

Irving Penn
Edge of Beauty
Curated by Tom Pecheux

Co-presented by Thaddaeus Ropac and Pace Gallery

22 June—13 July 2024

Paris Marais

Thaddaeus Ropac
London Paris Salzburg Seoul

Irving Penn

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Thaddaeus Ropac and Pace Gallery are pleased to announce a collaborative presentation featuring fourteen photographs by Irving Penn, showcasing both his iconic and lesser-known beauty images. Curated by Tom Pecheux, the Global Beauty Director for YSL Beauty, this exhibition coincides with Paris Fashion Week – Menswear, and will celebrate Penn’s enduring influence on the history of photography.

Renowned for his style of elegant, aesthetic simplicity across fashion imagery, portraiture and experimental personal work, Irving Penn produced beauty photographs that are distinctive for their understated humour and technical concision. These works – many made for *Vogue* during his sixty-five-year tenure there – illustrate concepts loosely related to the cosmetics featured in the magazine, often employing the same formal qualities established by Surrealism to hybridise editorial imagery with fine art.

Bee on Lips (1995), included in the presentation, is an extreme close-up of a bee crawling across a vividly rouged mouth. Emblematic of Penn’s use of visual puns, it refers to the popular 1950s phrase ‘bee stung lips’. In *Mascara Wars* (2001), a bloodshot eye starkly contrasts with the model’s powdered snow-white face, with two mascara wands poised at the base and tip of her eyelashes, suggesting a pause in the action. Whilst Penn is known for his extraordinary ability to capture beauty, his works simultaneously render a latent darkness. Juxtaposed with the inexorability of decay, his works endure precisely because they compel viewers to return again and again in an attempt to comprehend their hidden meaning, drawing parallels with artists such as Man Ray.

Penn’s work is consistently characterised by the formal beauty of the photographic medium. His sparse compositions and juxtaposition of sharp line with soft flesh create images that are visually arresting, even – or especially – when they verge on the grotesque or painful. In his beauty photographs, it is the unexpected that captures the viewer, prompting Alexander Liberman, editor of *Vogue* from 1943, to call them ‘stoppers’ – images that make time stand still amid the magazine’s pages.

Thaddaeus Ropac

London Paris Salzburg Seoul



Milk Slash (B), New York, 1996

Print made in 1997

Platinum palladium print mounted to aluminium

Image 43.2 × 38.1 cm (17 × 15 in)

Paper and mount 53.3 × 48.6 cm (21 × 19.13 in)

Ed. of 8

(IRP 1144) © The Irving Penn Foundation



Woman with Closed Eyes (and Contact Lenses) (B), New York, 1985

Print made in 1993

Cibachrome print

Image 35.4 × 38.3 cm (13.94 × 15.06 in)

Paper and mount 40.3 × 50.8 cm (15.88 × 20 in)

Ed. of 7

(IRP 1157) © The Irving Penn Foundation



Mascara Wars, New York, 2001

Print made in 2001

Fuji Crystal Archive print

Image 39.7 × 61 cm (15.63 × 24 in)

Paper 54.9 × 75.9 cm (21.63 × 29.88 in)

Ed. of 15

(IRP 1145) © The Irving Penn Foundation



Chocolate Mouth, New York, 2000
Print made in 2001
Fuji Crystal Archive print
Image 30.5 × 22.5 cm (12 × 8.88 in)
Paper 35.6 × 27.6 cm (14 × 10.88 in)
Ed. of 19
(IRP 1146) © The Irving Penn Foundation



