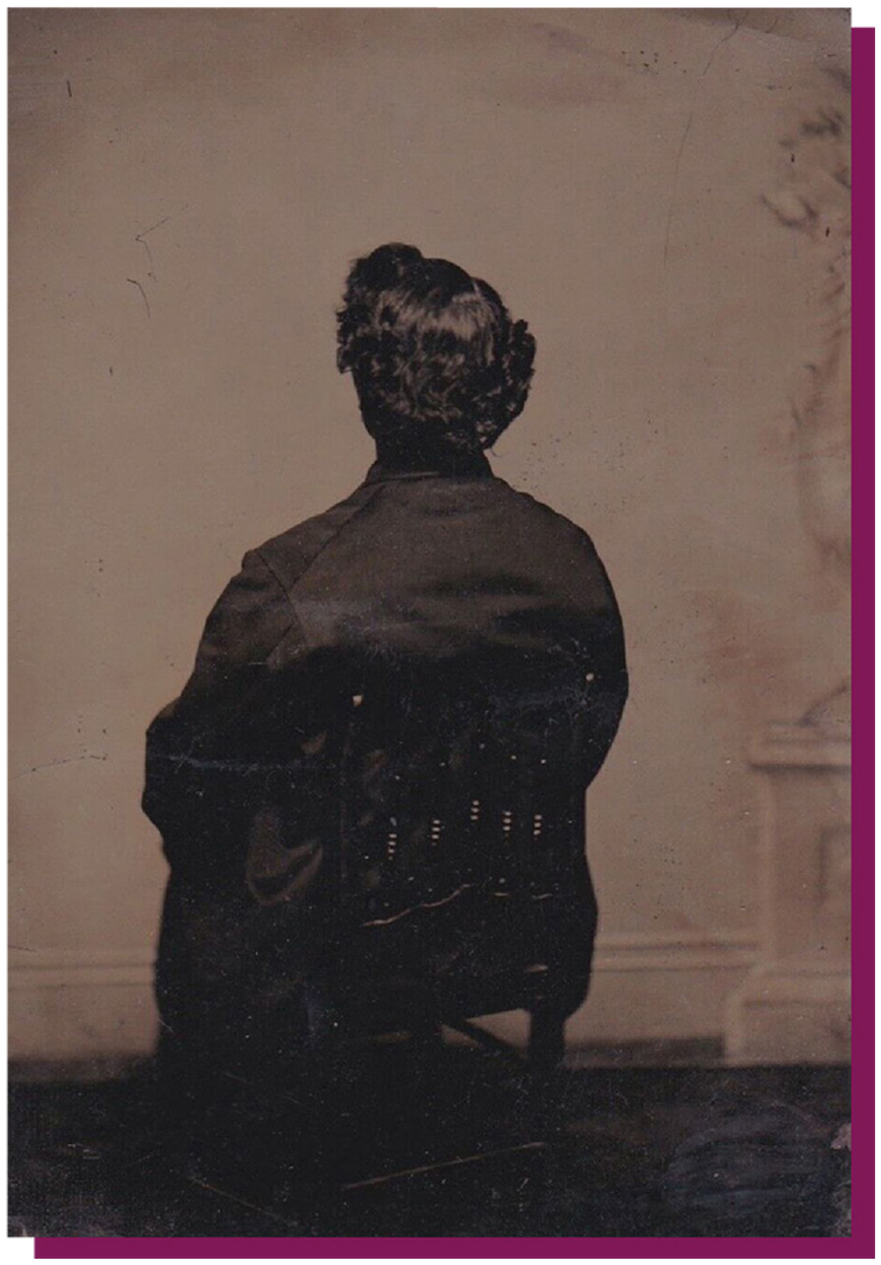
Anonymous, *Louise (Female Cross Dresser)*,
1845 ca., France



Anonymous, *Untitled*, 1860 ca., United States

The first photographic dialogue, that I am glad to share, talks about this. It is the dialogue of a woman, her name is Louise, who listens to the male part of herself, chooses it, declares it. It's only 1845, six years after the official announcement of François Arago; this reminds us that from the very beginning photography has been able to welcome self investigation, the anxiety, the need, the value of this research. Next to Louise, who's probably French or English, there is a man seen from behind, a man who looks just like Louise. A man who fifteen years later, in 1860 and in the United States, denies himself to the camera and its revealing gaze. To show oneself, withdraw, uncover, hide. Facing the unknown is a challenge, sometimes a dangerous game. Though it is in this tension, in this richness of relationships that the beating heart of my collection resides, the sense of its evolution and the invitation to follow it.

Pierre-Louis Pierson, *Scherzo di Follia (The Countess of Castiglione)*, 1863, France, enlargement by Braun & Cie 1930

Anonymous, *Total solar eclipse*, 1973, France

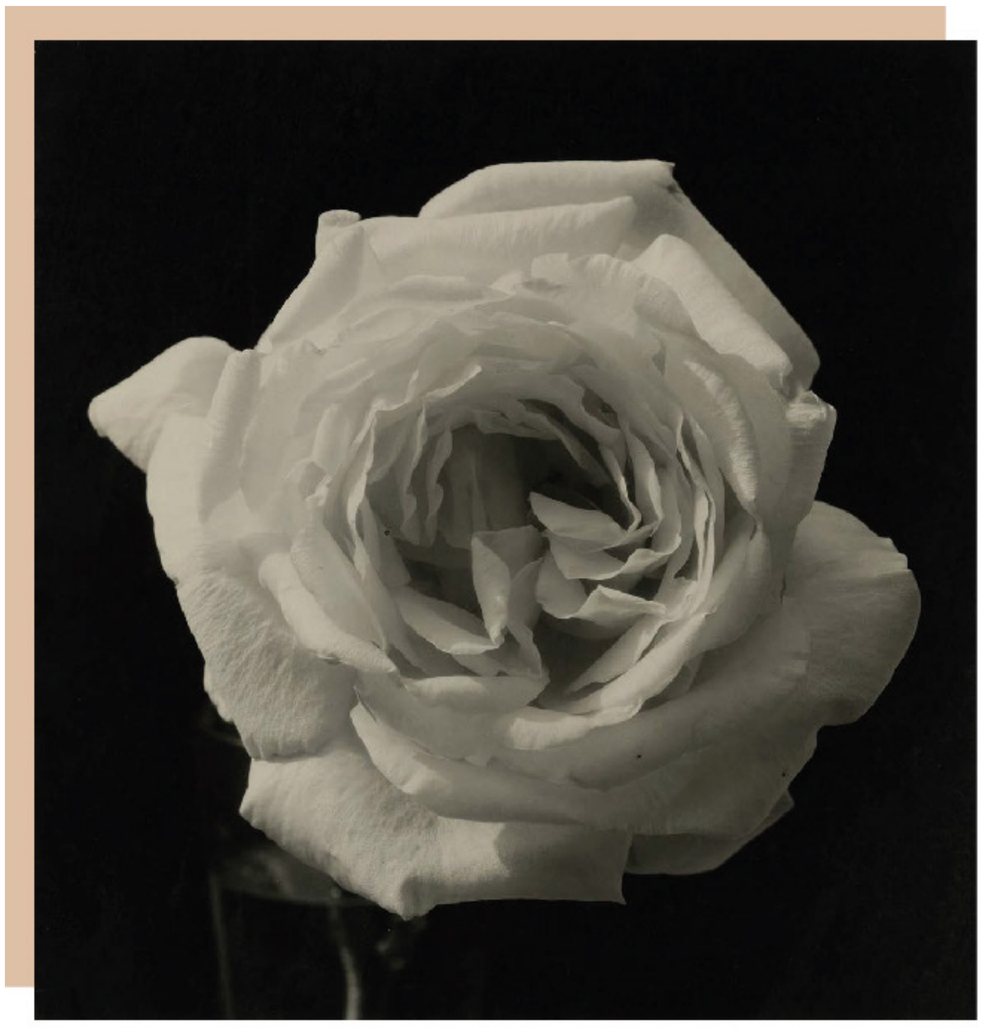
Of that black pupil he had made the center of his solar system. She was the star, she was the light, she was blinding. The earth and its inhabitants had no other choice but to follow the laws of astronomy and orbit around her, following the ellipse of the oval frame that isolated that fiery eye. When the Countess of Castiglione asked Pierre-Louis Pierson to portray her in the famous Scherzo di follia, it was already a memory, life at the court of Paris, the passion of Napoleon III, the dances, the dress of a “queen of hearts”; one of the embroidered hearts had gone beyond the very thin waist, where the emperor loved his Italian mistress. But despite the defeats of history one cannot be exiled from oneself and the Countess, the first eccentric, the first narcissist of the photographic era, who was the first interpreter of the infinite parts of the female imagination through photography - empress, widow, prostitute, murderess, nun, madonna, dying - continued to direct Pierson so that his lens kept the beauty and extravagance intact. Her own darkness caught her when she wasn’t forty yet, when in her apartment in Place Vendôme she did what the moon does to the earth for a few minutes, remove the sunlight. The Countess closed the windows, drew the curtains, veiled the mirrors with black drapes, and went out only at night. The eye that did not want to look at itself became an eternal eclipse and she stopped, at her whim, the peaceful course of the solar system.

