

# EVA STENRAM – Drape

Sweden

eng.

Where do these women emerge from?

The women seen in *Drape* are all pin-up models that were photographed some time ago (probably the 1960s). I don't know who the models or photographer are. I then digitally extended the curtains or drapes behind the model in the pictures in order to partially obscure the models' bodies.

The square images all derive from original medium-format negatives; the rest of the (rectangular) images derive from the 1960s US men's magazine *Cavalcade* and retain their original size and layout in relation to the magazine page.

In *Drape*, as in your previous work entitled *pornography/forest\_pics*, you copy paste and digitally modify b-grade pictures. Your attention is drawn to a special kind of imagery – erotic or pornographic – a genre where the focal point is always made very clear, the naked couple or girl surrounded by an environment which is specifically chosen for its symbolic value. A sofa, curtains to evoke domesticity or grass and trees to evoke wilderness. By digitally manipulating the images, you reverse the perspective by bringing the background to the fore etc.

Normally, erotic and pornographic images offer a public glimpse into a private and intimate space. In *pornography/forest\_pics*, by contrast, this space is completely hidden behind a screen of vegetation copied and pasted from other sections of the photograph, resulting in the disappearance of the porn scene, leaving the viewer with just a few remaining traces. In *Drape*, the curtain or drape similarly covers the intimacy of the body. The curtain reiterates its role as a marker between public and private space.

In both series, the background engulfs the foreground; the focal point slips off-screen and puts an overlooked part of the image in the spotlight. I am interested in reversing the hierarchy within the image.

Paradoxically, by removing the body or covering it, the body becomes, by its absence, even more present; the observer moves between what s/he expects from the clichéd image and what the image actually represents or rather refuses to represent after your manipulation. Your work questions the very act of looking. Would you say so?

I explore the act of looking through the making of my work. According to Freud, a child deals with his anxiety over the woman's lack of penis by retrospectively interrupting his own gaze, and re-focusing it on a detail that stands in close proximity to this absence. This detail becomes the fetish-object. Similarly, in *Drape*, there is a pleasure in looking at what surrounds the absence. I was trying to produce relatively strange images, images in which the gaze of the viewer is deflected and redirected. The model slips away, but of course some part of her is left behind in the picture (usually the lower legs and feet) and these parts, as well as the interior background, tell their own story.

Eva Stenram graduated from the Royal College of Art in 2003 with an MA in photography. She is currently based in London but has exhibited internationally including shows at the Victoria & Albert museum (UK), Seoul Museum of Art (South Korea) and the Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum (India). In 2012 she was nominated for the Les Rencontres d'Arles Discovery Award.