Sweetie (A), New York, 2002

Print made in 2004

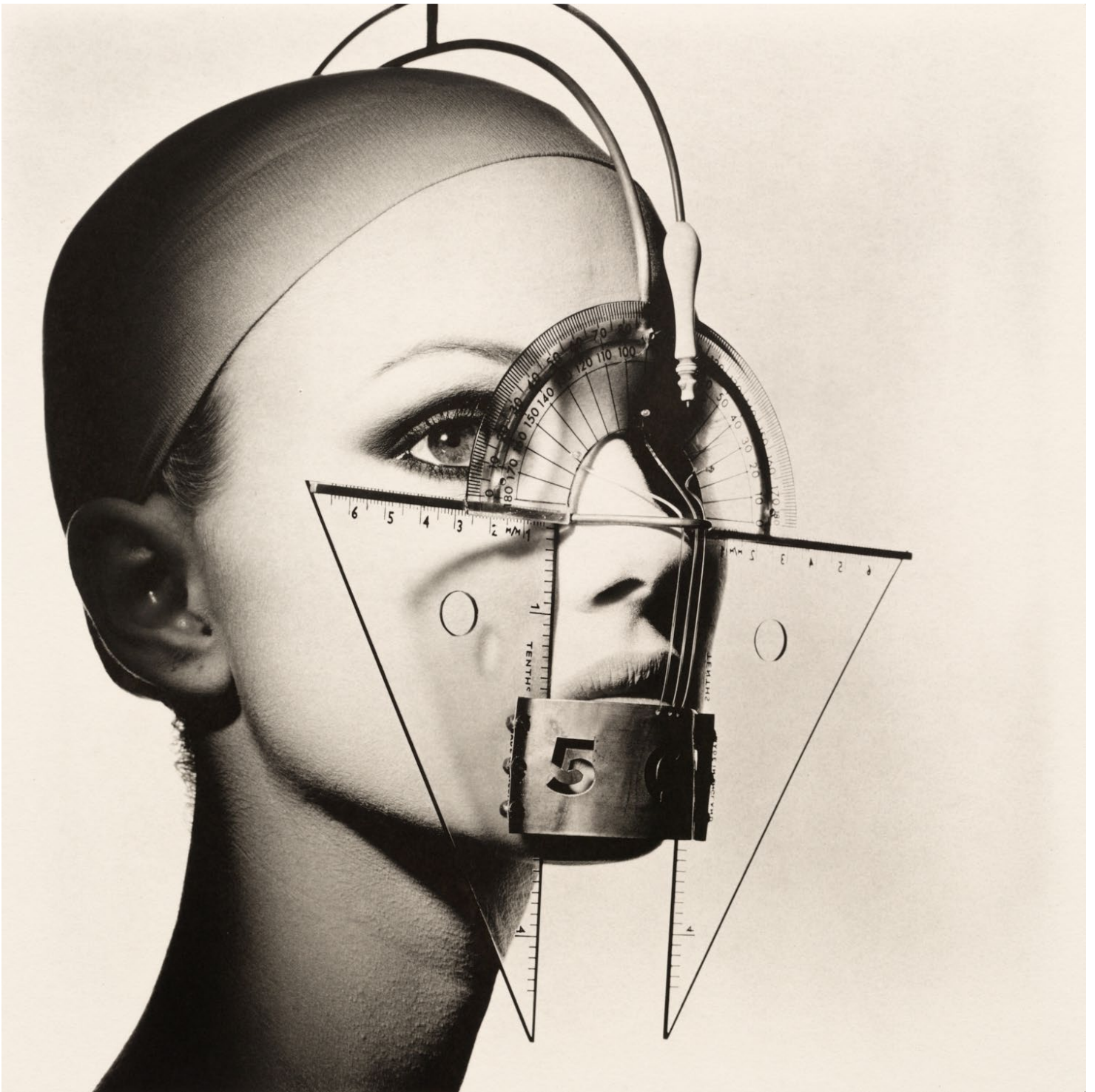
Fuji Crystal Archive print

Image 76.2 × 61.9 cm (30 × 24.38 in)

Paper and mount 83.8 × 69.5 cm (33 × 27.38 in)

Ed. of 6

(IRP 1147) © The Irving Penn Foundation



Protractor Face (Jaime Rishar), New York, 1994

Print made in 1996

Platinum-palladium print mounted to aluminium
Image 49.7 × 49.5 cm (19.56 × 19.5 in)

Paper and mount 61.9 × 55.9 cm (24.38 × 22 in)

Ed. of 6

(IRP 1156) © The Irving Penn Foundation



Woman with Sun Block, New York, 1966

Print made in 1985

Dye transfer print mounted to board

Image and paper 38.4 × 39.1 cm (15.13 × 15.38 in)

Mount 46.5 × 46.8 cm (18-5/16 × 18-7/16")

Ed. of 16

(IRP 1158) © The Irving Penn Foundation



Contact Lens, New York, 1981

Print made in 1984

Dye transfer print mounted to board

Image and paper 49.1 × 39.5 cm (19.31 × 15.56 in)

Mount 57.2 × 47.1 cm (22.5 × 18.56 in)

