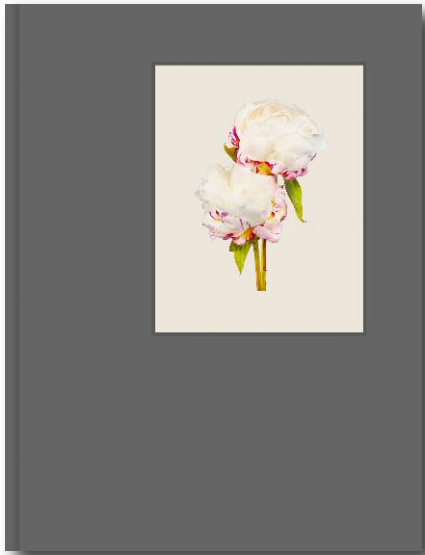


NEW RELEASE KEHRER VERLAG

The Most Beautiful Flowers

Kenji Toma

Photographs by Kenji Toma
 Introduction by Kyohei Abe
 Designed by Kehrer Design (Martin Lutz)
 Cloth hardcover with title shield
 24 x 31 cm, 196 pages
 88 color ill.
 English
 ISBN 978-3-86828-789-9
 Euro 45,00 / US\$ 50.00 / GBP 40.00



Photographic homage to one of the most well regarded flower encyclopedias of the 19th century

This photo series is Kenji Toma's homage to the botanical illustrations in *Choix Des Plus Belles Fleurs* by Pierre-Joseph Redouté, one of the most well regarded flower encyclopedias of the 19th century. Back when color photography did not exist, these images were illustrated with the purpose of replicating the botanic subject as close to reality as possible. Kenji Toma is more interested in doing the exact opposite with the photographic medium which, realistic by nature, can also be used to make a subject look unreal, artificial. The result is a highly contemporary and fascinating revival of the concept of the botanical encyclopedia.

Kenji Toma (b. in Niigata, Japan) is an award-winning photographer living in New York. After establishing his photography career in Tokyo, Toma arrived in New York in 1990. Since then, he has been recognized as one of the leading commercial still-life photographers with his unique mysterious style and detail-oriented vision. Concurrently, he is working on personal projects and *A Choice of the Most Beautiful Flowers* is his most representative work.

Kyohei Abe serves as director and chief curator of the Detroit Center for Contemporary Photography. He is also an artist whose works can be found in public and private collections globally, e.g. the Museum Fine Art in Houston, the Detroit Institute of Art, and the West Collection in Oak, Pennsylvania.

Toma's work illustrates a hybrid vision of botanical specimens with an uncanny clarity. At first glance, the photographs reveal a sensitive homage to Karl Blossfeldt's seminal photographic book Art Forms in Nature. The illustrative forms seduce the eye with color, texture, and transparency, yet something in these forms seems amiss. Where Blossfeldt's explorations involved the camera to capture the scientific replication of physical forms as they appeared when viewed in reality, Toma pushes the viewer's perception of that reality into the hyper-real.

...

For Toma, the raw depiction of the subject is too close to the real thing. Hyper-realism allows him to capture the specimen's idealized beauty, creating a work that is deeply modern, yet in harmony with a rich Japanese history and tradition. In the end, the work stands out for its depiction of simple beauty. It is almost as if Toma has cleared away the dust, allowing us to take pleasure in a view of a deeply cultivated ideal.

(from the introduction by Kyohei Abe)

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 Kehrer Verlag, Wieblinger Weg 21, 69123 Heidelberg, Germany
 Fon ++49 (0)6221/649 20-25, Fax ++49 (0)6221/64920-20
www.kehrerverlag.com www.artbooksheidelberg.com

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