

KYIV COLOURS

Kasper Bosmans

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kuratiert von Jonas Schenk

Power, historically, has never simply ruled — it has served looks. Diplomacy learned to seduce; justice learned to intimidate — both, it turns out, through the same instinct for spectacle. In Amber Room and Star Chamber (Kyiv Colours), Kasper Bosmans superimposes two such costumes of authority — the Amber Room, gifted by Frederick of Prussia to Peter the Great in 1717 to cement a military alliance, and the Star Chamber, the secretive English court whose starred ceiling presided over the arbitrary punishment of the politically inconvenient — into a single, gleaming surface of wallpaper, amber, and plexiglass.

What emerges is not a monument, but a costume. Bosmans treats sovereignty as a matter of ornament. This is authority caught in the act of over-dressing — an exuberance so deliberate it borders on drag. Read this way, the piece performs its subject rather than illustrating it: a masquerade of legitimacy, staged through sheer material excess, not unlike queer strategies of camp turning visibility itself into a weapon and a shield at once.

There is something almost romantic in this — the idea that dominion, throughout history, felt compelled to seek its own validation through beauty. That it needed to be gorgeous to be believed.

Quite the opposite, today. Rule, in its contemporary form, rarely bothers with pageantry anymore. It doesn't need amber, doesn't need stars — it operates in plain sight, bare-faced, in sheer dullness, nothing to repurpose.

At least the old ones left something behind. The uniforms, the gilding, the theatricalness of dominance. Power's old wardrobe became someone else's kink. What is discarded by history, can always be picked up again — and worn for entirely different reasons.

Bosmans' work, made in Kyiv in 2018, arrives at exactly this hinge point: a study of a moment when the state still felt it owed us a spectacle — set against a present that excels in blandness.

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