

Photography has been both the subject and source material of Eva Stenram’s work since the 1990s, when the artist began working with Photoshop software to digitally manipulate archival and analogue found photographs. Stenram has honed a signature style that evokes a nostalgic atmosphere, often incorporating vintage erotic and Pin-Up photography. Her sumptuous images contour the original photographs: backgrounds are brought into the fore, and figures are embedded or float, confounding the usual hierarchies of the photographic plane. In this deliberately disruptive process, Stenram questions the power dynamics of spectatorship, confronting questions of agency, control and ownership implied in the photographic act, while also acknowledging the complicity of both the artist and the viewer who indulges in the act of looking. **▲** *Drape XIV* (2015) is from Stenram’s notable early series ‘Drape’ (2011–13), in which the artist set forth some of her preoccupying themes: in the digitally altered 1950s and 1960s negatives of Pin-Ups intended for publication in men’s magazines, the desires of the intended original viewer – the male gazer – are exposed while the women subjects are concealed behind curtains. Though not entirely devoid of erotic frisson, with their tactile, sensual resonances, the pleasure of viewing these images is derived from the way they reveal how female sexuality is constructed and performed through pose, gesture and staging. **▲** Stenram is consistently interested in space, ominous interior settings and environments that conjure a certain sense of claustrophobia – from the domestic space of *Interior* (2021), with its doilies, teacups and shag-pile rug, to the dark grotto that engulfs the viewer in *Cave II*, part of a sequence of works created in 2021 using pictures from a 1970s book of landscapes in Germany. Spliced into this environment are human eyes – taken from vintage Pin-Up magazines – that slowly emerge from the glistening surface of the rock, their detached gaze both beckoning and blank. Stenram’s exploration of these spaces may serve as metaphors for looking inwards, reaching for the recesses of the imagination – towards what cannot be seen – turning the photograph once more on its head. **▲** The artist takes delight and finds delectation in the aesthetics of image-making and the possibilities of creating strange and surreal new worlds by reinventing her source materials. Distinctive in its vibrant atmosphere is *Garden State* (1999) (2019), a lush, dreamlike utopian vision of intimacy that combines a picture from a gardening book thrifted from a dime store with bodies cut from vintage erotic magazines: the gesture conveyed in the interlocking, disembodied arms that extend out, representing, Stenram suggested in correspondence with the author, ‘a desire to merge not just with each other, but with space itself’. **▲** C H A R L O T T E J A N S E N

Born 1976 Stockholm, Sweden. Lives in Berlin, Germany.



↑↑ **Drape XIV**, 2015, silver gelatin print on fibre based paper, 29.5 x 29.5 cm (11 ½ x 11 ½ in)
↑ **Interior**, 2021, Ditone pigment print on Hahnemühle Photo Rag Baryta, 11 x 14 cm (4 ¼ x 5 ½ in)
→ **Buds**, 2021, Ditone pigment print on Hahnemühle Photo Rag Baryta, 26.8 x 23 cm (10 ½ x 9 in)



↑ **Cave II**, 2021, Ditone pigment print on Hahnemühle Photo Rag Baryta, 35 x 35.5 cm (13¾ x 14 in)
 → **Garden State (199)**, 2019, archival pigment print on Canson Infinity Paltine Fibre Rag, 40.6 x 30.5 cm (16 x 12 in)

