

True Colors

Color in photography 1849 - 1955

23 January – 21 April 2025

How did color get into photography? The exhibition *True Colors - Color in Photography 1849 - 1955* answers this question with outstanding works from the ALBERTINA Museum's photo collection.

The desire for color in photography has dominated the world of photography from the very beginning. *True Colors* traces the development of color photography, from the first experimental techniques in the 19th century to generally applicable analog color photography.

Even in the early days of photography, daguerreotypes and salt paper prints were colored by hand to create colorful images. Monochrome pigment papers, which enjoyed great popularity until the 1890s, also contributed to the broad chromatic diversity of 19th century photographs.

The first successful color process, which was reserved for an exclusive circle, was introduced in 1891. The brilliant images in the so-called interference color process are based on the physical principle of standing waves, which also allows us to see colored reflections in soap bubbles. The unique pieces from the ALBERTINA Museum's Collection represent a unique focal point.

The autochrome process, which was introduced in 1907, brought about a major change in image culture. It was also practicable for amateurs and helped its inventors, the Lumière brothers, to achieve great commercial success. However, it was mainly used as a glass slide for projection. At the same time, around 1900, fine art printing processes were developed that used color pigments to produce multicolored image solutions. They fulfilled the artistic aspirations of the Pictorialists and were commonplace in large photo studios until the 1930s. For a long time, the challenge was to obtain colored prints on paper. This was also achieved at the beginning of the 20th century with the use of various three-color processes, which were assembled in several steps.

Kodak finally achieved the breakthrough to easy-to-use and therefore mass-market color photography in 1936 with the first 35mm color slide films. These products revolutionized the use of colour photography in the following decades, which form the conclusion of this ALBERTINA Museum exhibition.

True Colors provides an insight into the rich holdings of the ALBERTINA Museum's photography collection, the historical part of which is based on the collection of the Höhere Graphische Bundes-Lehr- und Versuchsanstalt (GLV). The exhibition demonstrates the great public interest, the constant development and the various fields of application of historical photography in color. *True Colors* also explores the impact of popular color processes on the visual culture of the early 20th century.

Press images

The following images are available free of charge in the *Press* section of www.albertina.at.
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Hans Madensky
Fashion portrait – student from the Vienna-
Hetzendorf fashion school, 1952
Kodak Dye Transfer
27 x 22,8 cm
The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna – Permanent Loan
by Höhere Graphische Bundes-Lehr- und
Versuchsanstalt
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Heinrich Kühn
The Parasol, 1912
Autochrome
18 x 13 cm
The ALBERTINA Museum, Vienna
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Philippe Pottier
Evening gown by Madame Grès, 1950/1954
Kodak Dye Transfer
22,2 x 16,5 cm
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Versuchsanstalt
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Richard Neuhaus
Parrot, 1899
Interference color photography
8,3 cm x 6,4 cm
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Versuchsanstalt
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Anonymous
Laboratory still life, around 1906
Pinatype
14,2 x 11,2 cm
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Arthur von Hübl
Exotic butterflies, 1908-1914
Autochrome
6,3 x 6,9 cm
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by Höhere Bundes-Lehr- und Versuchsanstalt
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Auguste and Louis Lumière
Bracelets, 1893-1900
ALL Chroma (Three-color photography on film)
8,4 x 17,8 cm
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Versuchsanstalt



Wilhelm Horn
Portrait of a young officer, 1849
Daguerreotype, colored
11 x 8,3 cm
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by Höhere Graphische Bundes- Lehr- und
Versuchsanstalt
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Adolphe Braun
Sample board of various pigment papers from Braun
& Co, around 1910
Pigment prints
38,2 x 32,5 cm
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by Höhere Graphische Bundes- Lehr- und
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