David LaChapelle, *Shoe Story*, 1995, United States

Zorro, *Untitled (Still life)*, 1968, France

He had chosen those pink flowers to set up the most delicate and cruel homage to himself, to the man he had been and, because of his age, he no longer was. And among all possible colours he had chosen pink. He, who for years had imagined himself as Zorro's alter ego, who had dressed in the same boots and cracked the same whip, because he knew how much pink, still in the eighteenth and early twentieth centuries, had been the colour of virility, the polite and aware red of those who know strength, passion, justice. For at least two decades Zorro, an extraordinary anonymous photographer, had dressed the clothes of the masked swordsman. Each dressing had taken place at home, in the bedroom of an old Paris apartment. In the 1940s, self-portraits were in black and white, nocturnal. The colour and the warm light of the day, on the other hand, announced his maturity, and in 1968, the '68 of all rebellions, taking leave of his fantasies, Zorro had inserted his beloved whips in a vase of carnations. Ikebana of a farewell. Thirty years later, David LaChapelle also wanted to ride in the domestic prairies of desire. He too became Zorro and let the executioner's leggings wrap up his body. Blue latex, because the sky today is chromatically destined to men. If only this were the case, we would have to protest, but that little powder shoe, resting on the head, balances the game of conventions and reminds us that the colour of the ancient male power is the same colour that now belongs to women.

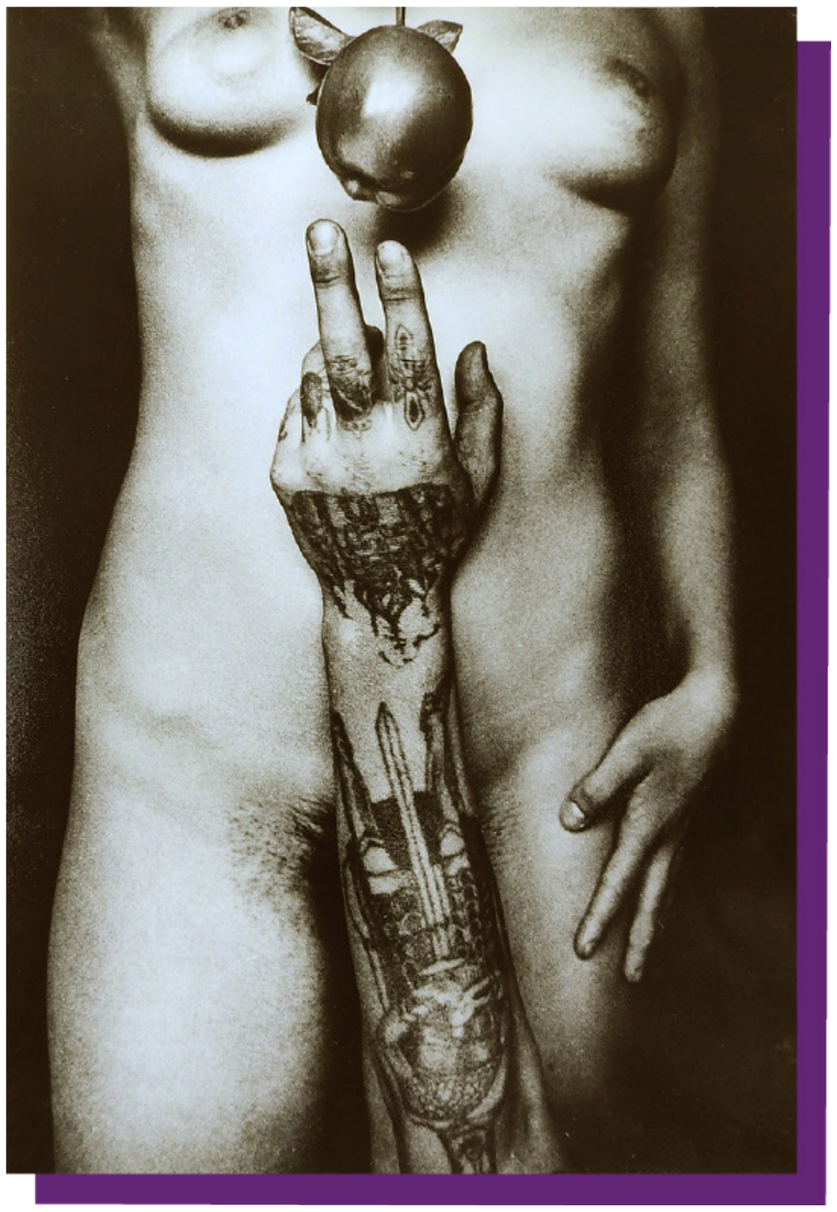
Edward Steichen, *Untitled*, 1920 ca., United States



Anonymous, *Untitled*, 1960 ca., Germany

Lovers of roses know that this sublime flower is divided into two parts and that each of them, so opposite, represents the convulsive, contradictory, chaste and cruel nature of the human heart. These adepts of pleasure are like two armies, that, instead of colliding in the open field, brush against each other, some bringing the corolla, some the stem, into their trenches. In 1920 Edward Steichen had already been a pictorialist, had already appeared on the pages of Camera Work, and was already the pioneer of fashion photography who three years later would be responsible for the image of Vogue and Vanity Fair. His rose, so delicate, so straight photography, speaks of a love so complete in opening up to the light and declaring the darkness from which the whirlwind of the petals is born. Everything is in balance between heaven and earth, between such a fragrant life and a perfume, rose water, used to prepare the dead for burial. And then the stem, those legs cut off in the shot by an anonymous German photographer in a Germany already divided by the Wall; those legs protected by chains and padlocks as if they were thorns, and those heels that rise swelling at the ankle like a fruit, and again those laces that tighten the skin of other animals to ours, are nothing more than the desire to protect and preserve this beauty. And whether we lean our lips on the petals or on the leather of the boots, little changes. Of love, of perfect love it's what we are talking about.