Ed. of 17

(IRP 1159) © The Irving Penn Foundation



Bee on Lips, New York, 1995

Print made in 1999

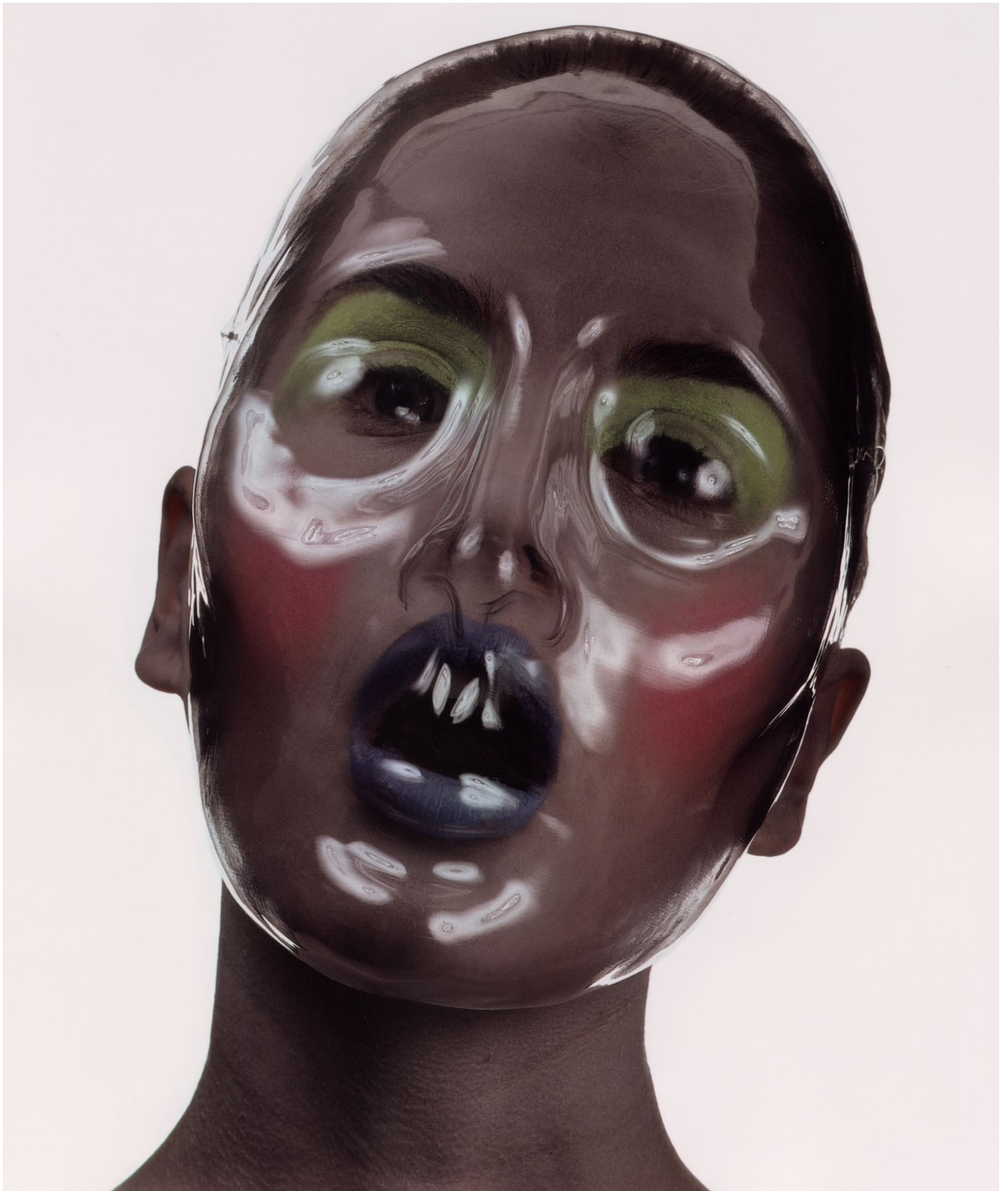
Dye transfer print

Image 40.3 × 57.2 cm (15.88 × 22.5 in)

Paper 48.9 × 59.1 cm (19.25 × 23.25 in)

Ed. of 11

(IRP 1149) © The Irving Penn Foundation



Clear Plastic Beauty Mask, New York, 1996

Print made in 1999

Dye transfer print

Image 55.9 × 46.7 cm (22 × 18.38 in)

