

PRESS RELEASE

Irving Penn: On Assignment

510 West 25th Street, New York
Opening reception: Thursday, September 12, 6 – 8 p.m.
September 13 – October 26, 2013

NEW YORK, August 13, 2013 – Pace and Pace/MacGill Gallery are honored to present *Irving Penn: On Assignment*, a survey of photographs, magazines and ephemera from the six-decade career of the iconic American photographer Irving Penn (1917–2009). The exhibition will feature images Penn took while working “on assignment” for publications such as *The New Yorker*, *Vogue*, *Look* and *Vanity Fair* and advertising campaigns for Clinique and De Beers, among others, for which he produced some of the most compelling fashion photographs, portraits and still lifes of our time. *Irving Penn: On Assignment* will be on view at 510 West 25th Street from September 13 through October 26, 2013. An opening reception will be held on Thursday, September 12 from 6 to 8 PM.



Widely recognized as one of the most prolific and respected photographers of the 20th century, Irving Penn began his photographic career in 1943 at the suggestion and encouragement of *Vogue's* then Art Director, Alexander Liberman. The first color photograph Penn made on assignment for *Vogue* appeared on the cover of the October 1st issue that same year – the first still life cover in the magazine’s history – and Liberman immediately “sensed that we were in the presence of a major new vision, with infinite possibilities for growth and discovery.”



Penn developed that artistic vision over the next sixty years, shooting more than 150 covers for *Vogue* between 1943 and 2004 (a selection of which will be on view), creating celebrated portraits of leading cultural figures such as Pablo Picasso, Truman Capote, and Miles Davis, and producing groundbreaking fashion editorials noted for their natural lighting and formal simplicity. With an elegance and economy of composition, Penn’s 1950 pictures of the Paris couture collections revised the visual aesthetics of fashion photography, and the act of placing his subjects – whether a model in Balenciaga, a Dahomey native, or tradesperson dressed in work clothes – against a seamless, neutral backdrop without context or narrative became a signature trademark of Penn’s style. This approach produced

photographs that focused on the subject, rather than the environment in which they might have been found. The deft craft of his still lifes transformed common objects into abstracted elements of modern artistic expression.

Lieberman reflected in Penn's 1991 book, *Passage*, that, "...so clear was Penn's concept, he could move without great convolutions from still life, to fashion, to portraits, to the world outside." Likewise, the iconic quality of Penn's images, not to mention the exquisite execution of his handcrafted prints, quickly transcended the printed page, as his photographs made their way from magazines to museum walls in New York and beyond. As John Szarkowski wrote in the catalogue accompanying Penn's 1984 retrospective at The Museum of Modern Art, New York:

...Penn's professional work elevates itself and its role by virtue of its great refinement of craft. The grace, wit, and inventiveness of his pattern-making, the lively and surprising elegance of his line, and his sensitivity to the character, the idiosyncratic humors, of light make Penn's pictures, even the slighter ones, a pleasure for our eyes.

Penn's photography has been the subject of numerous exhibitions worldwide. Recent exhibitions include *Irving Penn: Small Trades* at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles (2009-2010); *Irving Penn: Portraits* at the National Portrait Gallery, London (2010); *Irving Penn: Diverse Worlds* at the Moderna Museet, Malmo (2012), which travelled to the Kumu Art Museum, Tallinn, and is currently on view; and *Irving Penn: Underfoot* at the Art Institute of Chicago (2013). His work can be found in both domestic and international museum collections, including the Art Institute of Chicago; Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Paris; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Moderna Museet, Stockholm; the Morgan Library and Museum, New York; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; and the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Penn has published multiple books of photographs: *Moments Preserved* (1960); *Worlds in a Small Room* (1974); *Inventive Paris Clothes* (1977); *Flowers* (1980); *Issey Miyake* (1988); *Passage* (1991); *Still Life* (2001); *A Notebook at Random* (2004); *Photographs of Dahomey* (2004); as well as two books of drawings. Monographs of his work include: *Irving Penn* (1984); *Irving Penn: Master Images* (1990); *Irving Penn: A Career in Photography* (1997); *Dancer* (2001); *Earthly Bodies: Irving Penn's Nudes, 1949-50* (2002); *Irving Penn: Platinum Prints* (2005); *Irving Penn: Small Trades* (2009); *Irving Penn: Portraits* (2010); *Irving Penn: Archæology* (2010); *Irving Penn: Cigarettes* (2012); and *Irving Penn: Cranium Architecture* (2013).

For more information about *Irving Penn: On Assignment* or press requests, please contact Jessica Mostow at Pace/MacGill Gallery, 212.759.7999 or jessica@pacemacgill.com. For general inquiries, please email info@pacemacgill.com.

Images:

Irving Penn, *Mascara Wars*, New York, 2001

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Irving Penn, *Fashion Photograph (Jean Patchett) (A)*, New York, 1949

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One of the world's leading photography galleries, Pace/MacGill has been dedicated to advancing fine art photography for almost 30 years. Known for discovering artists, representing masters, and placing important collections and archives into major public institutions, Pace/MacGill has presented some 200 exhibitions and published numerous catalogues on modern and contemporary photography. Founded in 1983 by Peter MacGill, in collaboration with Arne Glimcher of Pace and Richard Solomon of Pace Editions, Pace/MacGill is located at 32 East 57th Street in New York City.