Alfa Castaldi, *Entomologia, Mugler Vogue D.P.*, 1991, Italy



Sergei Vasiliev, *Russian criminal tattoo Encyclopaedia*, 1989, Russia

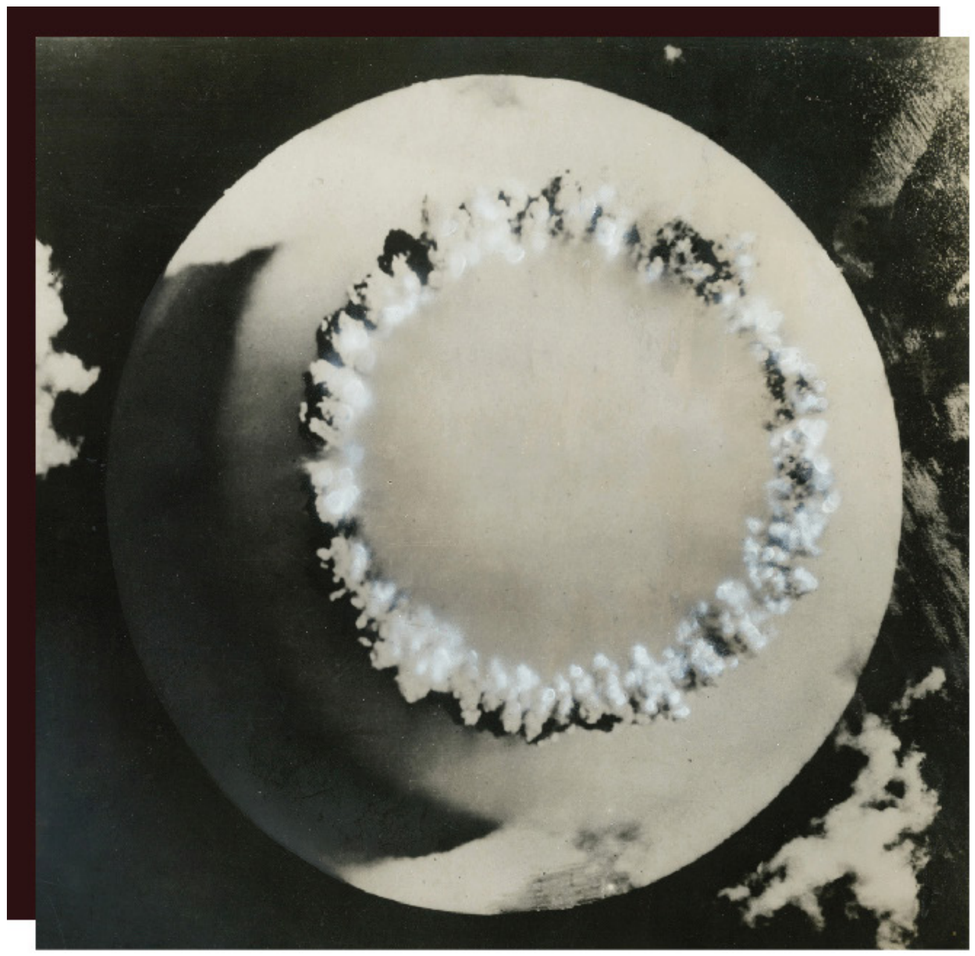
You must have married the crime to be a leader, a Pakhan, as they used to say in the darkest circles of Russian prisons in the 1980s. You must have joined evil, declaring yourself its humble servant, to enjoy the privilege of tattooing the rings of command on your fingers. Rings of royal splendour with sceptres and crowns, rings like daggers to commemorate murder and revenge, rings where every ray of sunshine is a condemnation and the crosses are journeys to the « zone », the extreme fields of forced labor. While being lords of all violence, even the inhabitants of hell invoked a little peace, and then to the ring finger, where one imagines a small artery that goes up the arm and reaches the heart, where the spouses exchange vows, a scarab appeared, the lucky insect, the symbol of the resurrection for the ancient Egyptians. But how to rise from the darkness of the underworld, of any underworld? You rise again through the act of desiring, says Sergei Vasiliev, jailer and photographer; and the apple that seems a whisker from that hand, and instead is so far away, is certainly not the fruit of sin, for the condemned would smile at this, but it is the desire itself. The indestructible desire. The desire for the lost thing which, when it comes back to light, will have the bitter sweet taste of honey. And if the insect that distills the nectar dresses Thierry Mugler and is one of the sublime creatures that Alfa Castaldi shaped for Vogue and for the famous double pages of Anna Piaggi, then kiss your beetle, kiss the ring that united you to hope in spite of everything, because you are a lucky man.

Anonymous, *Untitled*, 1880 ca., Algeria

R. Moreau, *The dance of Loïe Fuller*, 1908, France

She is the butterfly, she is the fire, she is the light, she is heaven and the stars. She is Loïe Fuller in the words of her lover, Gab Sorère. Loïe is a woman who loves women, and in the whirlwind of silk veils that surround her she is a creature in the making, the woman who is becoming the new woman of the late nineteenth century. Before then no one had ever seen desire and pathos take such free and exuberant forms, almost already abstract. And before Fuller, no artist had made of herself her total, scenic work of art, where the fabric dotted with fluorescent radio, with which Loïe was dressed, dictated an unprecedented story of freedom in the dark. The Art Nouveau of self-determination.
Loïe Fuller, then Marie Louise, was born in 1862 in the most remote American province. As a young girl, she had moved to New York singing and dancing in vaudeville, later she had reached Paris and at the Folies Bergère, after three hundred replicas of her Serpentine Dance in 1891, she had created modern dance. In the wake of that bright success, Loïe had inaugurated an all-women company, had opened a school and had formed a team of fifty electricians who moved behind the scenes of every show of hers.
In the years when the electric light was turning into a daily presence, Loïe had sensed that the inner light could change the female destiny. Just turn it on and everything starts to swirl, to come to life. Just turn it off, yesterday as today in every part of the world, in Afghanistan once again in the hands of the Taliban, in the violence of the very modern west, and the veils and the light they are impregnated with will censor the energy instead of freeing it.
They erase the body instead of erasing the night.

