



Taner Ceylan, "The Lost Paintings Series"

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This Turkish painter employs photorealist techniques to deconstruct Orientalism, a 19th-century genre in Europe and the United States that featured exotic scenes of the mysterious Levant. Some artists relied on pure fantasy; others traveled to North Africa and elsewhere to base their visions on some observable reality. Either way, Orientalism went hand in glove with colonialism, as the stereotypes it helped foster were essential to the psychology of Western empire building. Ceylan plays with and against these same stereotypes, portraying dusky, alluring women as well as men in fezzes and kaffiyehs, though with notable twists (the inclusion of evidently gay subjects, for instance). More to the point, he juxtaposes one sort of illusion (paintings that look like photographs) with another—the myths and misconceptions that have emerged about the Middle East.

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