Paper 56.4 × 48.9 cm (22.19 × 19.25 in)

Ed. of 12

(IRP 1150) © The Irving Penn Foundation



Tulip/Tulipa: China Pink, New York, 2006

Print made in 2006

Digital pigment print with Epson UltraChrome Pigmented
Inks on Crane's Museo Silver Rag paper mounted to board

Image 52.7 × 48.3 cm (20.75 × 19 in)

Paper and mount 61 × 73.7 cm (24 × 29 in)

Ed. of 14

(IRP 1151) © The Irving Penn Foundation



Gerbera Daisy/Gerbera jamesonii "Husky", New York, 2006

Print made in 2006

Pigment print mounted to board

Image, paper and mount 43.2 × 61 cm (17 × 24 in)

Ed. of 10

(IRP 1152) © The Irving Penn Foundation



Bull's Eye Contact Lens (B), New York, 1983

Print made in 1985

Vintage gelatin silver print mounted to board

Image 25.4 × 26.4 cm (10 × 10.38 in)

Paper and mount 27.3 × 27.8 cm (10.75 × 10.94 in)

Ed. of 6

(IRP 1153) © The Irving Penn Foundation



Gaultier Eye Earrings, New York, 1998

Print made in 1998

Cibachrome print

Image, paper and mount 56.2 × 50.8 cm (22.13 × 20 in)

Ed. of 6

(IRP 1155) © The Irving Penn Foundation

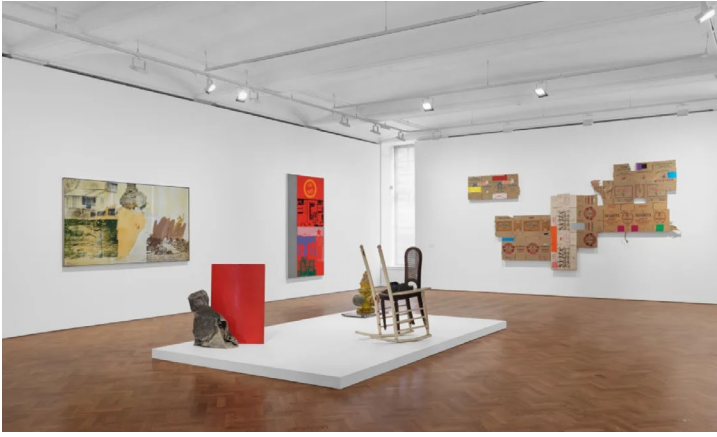
Irving Penn

About the artist



Irving Penn studied design from 1934–38 with Alexey Brodovitch at the Philadelphia Museum School of Industrial Art, Pennsylvania. Following a year painting in Mexico, he returned to New York City and began working at *Vogue* magazine in 1943, where Alexander Liberman was art director. Penn photographed for *Vogue* and commercial clients in America and abroad for nearly 70 years. Whether an innovative fashion image, striking portrait, or compelling still life, each of Penn's pictures bears his trademark style of elegant aesthetic simplicity. In addition to his editorial and advertising work, Penn was also a master printmaker. Beginning in 1964, he pioneered a complex technique for making platinum-palladium prints, a 19th century print process to which he applied 20th century materials. The first retrospective of Penn's work was organised by The Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1984. Following the landmark exhibition, which travelled to over 14 countries after MoMA, he resumed painting and drawing as a fully fledged creative endeavour. Until his death in 2009, his innovative photographs continued to appear regularly in *Vogue*, and his studio was busy with assignments and experimental personal work. Recent exhibitions include *Irving Penn: Centennial* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2017), which travelled to the Grand Palais, Paris (2017–18) and *C/O Berlin* (2018); and *Room 6 in Materials and Objects: Irving Penn* at the Tate Modern, London (2019–20).

Current & upcoming exhibitions



London Ely House

Robert Rauschenberg
ROCI
Until 3 August 2024



Paris Marais

Sean Scully
Carbon and Air
Until 27 July 2024



Paris Marais

Not Vital
Contemplating
Until 27 July 2024



Paris Pantin

Alex Katz
60 Years of Printmaking
Until 23 July 2024



Salzburg Villa Kast

Georg Baselitz
adler barfuß
Until 20 July 2024



Seoul Fort Hill

Andy Warhol
The Joseph Beuys Portraits
Until 27 July 2024