Anonymous, *Nuclear bomb testing (Bikini Atoll)*,
1946, Marshall Islands

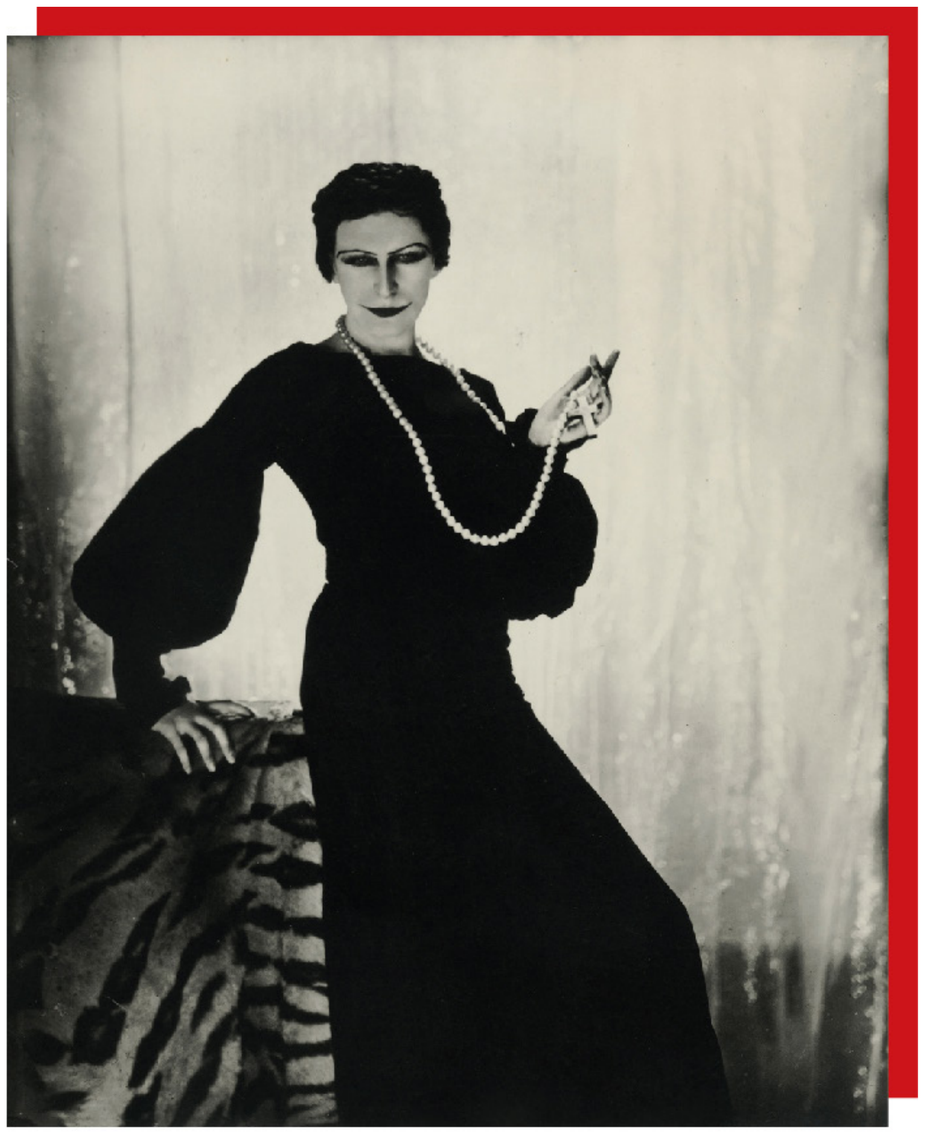


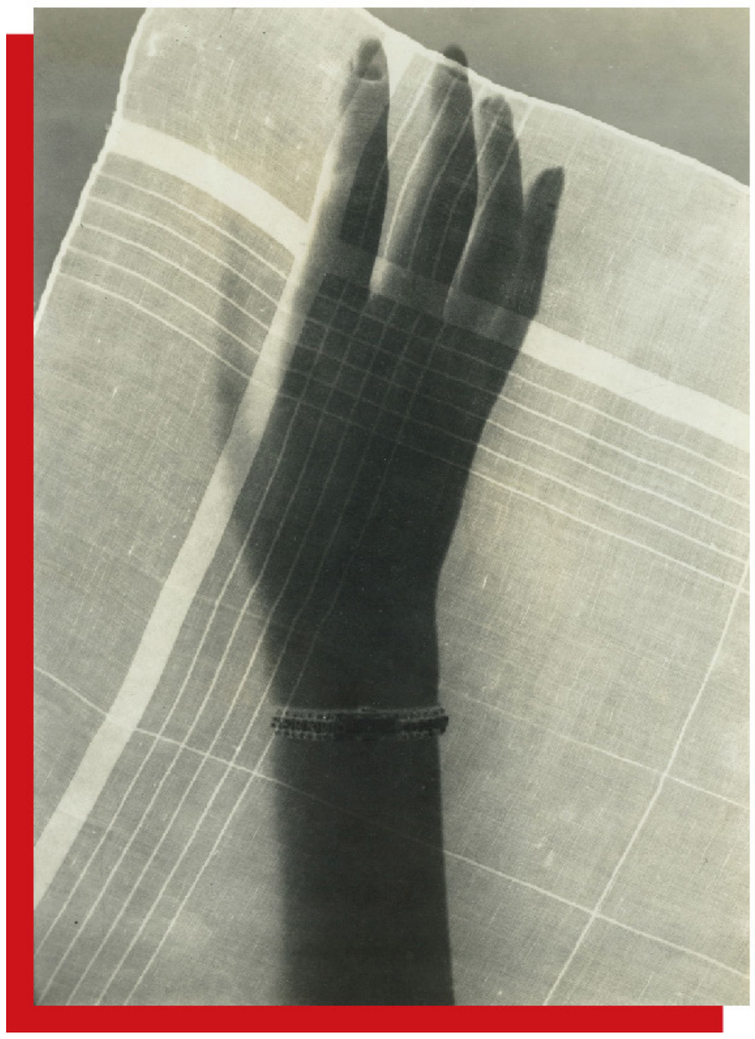
Yasumasa Morimura, *Self-Portrait: (Actress) after Vivien Leigh 2*, 1996, Japan

World War II had ended the year before when the US government dropped two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6th and 9th August 1945. In the summer of 1946, in the blue Bikini Lagoon in the Marshall Islands of the Pacific Ocean, the United States detonated another bomb. A test, this time, to verify the effects of nuclear power on ships anchored around the atoll. Sailors and commanders remained at a safe distance. A few minutes before the explosion they had received the order to drop a blackout mask over their eyes and had waited for the signal. At 08.35 they had seen the bomb explode, placed under a landing ship; between the ocean and the sky suddenly an immense cloud had risen, an inflorescence that an operator, flying over it, had caught in its deadly rising. So white, so soft, perfect and then that crown that drew the last royal circle, the moment before it dispersed in the air to become a dark column.

When fifty years later, in 1996, Yasumasa Morimura wore one of the most famous dresses in the history of cinema, the red-sin, red-passion, red-pride, red-I dress by Scarlett O'Hara in Gone with the Wind perhaps he could not imagine that he was interpreting the very essence of the history of modern Japan. It is not only one of the most famous images of the Actress series, portrait and self-portrait of an artist who comes out of himself to become someone else, but the Vivien Leigh of Morimura, the Scarlett of Tara, the sweetheart rejected by Ashley, the ungrateful wife by Rhett Butler, is the face and body of a country that has lost the war and has chosen, by «americanizing itself», to wear the uniform of its invader. Who else is Scarlett O'Hara if not the woman who loses the Civil War? What is that red-death dress, with that cloud of feathers that envelop her shoulders and breasts, if not a premonition of the nuclear war that will be? And who is Morimura-Scarlett if not a loser, a Japanese born six years after the end of the Second World War, and who nevertheless accepts the radiations of American culture and its actress-bombs? «Tomorrow is another day» said Scarlett. Who knows what part of me will survive tomorrow.

