

photograph

Edmund Teske

Gitterman Gallery, New York



Edmund Teske, *Bronx Kenneth Anger, Topanga Canyon*, 1954. ©Estate of Edmund Teske, courtesy Gitterman Gallery

Edmund Teske's photographs seem to exist outside of any standard chronology. They include otherworldly, almost Victorian studies as well as portraits of such public figures as The Doors' Jim Morrison. Perhaps because his work is so hard to pin down, Teske, who died in 1996, has floated largely under the radar. Despite museum shows, including *Spirit into Matter* organized at the Getty in 2004, his work has not found the same traction as that of, say, Robert Heinecken, friend and fellow photographic manipulator. So the elegant exhibition at Gitterman Gallery through January 24 is a rare opportunity to see Teske's unique, painterly photographs, some never before exhibited.

Teske was born in Chicago but made his way to Hollywood and settled in with a fertile, creative group of friends, including the underground filmmaker Kenneth Anger, the subject of one toned, solarized, almost mythical image in the show, and the curator and museum director Walter Hopps, who appears in several others. Teske used collage,

solarization, and toning to achieve a variety of affects – a landscape seeps into a portrait, time periods are compressed, leaves and trees engulf his human subjects, and streaks of umber stain the prints. It was Edward Steichen who labeled Teske's process "duotone solarization." In one untitled image from the 1970s, a pattern of steel grey and rust fans out across a nude male torso. A necessarily veiled homoeroticism runs throughout some of the prints, as well as a spiritual exploration centered on Hindu philosophy, which absorbed Teske after his move to California in the 1940s.



Edmund Teske, *Mono Lake, California*, 1971. ©Estate of Edmund Teske, courtesy Gitterman Gallery

Teske's allegorical works can seem old-fashioned, but his lush, duotoned *Mono Lake*, 1971, could be a precursor to Matthew Brandt's 2012 image of the same setting in his series *Lakes and Reservoirs*. Teske's aesthetic approach mirrored his philosophical ruminations: by combining and reusing images, he imagined time as a fluid, malleable entity. His photographs are the antithesis of the decisive moment; rather, they seem to fall through time, in a sort of dream state.

— By Jean Dykstra 01/20/2015