation of socially coded living spaces and interiors plays a special role in the collagistic deconstructions of Lambertus’s illusion machine. In part, this is the artist’s attempt to come to grips with the history of wallpapered rooms in the now not-so-white “white cube” of the exhibition space. In this context, a neo-Gothic hunting room wallpapered with Jacquemart’s *Chasse de Compiègne* (1812), in combination with anthropomorphized gorilla soldiers from the movie *Conquest of*

the Planet of the Apes (1972) and a South Pacific sunset overlaid with dystopian imagery, can be reinterpreted as an apocalyptic place in the shadow of violence, where the boundaries between humanity, animality, and natural wildness blur – such is the case with *hidden door I* (2015). In another installation titled *Career Girl, live at ease* (2013), Lambertus uses the medium of the interior to examine the thoughtlessness of humanity’s behavior toward nature. Here, she has superimposed kitschy images of ocean waves and dolphins onto the wall panels in a photographic reproduction of a Baroque ballroom; the view out the window onto the garden parterre has been replaced by a decaying swimming pool whose rubble spills into the ballroom like a mudslide, while a group of soldiers on patrol in enemy territory are depicted on the outer edges of this surreal interior landscape. One possible layer of meaning is unlocked by the title of the piece, which, like much of Lambertus’s wordplay, carries an ironic or sarcastic undertone: “Career Girl” is in fact the nickname of an elderly female dolphin who was originally trained to detect mines as part of the U.S. Navy Marine Mammal Program and then, after her retirement at forty-seven – that is, at an age at which non-animal soldiers are typically released from active military duty – sent out on new, potentially fatal underwater missions. So much for her supposed “life at ease.”

In *Kiss me, Hardy* (2013), Lambertus deals with another, equally sociopolitically contaminated “minefield.” In this site-specific work, the artist draws attention to the pervasive militarization of society (which is largely stoked by visual media) by juxtaposing scenes from the Napoleonic battle wallpaper *La bataille d’Austerlitz* (1829–30)¹⁶ with the hip camouflage patterns that have been so widespread in recent popular culture, as well as war toys for children, reenactments by adult military-history buffs, troop deployments in Afghanistan, and violent altercations during the 2013 Gezi Park protests in Istanbul. This extremely volatile mix of imagery – accompanied by military faux-terrain

elements such as camouflage fatigues and a gas mask – was conceived for a vacant storefront on the historic promenade in the once-fashionable spa town of Bad Ems. Much like in the series *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home* (1967–72) by Martha Rosler (b. 1943), in which the American artist collaged war photographs from Vietnam into pictures of domestic interiors from the magazine *House Beautiful*, in Lambertus’s work an interior space becomes, and in fact is exhibited as, a theater of war that viewers can enter. In this way she critiques the media’s increasing infiltration of the domestic sphere (and not only the domestic sphere) with violent fantasies and images of every description. At the same time, she questions our image of war as an exclusively male “playground” by incorporating girls with assault rifles and a Madonna-like female soldier on horseback into the fabric of the space.

However, in the profusion of spatially overlapping image layers depicting conflicts both historical and contemporary, as well as their media representations, an additional, semantic level emerges that is not present in the same form in Rosler’s work: the question of the (media) construction of history.¹⁷ The exhibition site is not insignificant in this regard, for it was on the promenade in Bad Ems that the French ambassador, Count Benedetti, demanded of the future Kaiser Wilhelm I that the House of Hohenzollern give up all claims to the Spanish throne. The “Ems Dispatch” that was subsequently sent on July 13, 1870, to Otto von Bismarck, who passed it on to the press in significantly abridged form, brought worldwide fame thundering down upon what today is a sleepy town, leading to a geopolitical conflict of unforeseen magnitude that culminated in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71. It is in this charged field of history-making, historic site, and exhibition space that the explosive force of *Kiss me, Hardy* is unleashed. The installation becomes an invitation for viewers not just to grapple with the socially coded models of war and violence pictured in politicized wallpaper images, but

13 Dee Jefferson, “Lisa Reihana: A Monumental, Immersive New Artwork Reanimates the Story of Captain Cook and First Contact,” *ABC News*, January 31, 2018, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-01-31/lisa-reihana-in-pursuit-of-venus-reimagines-australian-history/9376114>.

14 Michael Stoeber, “Patricia Lambertus. Suche nach Selbstfindung,” in *Identitäten. Salon Salder 2019*, ed. Stadt Salzgitter, exh. cat. (Salzgitter: Städtische Kunstsammlung, 2019), 33.

15 Ibid.

16 This wallpaper, whose manufacturer is unknown, is a depiction of the Battle of the Three Emperors on December 2, 1805, in which Napoleon defeated an alliance of Austrian and Russian troops near the Moravian town of Austerlitz.