George Hoyningen-Huene, *Cecil Beaton as Elinor Glyn*, 1930, France





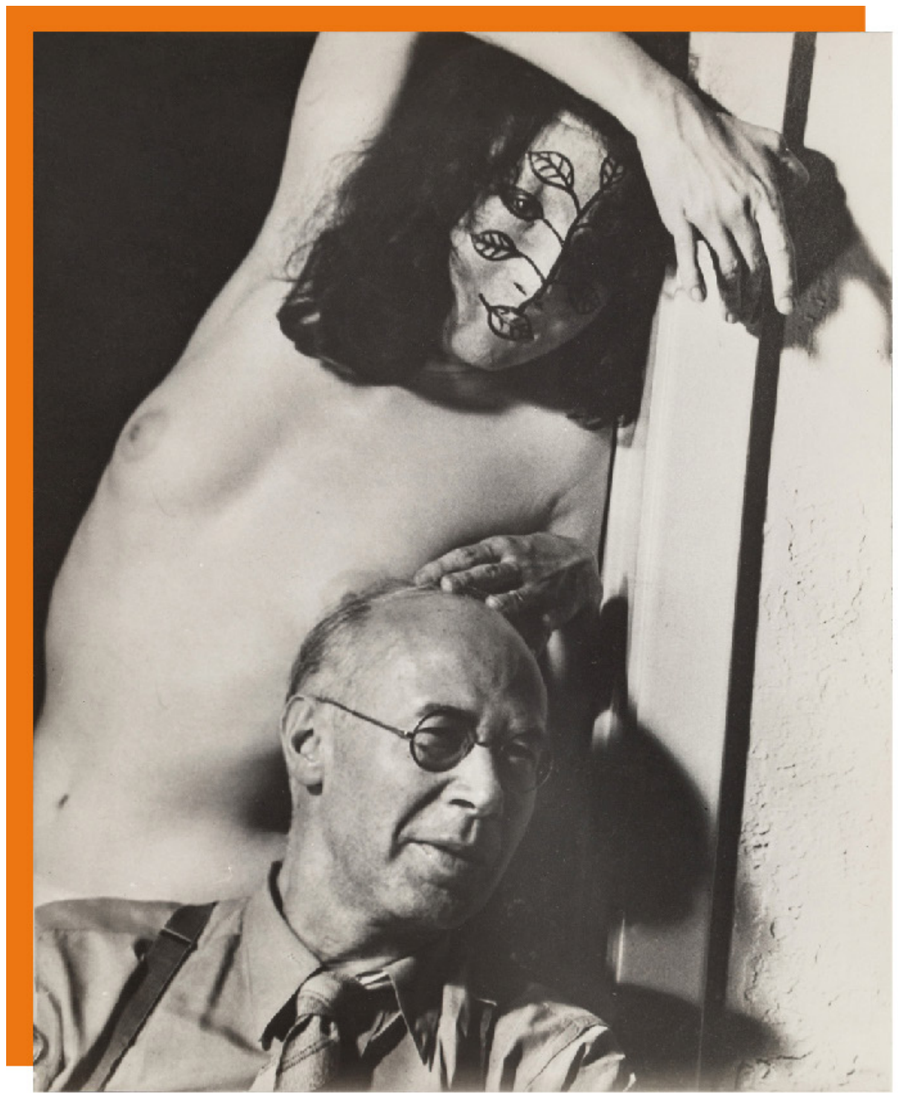
Anonimo, *Untitled (Study of a Hand)*, 1930 ca., France

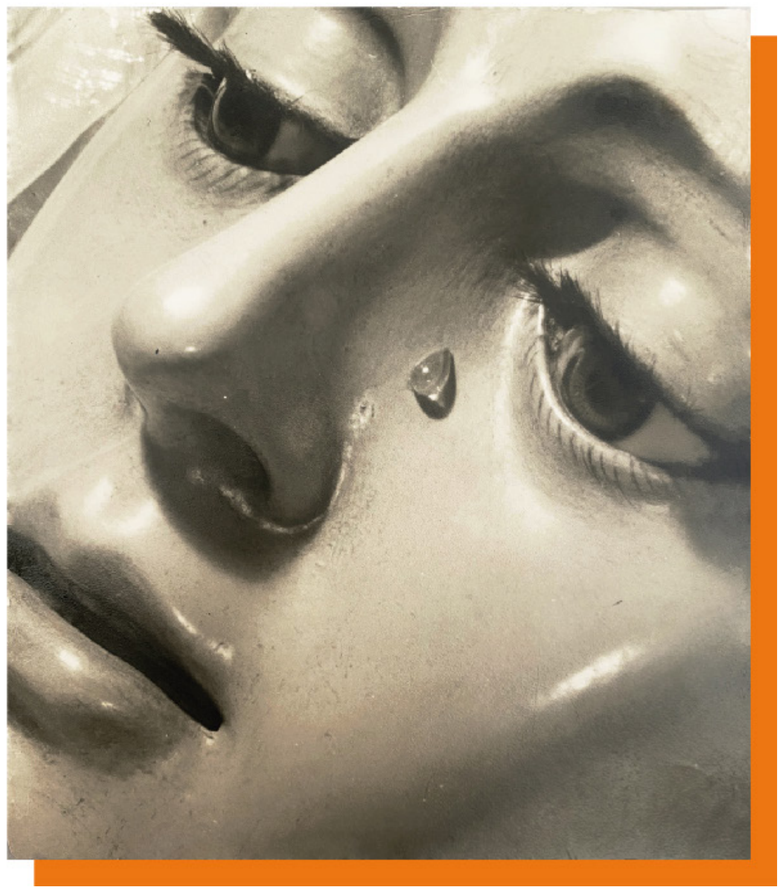
If we had a movie camera, we would start with that hand of a Madonna and model that holds an ivory cross and shows it between the very thin fingers like the relic of a joyful sin. From the palm raised to the sky we would climb along the beads of the rosary, we would caress that girl's neck and that scarlet smile that goes beyond her mouth and promises wonders. Even the eyes say so, in the mascara darkness that lets only the blue star of the iris shine: «enter the game». And the other hand also says so as it descends to the ground, towards her passions, and rests confidently on a tiger skin. If we had a camera, we would ask Cecil Beaton to continue the film, to play again and walk towards us, weaving into the extremely refined and cruel feminine that inhabits him.

This is how the great photographer appeared at Elsa Maxwell's birthday party in Paris in 1930. After all, how could he have celebrated the power of one of the most poisonous and two-pronged pens in journalism of the time? How to flatter that woman who loved women and decided the fate of anyone who aspired to success? As a gift to Maxwell, Beaton had offered another woman, the mother of all strong females, the tiger and the lady of bon ton, and had therefore worn the clothes of Elinor Glyn, English writer, screenwriter, producer and director, so confident of oneself to recognise and cast the talent of others. And the others were Rodolfo Valentino, Gloria Swanson, Clara Bow, all happy owners of «a certain something», or simply «it» as Glyn called it.

Posing en travesti in front of George Hoyningen-Huene's lens, Cecil Beaton declared his particular version of «a certain something», that makes people different because they are stronger and more complete. And Beaton's «it» was the power to speak to opposites, to the heaven of the saints and the land of temptations, to the feminine in the masculine and to the masculine in the feminine, letting the body, in the black velvet that guards it, reveal them both. In the mystery of his anonymity, another photographer had come to the same radiant conclusions and in the same years, in Paris, had played between positive and negative, and he too had seen a woman's hand emerge through the faint stripes of a man's handkerchief.

