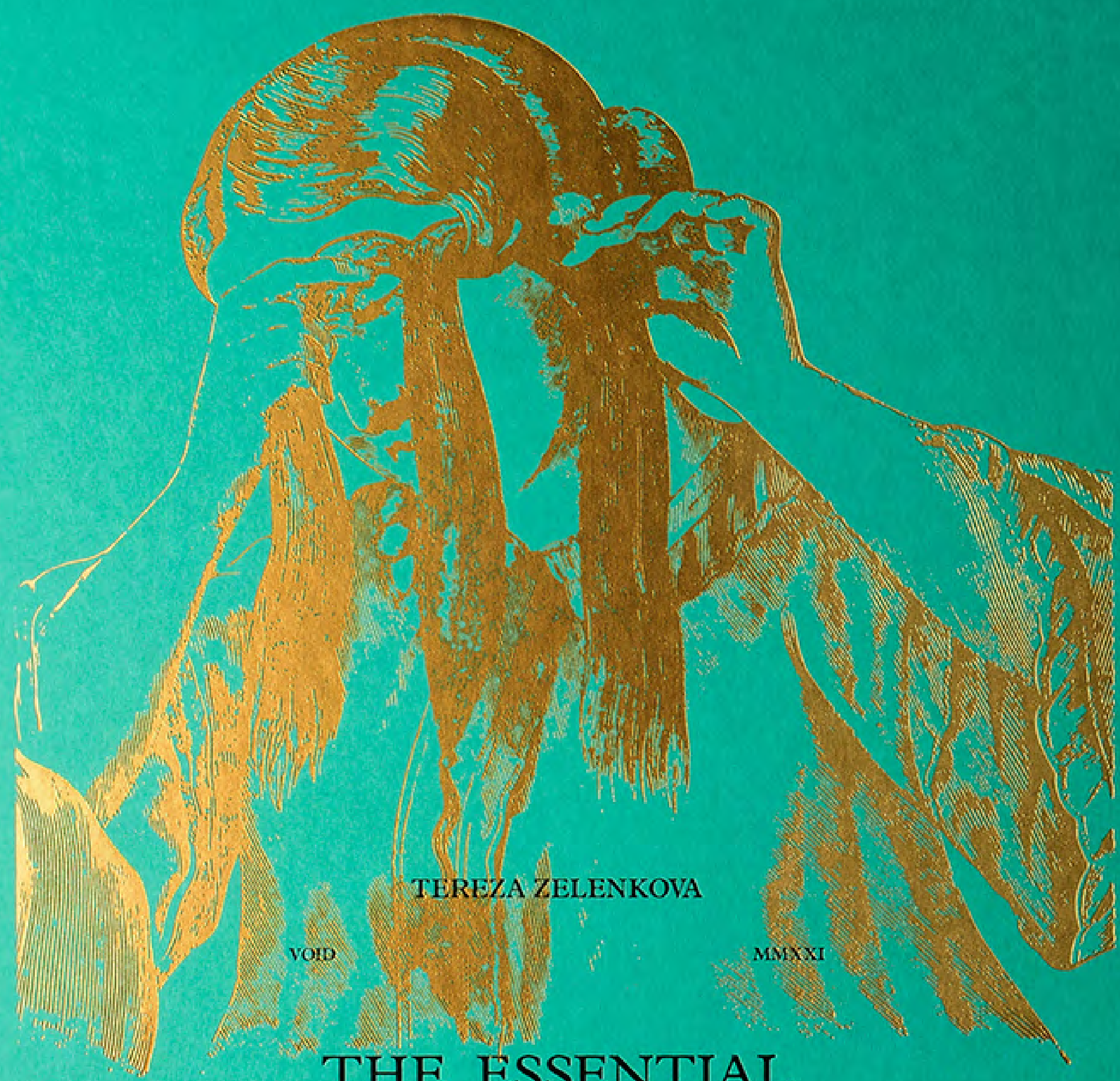


TEREZA ZELENKOVA

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THE ESSENTIAL
SOLITUDE



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'The Essential Solitude'

