

# Press Release

Berlin, January 16, 2018

## Irving Penn

Centennial

**C/O Berlin** is presenting the exhibition **Irving Penn . Centennial from March 24 to July 01, 2018**. The **opening** will be held on Friday, **March 23, 2018**, at **07:00 pm** at the **Amerika Haus** in Hardenbergstrasse 22–24, 10623 Berlin.

With a body of work stretching from portraits of Pablo Picasso, Marlene Dietrich, and Alfred Hitchcock to abstract female nudes, exquisite still lifes, elegant studies of flowers and cigarettes, portraits of children in traditional Peruvian dress, New Guinean natives, French pâtissiers, all the way to glamorous fashion photos for *Vogue*, Irving Penn (1917–2009) was one of the most influential photographers of the twentieth century. In his nearly seventy-year career, he created an exceptionally diverse and distinctive visual cosmos. He was a virtually unparalleled master of nude, fashion, still-life, and portrait photography, and a leading figure in contemporary photography and art for over six decades. Penn's unique style and pared-down aesthetic remain influential to this day, and have had a profound impact on innumerable successors.

At the age of just seventeen, Irving Penn began studying graphic design in Philadelphia. In 1943 he started work as a graphic designer for *Vogue* under Alexander Liberman, Art Director of the renowned fashion magazine, and photographed his first cover in the same year. More than 160 additional covers and numerous fashion photographs for *Vogue* followed. Penn's fashion photographs propelled him to international fame. His interest in the human image led him to push beyond classical typologies and embark on travels to distant countries like Peru in 1948 or New Guinea and Morocco in the period between 1967 and 1971. Alongside his ethnographic studies, Penn created portraits of a number of internationally known figures from the worlds of art, film, literature, and music. Whether Salvador Dalí, Audrey Hepburn, or Saul Steinberg, he always photographed his subjects against a neutral backdrop. For his first large series of portraits, Penn constructed a corner from two upright stage flats placed together at an acute angle. Through his delimitation of space, Penn created a sense of familiarity and intimacy with the person in front of his camera. He convinced his subjects to pose in unusual ways or challenged them to take risks. Using a Rolleiflex camera, he employed the same approach to abstract space and meticulous attention to detail in his series *The Small Trades*, in which he depicts laborers, tradesmen, and shopkeepers in their work clothes, and in another series of portraits of indigenous people. His sensitivity to the significance of the everyday, the beauty in "ugliness," and simplicity allowed him to continually produce new and original still lifes and graphic compositions. Particularly his still lifes from the 1990s and the first decade of the twenty-first century reflect his fascination with photography, his love of detail and his masterful play with light and the objects in front of his camera. Irving Penn ennobled his subjects, whether they were human beings or inanimate objects, with his photographic gaze and made each one special. His photographs are infused with clarity, elegance, perfection, and a flawless beauty.

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C/O Berlin is commemorating the exceptional photographer Irving Penn with a major retrospective on the centenary of his birth. Featuring around 240 works, the retrospective was organized by The Metropolitan Museum of Art in collaboration with The Irving Penn Foundation and will be the first exhibition of Penn's work in Berlin in twenty years. Around 180 works donated by The Irving Penn Foundation to The Metropolitan Museum of Art form the core of the exhibition, among them the now-famous studies of Lisa Fonssagrives-Penn, the most sought-after photo model of the time, who became Irving Penn's wife and muse. The exhibition has been made possible by the Terra Foundation for American Art and the Senate Department for Economics, Energy and Public Enterprises. It is being shown in New York, Paris, São Paulo – and exclusively at C/O Berlin in Germany.

A comprehensive monograph accompanying the exhibition is published by Schirmer/Mosel in Munich, edited by Maria Morris Hambourg and Jeff L. Rosenheim, with articles by Maria Morris Hambourg, Jeff L. Rosenheim, Alexandra Dennett, Philippe Garner, Adam Kirsch, Harald E. L. Prins, and Vasilios Zatsis, and more than 365 reproductions of Irving Penn's most important works, representing key phases of his photographic career.

**Irving Penn** (1917–2009) studied at the Philadelphia Museum School of Industrial Art, where Alexei Brodovitch, Art Director at *Harper's Bazaar*, taught up to 1934. In 1943 Penn photographed his first cover photo for *Vogue* followed by many more. He became one of the most important fashion photographers of the 1950s and 1960s. After founding his own photographic studio in New York in 1953, he continued to create numerous portraits of luminaries from the worlds of film, music, and art and took innumerable still-life and fashion photographs. Irving Penn ranks among the most important photographers of the last century, in no small part because of his pioneering work in both commercial and artistic photography. His photographs have been shown in numerous international exhibitions and are in major museums and collections throughout the world, including The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. He died in New York in 2009.

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**Exhibition** March 24–July 01, 2018

**Opening** March 23, 2018 . 07:00 pm

**Press tour** March 23, 2018 . 11:00 am

**Opening hours** daily . 11:00 am–08:00 pm

**Admission** 10 Euro . reduced 6 Euro

**Location** C/O Berlin . Amerika Haus  
Hardenbergstrasse 22–24 . 10623 Berlin

**Organizer** C/O Berlin Foundation  
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