Man Ray, *Henry Miller and Margaret Neiman*,
1942, United States

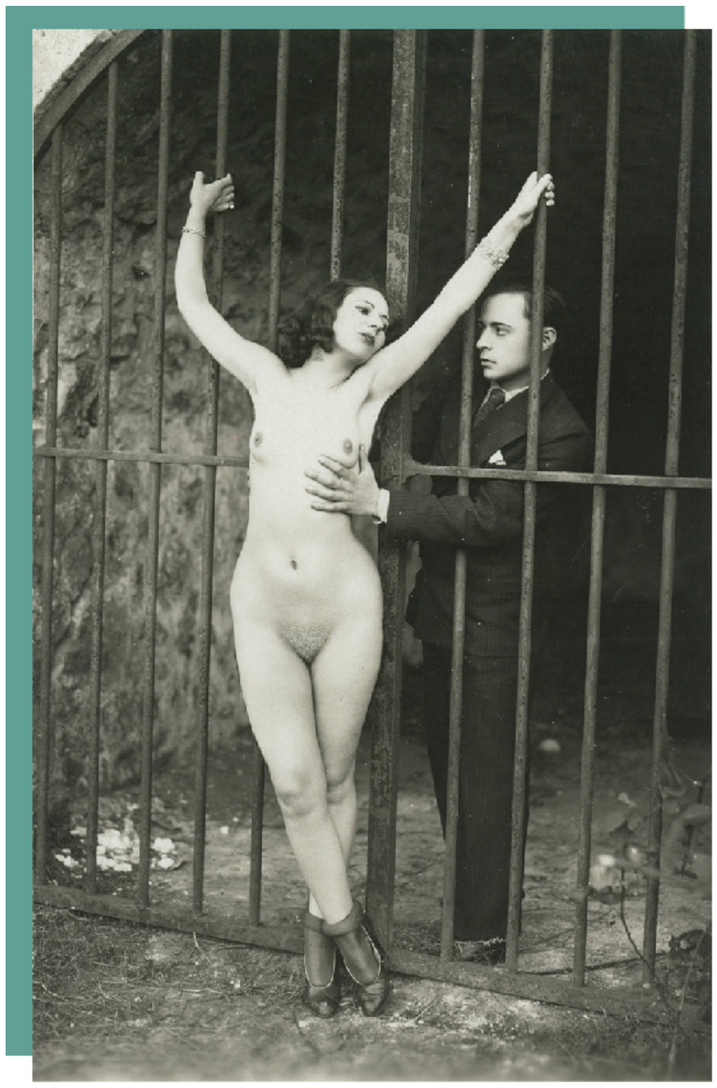


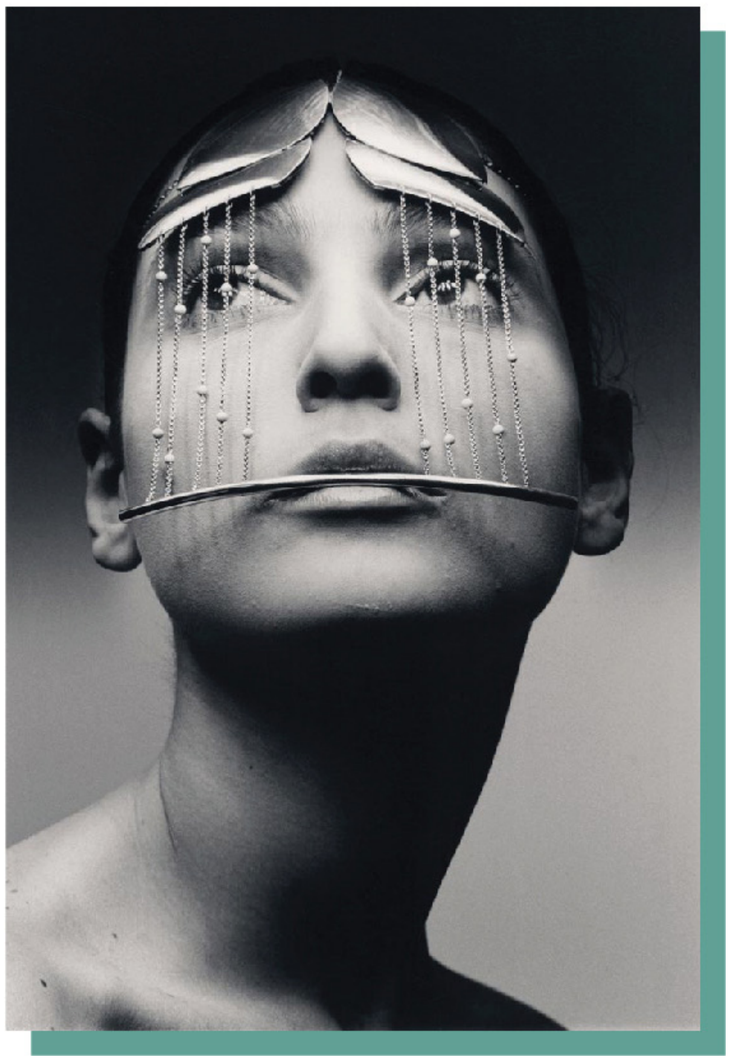


Anonymous, *Santa Marta*, 1950 ca., Spain

Although it may seem strange, it is a good thing that Man Ray and Henry Miller did not meet in Paris in the years they both spent there. Strange because the photographer had arrived in the French capital in 1921, exactly a century ago, and the writer in 1928. Strange because they were the same age, they were Americans, both sons of a tailor, they were libertines, libertarians, atheists, individualists and they loved De Sade, even if Man Ray knew him better since, living in rue Campagne-Première, he was a neighbour of Maurice Heine, who was responsible for the true rediscovery of the Divine Marquis. But the strange game of coincidences continues because in 1934 Man Ray prints the collection Man Ray. Photographies 1920-1934 Paris, while in the same year Henry Miller publishes Tropic of Cancer in Paris for the editions of the Obelisk Press and in the first pages he writes: «Paris is the cradle of artificial births».
The artifice of fate wants Man Ray and Henry Miller to leave Paris for the United States in 1940, still ignoring each other and they only meet in Hollywood a few months later at Gilbert and Margaret Neiman's house where Miller, penniless, found refuge. All together Man Ray and Juliet, his new partner, Gilbert, Margaret and Henry spend long evenings playing, drinking and dancing until dawn. But perhaps behind Margaret's face, hidden by a painted papier-mâché mask, Man Ray imagines another face. Another body. Another love. Another city. And in this strange nostalgia, the portrait of Henry Miller and Margaret Neiman, that finally celebrates the meeting between the two men, actually becomes the self-portrait of Man Ray and of his secret desire to return to Paris and to all that he had experienced. Who knows if Man Ray remembered the tears he shed the day after Lee Miller's farewell, those glass tears that he would photograph shortly after, those glass tears a breath away from the rimmel-smeared eyes? Because women must cry and suffer, the muse-women, the mystery-women, even the saint-women in the blasphemy of Sadian memory dear to every surrealist. Impossible to know if Man Ray had seen one of the statues parading in the Holy Week procession in Seville. What is certain is that the tears "see" better than the eyes.