17 Eck, *Tapezierte Liebes-Reisen*, 18.

also to interrogate history as a construct of power politics that is predominantly male (i.e., created by “great” men).

Which brings us back, after many detours, to the place where this essay began: Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*. For Carroll, too, the journey into a fantastical, seemingly unreal world, an Absurdistan conveyed in and through images, is the peg on which to hang a deeper social critique. This is often overlooked in superficial adaptations of the classic children’s book (such as Walt Disney’s 1951 animated film), but there is no denying that Carroll’s thoroughly eccentric characters personify specific social types. The hookah-smoking caterpillar, for example, stands for people who incessantly twist the words of those they converse with; the three illustrious figures who meet daily for six o’clock tea lampoon the inane chatter of English teatime gatherings; and the Mock Turtle caricatures the long-winded, attention-dominating storyteller who, in his self-absorption, actually has nothing to say beyond shaggy-dog stories. With much irony, sarcasm, and wit, Carroll thus holds up a mirror to nineteenth-century British society. As Christian Enzensberger writes: “Carroll’s books are about society. Here, and almost exclusively here, is where Alice goes through her adventure; her true setting is the

parquet; the struggle is about decorum; the weapon is the word. The beheadings ordered by the Queen of Hearts are just jokes; the true executions take place in language. In the lands through which Alice wanders, one dies the deaths of being at a loss for words and having to hold one’s tongue; one is not murdered, but rather silenced.”¹⁸

Much like Alice, the viewers of Lambertus’s installations move through terrain littered with social “mines.” They are not silenced, however; on the contrary, they are invited to actively engage with what is pictured. Her many-layered spaces thus become “echo chamber[s]”¹⁹ in which the discourses of the present and past are not simply deconstructed, but also reverberate in the here and now in images of domesticity. In this unique and provocative way, the artist has succeeded in breathing new life into the medium of French scenic wallpaper.

ASTRID SILVIA SCHÖNHAGEN

¹⁸ Christian Enzensberger, “Der Aufruhr der Regeln,” afterword to *Alice im Wunderland. Mit zweiundvierzig Illustrationen von John Tenniel*, by Lewis Carroll, trans. Christian Enzensberger (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1984), 129–38 (quotation on 130).

¹⁹ Ludwig Seyfarth, “War in Illusionistic Space,” trans. Patrick Hubenthal, in *Patricia Lambertus. Kiss me, Hardy*, ed. Oliver Kornhoff, exh. cat. (Bad Ems: Künstlerhaus Schloss Balmoral, 2014), n.p.



Abb. 1 / Fig. 1:

Warendorf, Bürgerhaus in der Klosterstraße 7 / middle-class house at Klosterstrasse 7: Tapetenzimmer mit Dufours / Room decorated with Dufour's scenic wallpaper Paysage de Télémaque dans l'île de Calypso, 1818; im Hintergrund Blick in den „Inka“- oder Gartensaal / with view of „Inca room“ (garden room) in background

Foto / Photo: Hedwig Nieland © LWL-DLBW



Abb. 2 / Fig. 2:

Manufaktur / Workshop of Zuber & Cie.: El Dorado (Ausschnitt mit Darstellung Afrikas / detail of panel depicting Africa), 1849, Installationsansicht / installation view, Deutsches Tapetenmuseum

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Abb. 3 / Fig. 3:

Patricia Lambertus: Nature's Lullaby, Schloss Hundisburg / Hundisburg Castle, 2011

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Abb. 4 / Fig. 4:

Danica Dakić: EL DORADO. Giessbergstrasse (Videostill / video still), 2006/07

© Danica Dakić, VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2021



Abb. 5 / Fig. 5:

Manufaktur / Workshop of Dufour: Les sauvages de la mer Pacifique (Detail / detail), 1805

© Foto / Photo: Astrid S. Schönhagen



Abb. 6 / Fig. 6:

Lisa Reihana: in Pursuit of Venus [infected], 2015–17, „Emissaries“ im Neuseeland-Pavillon / at New Zealand Pavilion, Venedig-Biennale / Venice Biennale, 2017

Foto / Photo: Michael Hall. Abdruck mit freundlicher Genehmigung von / Image courtesy of New Zealand at Venice.

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Abb. 7 / Fig. 7:

Lisa Reihana: in Pursuit of Venus [infected] (Detail / detail), 2015–17, Ultra-HD-Video / Ultra HD video, Farbe / color, 7:1 sound, 64 min.

Abdruck mit freundlicher Genehmigung der Künstlerin / Image courtesy of the artist, Artprojects und / and New Zealand at Venice.

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