



## Erwin Olaf

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"Vermeer Noir" might be an apt description of Dutch photographer Erwin Olaf's disquieting image repertoire. His subjects are posed indoors, immobile, somewhat in reverie and bathed in nearby window light--but not tranquilly so. An atmosphere of sinister but clinical indifference attends both them and their environments, rendering them into beautiful but dislocated mannequins in catalogue-furnished interiors. All sense of belonging to a place is eliminated. Each richly colored and sleekly composed image offers a sly reinterpretation of Norman Rockwell-like iconography and characters, manifesting a nostalgia that both burlesques and celebrates America of the 1950s and 60s. Dramatic emotions are hinted at but left ambiguous; certainly nothing in the models' surroundings suggests a cause. Here, across three themes of Hope, Grief and Rain, Olaf blends mid-century Modern and Noir in the lens of contemporary fashion. Avocado greens, golden-hued oranges and subtle lilacs brighten and deaden simultaneously, sending an irresolvable tension through his scenarios like an electric current. This tension, strung between the polar effects of zing and muteness, is the line Olaf treads in his pictures. As a whole, the work defines what critic Jonathan Turner usefully describes as "Olaf's recent fascination with the visual representation of such emotions as loss, loneliness and quiet despair... [He] plays games with the idea of cold reality versus cruel artifice, capturing that precise moment when innocence, hope and joy are lost." The book comes with a DVD.

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