



Still Life : Irving Penn Photographs, 1938-2000

By Irving Penn, John Szarkowski

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Irving Penn is one of the leading photographers of the 20th century. His elegant and innovative photographs are the subject of this volume. It includes some 200 images.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

From early, career-establishing Vogue magazine work like *The Spilled Handbag* (*Theatre Accident*) of 1947 through his images of bones and other detritus (*Bone Landscape*, 1980) to his recent pictures of cuttlefish, Irving Penn has masterfully evinced the secret lives of objects. Ninety-eight of Penn's greatest images (45 color, 50 tritone, 3 duotone) are assembled in *Still Life*, a publication personally supervised by the artist. Still making funny, strange and lovely editorial photographs for Vogue and other magazines (an ant crawls on a melted Brie; a mannequin gazes out from under a bell jar), Penn also continues to experiment in his personal work: components of traditional still-life paintings like skulls, fish, paintbrushes and dice, for instance, arranged artfully and bizarrely, shot in black and white.

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From Library Journal

Penn is notable for gathering things in clumps and patterns and photographing them something he has been doing for 60 years. His boldness and bravado have led to a new notion of what constitutes a still life. This book, introduced by John Szarkowski, director emeritus of the department of photography at MOMA, does a very good job of revealing both Penn's lens and his psyche, which can be off-putting. Yes, it is possible to merge a perfect overhead view of a huge bumblebee and the perfectly sensual mouth of a well-lipsticked woman, but really who wants to see a big, menacing bee roaming on human teeth and lips? One expects that Penn will someday take his camera into the operating room and place something a Lego toy, handgun, or tarantula on a pancreas open for inspection during surgery. The artist seems to want us to think that because something exists, it looks pretty nifty when photographed with the skill used to make fashion magazines sizzle. Still, Penn is a camera master, yielding technically perfect images and tossing wet blankets at the common still life of fruit or flowers. The first book to focus exclusively on his still lifes, this will introduce Penn's art to new viewers. It gives photographers seeking new ways to work much to ponder. David Bryant, New Canaan Lib., CT

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About the Author

Irving Penn's books include *Moments Preserved* (1960), *Worlds in a Small Room* (1974), *Inventive Paris Clothes 1909-1939* (1977), *Flowers* (1980), and *Passage* (1991). A retrospective of his work was exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1984. In 1997, the Art Institute of Chicago mounted a traveling international exhibition.

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