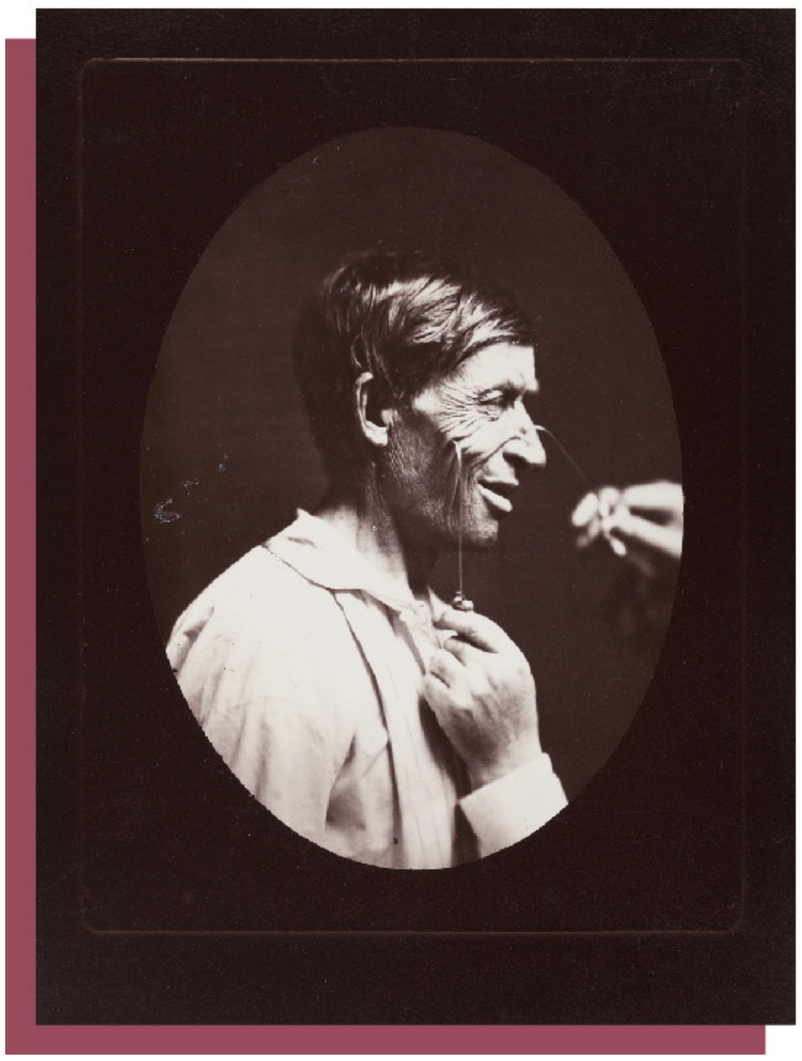
Studio Biederer, *Untitled*, 1930 ca., France





Ugo Mulas, *Gioiello di Pietro Consagra indossato da Benedetta Barzini*, 1969, Italy

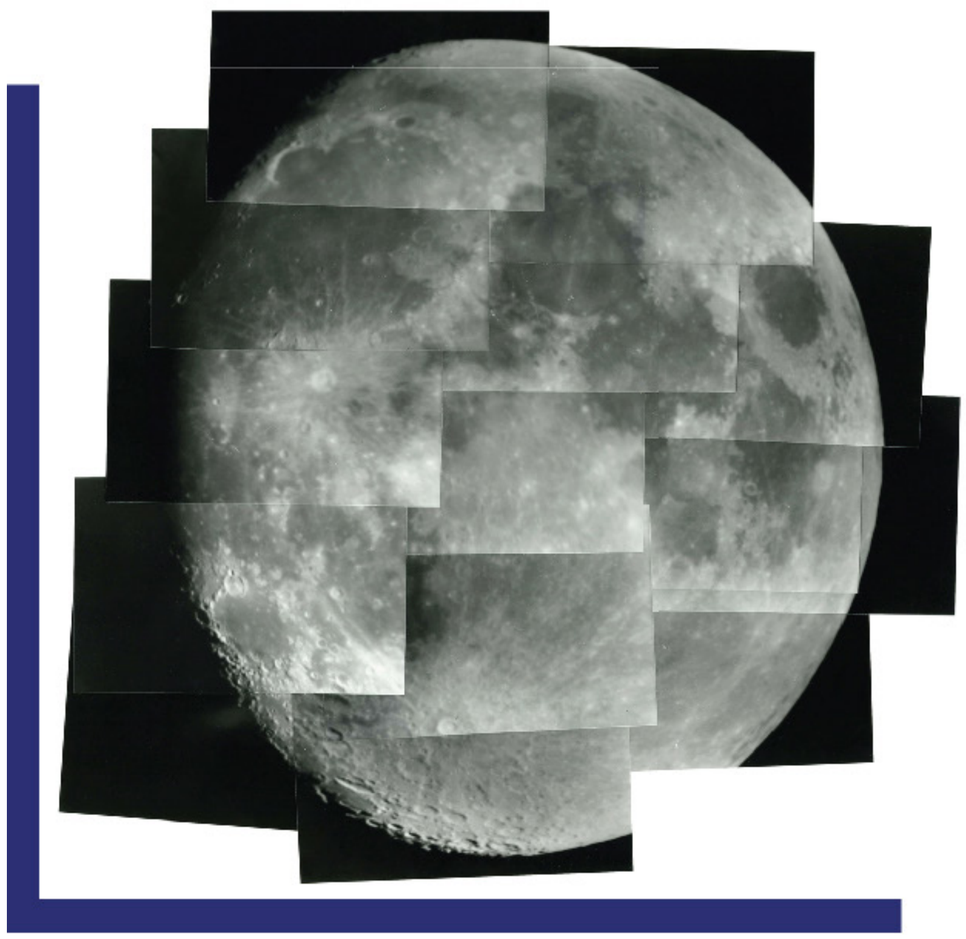
We should do this verification every January, a cold, essential month, prone to reviews and new year's resolutions, and check the state of the domestic and mental cages in which we live. An accurate check of the bars, doors, hinges, then the small opening that allows us to introduce food and caress the animal's skin or fur beyond the fence, and of course better take a look at the padlock and the key that we keep hidden. Starting from the etymology of this month dedicated to Janus, a double-faced god capable of looking at the past and the future at the same time, the verification would help us understand where we are on our tiring and bumpy journey towards awareness, whether we are free or prisoners, whether we are open or closed to new ideas, whether we are in the flow or rigidly constrained, whether we are traveling or trapped. And the verb to verify, so scientific, surgical, aseptic, is not used by chance.
Fifty years ago, in 1972, Ugo Mulas conducted his famous Verifications. At the origin of an investigation, unparalleled in Italy and beyond, was «a certain discontent with what I had done all these years» admitted the great photographer. And certainly he was not dissatisfied with the quality of the images, but with the recklessness with which he had chosen photography and had practiced it professionally since 1954. It was as if Mulas had felt the cage of habit and repetition: going into the studio, loading the film, focusing, framing, shooting, developing, enlarging, cutting. In short, he operated like a machine, and did it well, but without being aware of the reason that motivated each single operation, of the gestures, of the materials that made up the practice and photographic thought. Maybe this extraordinary revision had begun in 1969, when Mulas portrayed the jewel of Pietro Consagra, the cage-mask that imprisons the eyes and lips of the beautiful Benedetta Barzini. It was not a real closure, more feeling and seeing just a half. Even half a kiss. Yet it was enough to notice those almost invisible bars, blurred because too close to the eyes, and the cage would open. Observing the mysterious mise en scene of the Biederer brothers, it is up to us today to decide which of the two characters is inside or outside the cage, who is the jailer, who is the prisoner, who holds the imagination in check and who sets it free. A very personal verification.



