

The Photobook:
A History volume III
Martin Parr and Gerry Badger



Anne-Sophie Merryman (Miki Soejima)

Mrs Merryman's Collection

Mrs Merryman's Collection begins with a brief explanation by its author, Anne-Sophie Merryman, that this collection of postcards was assembled by her grandmother, Anne-Marie Merryman, who 'used to look at them for hours while seated in her armchair'.

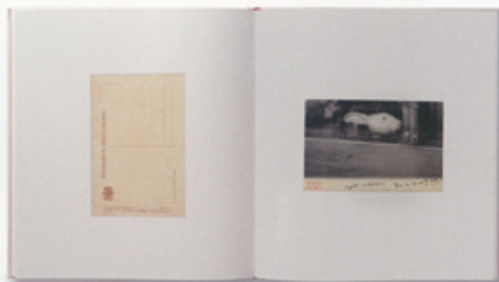
The postcards seem to have been posted from around the world, and those whose dates one can discern are mainly from the 1920s. They are, for the most part, not of the usual scenic beauty spots but novelty postcards, with images of oddities or strange scientific phenom-

ena, such as a levitating chair or a severed ear in a jar. There is no apparent rhyme or reason to them, except that they vary from the uncanny to the beautiful, and all points in between. But with the book's focus on the 1920s, one could surmise that, just as in John Stezaker's *The 3rd Person Archive* (see pages 296–97), the focus is Surrealism.

There is, however, a difference. Stezaker's imagery was derived from the 1920s, although reinvented by the artist. Everything in *Mrs Merryman's Collection*, from the photographs to the postcards to the postmarks, was created by Anne-Sophie Merryman herself, a nom-de-plume for the Japanese artist Miki Soejima. The crea-

tor's identity is revealed when the reader unpicks two pages that have been sewn together with red thread.

We might well ask, why go to the bother of all this work? One answer is to make a postcard collection completely under the artist's control. Another is to make a photobook. One thing is certain: in this book – as in others that also participate in the current craze to make photographic fictions – it becomes more difficult than ever to believe what a photograph appears to tell us. But photographic truth is not the only form of truth, and one feels that there is a truth to be discerned in this beguiling and mysterious book.



Anne-Sophie Merryman (Miki Soejima) **Mrs Merryman's Collection**
Mack Books, London, 2012
270 x 245 mm (10½ x 9½ in), 112 pp
Hardback with tipped-in photograph
86 colour photographs/postcards
Compiled by Anne-Sophie Merryman (Miki Soejima)