

# LALLA ESSAYDI

## Crossing Boundaries Bridging Cultures



ACR Édition



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Crossing Boundaries  
Bridging Cultures

ACR Édition

This book is published in conjunction with

Edwynn Houk Gallery

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[www.houkgallery.com](http://www.houkgallery.com)

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Lalla Essaydi

*I am dreaming about freedom and don't know how to talk about it. I am staring at the book and not sure what language I am supposed to speak. When a book is translated, it loses something in the process and what am I but generations of translations? I stand guilty outside and I stand guilty inside, profoundly buried in my translation, painting behind the works that are carried along by vital forces far greater than my own. I am a book that has no ending. Each page I write could be first.*

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# INTRODUCTION



*In a sense, my work is haunted by space, actual and metaphorical, remembered and constructed. My photographs grew out of the need I felt to document actual spaces, especially the space of my childhood. At a certain point, I realized that in order to go forward as an artist, it was necessary to return physically to my childhood home in Morocco and to document this world that I had left in a physical sense, but, of course, never fully in any deeper, more psychological sense. In order to understand the woman I had become, I needed to reencounter the child I once was. I needed to return to the culture of my childhood if I wanted to understand my unfolding relation to the "converging territories" of my present life. This culture, and the space of my childhood within it, was defined for me by specific domestic spaces, ones that still exist, but are in the process of slowly deteriorating. So I embarked on a project to photograph these physical spaces before they were lost, and in doing so to see the role they played in shaping the metaphorical space of my childhood.*

*For the past several years, I have been working on a body of photographs that are set in Morocco, in a large, unoccupied house, belonging to my family. Until fairly recently, my work was preoccupied with this physical space. Thus the house is both a literal and a psychological space, a space marked by memory. More recently, however, after having revisited this house many times in making these photographs, and thinking about my own complex relation as an artist to this space of childhood, I have become aware of another, less tangible, more ambiguous space, that of the imagination, of self-creation.*

*Creating these photographs is performative: I use family acquaintances as models. Applying henna is a very painstaking process, and cannot be*