

Keep it Unreal:
Esther Teichmann's
"Drinking Air"

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Esther Teichmann's photographs focus on subjects close to her—relatives, friends and lovers who she transforms into exotic, symbolic figures via painted backdrops, mysterious lighting and painstaking manipulations in the dark room.

"I've never been that interested in the reality of what's there," says the German-American artist. "It's autobiographically driven, but then I shift it into a fantastical space."

Like a Victorian portrait photographer, Teichmann works with large-format bellows cameras, composing her tableaux with nods to classical sculpture, paintings and an eclectic range of found images.

This "magpie" approach is showcased in her new limited artist's book *Drinking Air*—an excerpt of which we premiere here—featuring works from her recent series *Mythologies* alongside clusters of reference material. For *Mythologies*, Teichmann was looking in particular at Orientalist paintings, inspired by her artistic forebears' shared interest in "this idea of the eroticizing and exoticizing of the other." In this recent work, a further dislocation from reality is achieved through nostalgic, brooch-like oval crops, collage, and painterly, hand-tinted colors.

"The reason I'm drawn to the photographic is this magical quality of the condensed, spectral image," she says. "It has this quality in the process, this experience of being separate from normal temporality. It's very intimate."

Read the original interview on
www.nowness.com