Tereza Zelenkova

Published by Void

80 Pages

27 Duo-tone photo plates

7 Never seen before images

'The Essential Solitude'
by Tereza Zelenkova

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by Tereza Zelenkova

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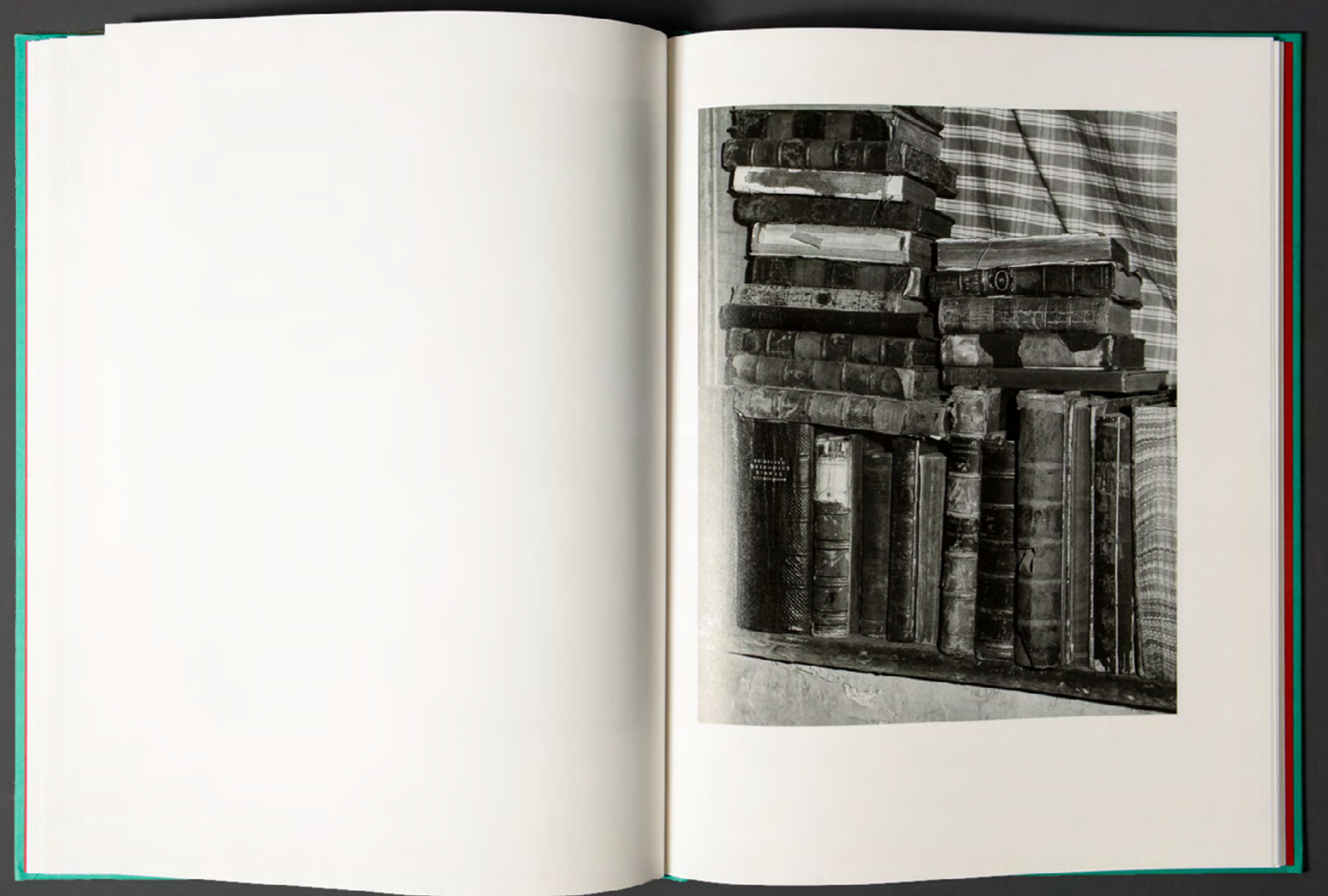
THE ESSENTIAL SOLITUDE

