



— CULTURE

MARYAM EISLER IN THE FRAME

BY ROSIE SMITH

Maryam Eisler's talents span far beyond photography. Rosie Smith gets to know the multi-hyphenate creative behind the camera

Few people understand art's power to conjure and connect like Maryam Eisler. "Art has always inspired me to think and feel more deeply about humanity, in search of ideas that match the moment," she shares, reflecting on what art offers her personally and the world at large. "It is at the vanguard of creative and spiritual renewal, with a potential to offer the viewer new perspectives – and, more often than not, an impact which goes way beyond the artwork's own organic form."

If there was one line that encapsulates Maryam's stellar career to date, this could be it: the Iranian-born, London-based artist's influence as a creative reaches far beyond her own practice. While her work spans a range of formats – she's a celebrated photographer, artist, author and editor – Maryam is also an art patron with an undeniable impact on the wider creative community. Thanks to her roles as a member of the Tate International Council, trustee of the Whitechapel Gallery and co-chair of Tate's MENAAC acquisitions committee (to name a few), she enables her peers and new generations of artists to benefit from her experience and insight.



In short, her contribution to creativity adds up to more than the sum of its parts, which

is, perhaps, what it means to be an inspirational cultural figure. Not that Maryam would put it that way. "I am flattered to be included in such an illustrious listing, which surely I do not deserve," she says when asked about being named by *Artnet* as one of the "100 Most Powerful Women in Art". "However, the question of being recognised is enough for me to know that my endeavours – in the realm of institutional support, publications, exchange and actual artistic production – have managed to perhaps make a positive impact."

When it comes to key themes in her artistic practice, there is a clear thread running through her work over the years. "My personal journey through photography has not only been a search for self-identity, but has also been about an exploration of the sublime feminine. The power of femininity, though it may have been denied or suppressed, is undeniable in its allure and irreplaceable in its formal and artistic expressions. Through my lens, I aim to reduce female energy to its bare essence, to its spiritual and physical strength but also to its vulnerability... in sum, to its complete humanity."



With every collection, Maryam brings this idea to life in bright new ways. Her varied body of work ranges from precise editorial portraiture – ornate garments, striking poses, lavish settings – to abstracted scenes in primary tones that seem to bottle feelings of wistful longing and nostalgia. Masterfully framed moments of city life and the natural world appear too, from swimming pools in Palm Springs to rock formations in Utah. Whatever the subject, these are the kinds of photographs that have the power to pull you in, instantly and effortlessly, by revealing an irresistible version of the world that feels rich and fresh; a place that's alive with beauty and wonder.



To discover Maryam's art and perspective is, simply, to want more of it. Her words and her photographs radiate an intriguing, complex confidence; you find yourself turning pages for another paragraph, another picture, another exploration of existence from her point of view. Fortunately, that's exactly what we can expect: Maryam is always thinking of her next creation. "Every year that I am in the practice of making art, I find new inspirations with personal experience and wisdom. I am a woman, and as such my female gaze is a product of my own life's sensual and spiritual journey?"



All images shown from the 'Once Upon a Turquoise Past' series (2021) maryameisler.com

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