I had known of Dennis Severs' House at 18 Folgate Street for at least ten years by the time I made these photographs. Its original owner, Dennis Severs, who I never had the chance to meet, must have been an incredibly spirited personality with a profound imagination. I can see some of the interests we would have shared, not least among them a mutual appreciation for period interiors. According to Walter Benjamin, the interior represents the universe for a private individual; a world "in which things are freed from the drudgery of being useful." Indeed, usefulness and practicality are concepts largely foreign to Dennis Severs' House, and to art in general. Still, it is enough to look out from one of the house's windows facing the glass and steel high-rises of the City, to be reminded of some of the oppressive realities of contemporary life. The uncanny

timelessness of Severs' interiors, which are made up not only of countless artefacts carefully arranged in individual rooms that each represent a slightly different historical period, but also various smells and sounds, together resulting in a complete disorientation of the senses. There's no dogmatism, though, and no desire for historical accuracy, just the ephemeral atmosphere of a dream that transports you to some non-specific time.

"The photographs in this book resulted from my visits to Dennis Severs' House. They are deeply personal, yet they also attempt to speak about the universal experience of solitude, imagination, and beauty. Most of all, they pay homage to the solitude of a reader absorbed in a book; and to all the travelers who never leave their bedrooms."

— TEREZA ZELENKOVA



THE ESSENTIAL SOLITUDE

“It seems we have learned something about art when we experience what the word solitude designates,” wrote the French writer and philosopher Maurice Blanchot in his essay, *The Essential Solitude*. What Blanchot has in mind is not any ordinary solitude, however, but rather the solitude of literary work and a work of art. This solitude is different from a simple desire “to be alone”, or the solitude artists might require to be able to practice their art. The solitude of the work of art hinges on its existence outside of any commonly perceived time and space. “To write is to surrender oneself to the fascination of the absence of time,” Blanchot explains, “when here is also nowhere, when each thing withdraws into its image and the ‘I’ that we are, recognizes itself as it sinks into the neutrality of a faceless ‘he’.” What Blanchot describes is a creative act through which

one severs his or her ties to the surrounding reality and forgoes their individualism for something universal and primordial. And, without doubt, something not so dissimilar also affects a reader or a viewer, who too can lose themselves within the nowhere of the work. I wanted to render my personal vision of this nowhere space that is at once familiar but strange; existing on the threshold of the imaginary and the real; rooted in history but always somehow outside of time.

After these past two years, many of us know more about solitude than we could ever have dreamed of before. Our homes’ interiors also became our exteriors, our workplaces, restaurants, cinemas, and much more. One must ask himself now, why someone would want to confine himself in such a manner voluntarily. Yet, when we look at the history of art and literature, solitude seems to be one of the most cherished abodes of creatives; and the interior, however impoverished, is the place in which fantastical occurrences are unsurpassable by any other voyage one might make.

‘The Essential Solitude’ was previously self-published in a small run. Featuring unpublished images and text, this new edition is the opportunity to spread this unique series to a broader audience.



TEREZA ZELENKOVA

Tereza Zelenkova was born in Ostrava, Czech Republic in 1985, and she's based in Prague. She lived in London between 2007 and 2018, where she studied photography at the University of Westminster and later at the Royal College of Art.

She is best known for her pensive black and white photographs, inspired by literature, local mythologies, and history. Central to her practice is the combination of photographs with her own writing; a fertile relationship that draws together her influences of the lyrical alongside a commitment to research, drawing together often wide-ranging and complex lines of enquiry.

Tereza has received several awards and her work has been exhibited on four different continents. Her photographs are held in the collections of Victoria & Albert Museum, Foam Photography Museum, Musée de l'Élysé, and Fotomuseum Winterthur.





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talkto@void.photo