Adrien Tournachon (Nadar jeune) and
Dr. Duchenne de Boulogne, *Étude d'expression*,
1856 ca., France

Erwin Olaf, *Lady D 1997 Royal Blood*,
2000, The Netherlands

It's one of those dates in everyone's history now, and it's a recurring question, «do you remember the day Lady D died? And where were you?» On August the 31st 1997, Princess Diana passed away in Paris, at the Pitié-Salpêtrière, in that same hospital where a century and a half earlier Guillaume-Benjamin-Amand Duchenne de Boulogne, a French neurologist, had carried out his extraordinary research on the conductivity of neurotransmitters and on the neurophysiology of emotions. Research that the doctor had also documented at a photographic level and that in 1862 he had collected in the famous volume Mécanisme de la physionomie humaine, inaugurating the relationship between photography and medicine. Together with Adrien Tournachon, Nadar's younger brother, and then independently, Duchenne had documented the different reactions of the facial muscles to the stimulation of electropunctures, and had thus identified, linking them to the movements of the individual muscles, thirteen primary emotions: attention, reflection, aggression, pain, happiness, benevolence, lust, sadness, weeping, whimpering, surprise, fear, terror.
Before photographers enhanced the rapid evolution of emotions, and before joy, despair, love, pity, anger became an everyday subject, a scientist had already cataloged everything. In fact, what is Mécanisme if not an atlas of photographic emotions, of which the face is the protagonist? What is this medical book if not the very human attempt, in the words of its author, to «grasp the conditions that aesthetically create beauty», where the beauty of the face is always «the beauty of emotions»?
So what is the portrait that Erwin Olaf dedicates to Lady D, in the Royal Blood series, if not the discovery of «another mechanism», of another atlas, that of the fiction of emotions?
Despite the accident in the Pont de l'Alma tunnel, despite the mangled flesh, the beautiful face of Diana Spencer's impersonator shows no pain. And not even among the endless news images that marked the life of the «sad Princess», is it easy to recognise the truth of her feelings. Duchenne made history for having been able to distinguish the facial muscles that cause a sincere smile, the «Duchenne smile», from those that generate a hint of circumstance. Who can say what the father of modern neurology would have discovered if Lady D had been one of his patients at the Salpêtrière.

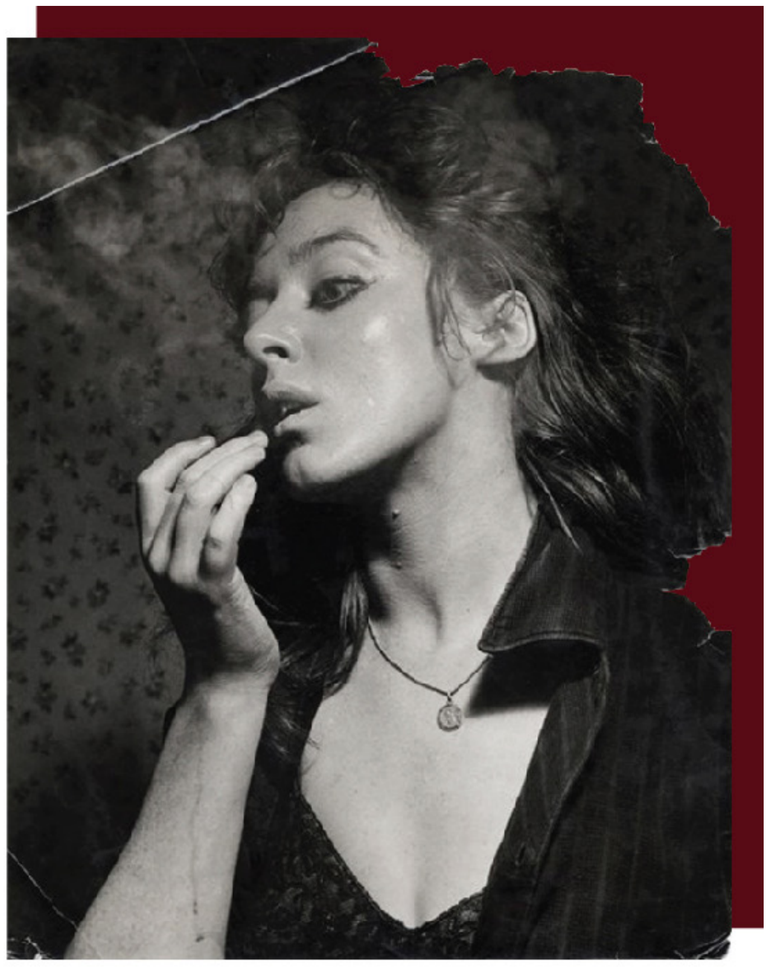


Anonymous, *Untitled*, 1960 ca., France

Baron Adolph De Meyer, *Marchesa Casati*,
1912, France

She didn't want to hear about the sun or even see it. And if she could, she would have darkened it even in the sky, so that the day might become a very long night. Throughout her life, a life devoted to the theatre of herself and the show of her inventions, the Marchesa Luisa Casati was a lunar woman, of that lunatic, hypnotic and transformative madness, which diverts the flows and pushes the most courageous beings to explore other dimensions. Even that of the afterlife. The Marchesa loved, and so did Baron Adolph de Meyer, her guest in Venice, at Palazzo Venier dei Leoni, to evoke spirits and question them. Among the most reluctant «to be tracked down and to get out of her silence», Casati admitted, was that of Princess Cristina Belgiojoso, who was said to have kept the hearts of her lovers and even embalmed the body of one of the youngest and most beautiful.
The Marchesa had not dared as much, because in reality she had gone further, dying herself of boredom after each kiss, and even stopping her heartbeat to escape the fusion of the embrace, as Gabriele D'Annunzio, her lover, complained. But then the desire for conquest would rise again, her eyes green as absinthe reopened, and the body craved a new skin, maybe even a new dress, one of those scenography dresses she would wear in grandiose parties, those soul-dresses that on her looked like «the ashes on the coals», as in D'Annunzio's words. Casati entered the scene and it was as if the life of others, ordinary even in wealth, was extinguished. And it was extinguished because that stunning, lonely woman carried the mark of lunar death with her. A moon never full, but in fragments, one for each victim, one for each broken heart, one for each portrait that the artists, taken by the enchantment themselves, have dedicated to the Divine Marquise, from Baron de Meyer to Man Ray, from Cecil Beaton to Giovanni Boldini.
Even as she got older, Casati remained faithful to the lunar hours. In her little London flat where she spent her last few years, her curtains were permanently closed and a black veil covered her face. She was far from sad, in spite of the fact that everybody had abandoned her and she was now in misery. «Unhappiness gives off a bad smell» recalled the Marchesa. And after all, when you are a lunar woman you get used to disappearing from the sky and shining again among the clouds.

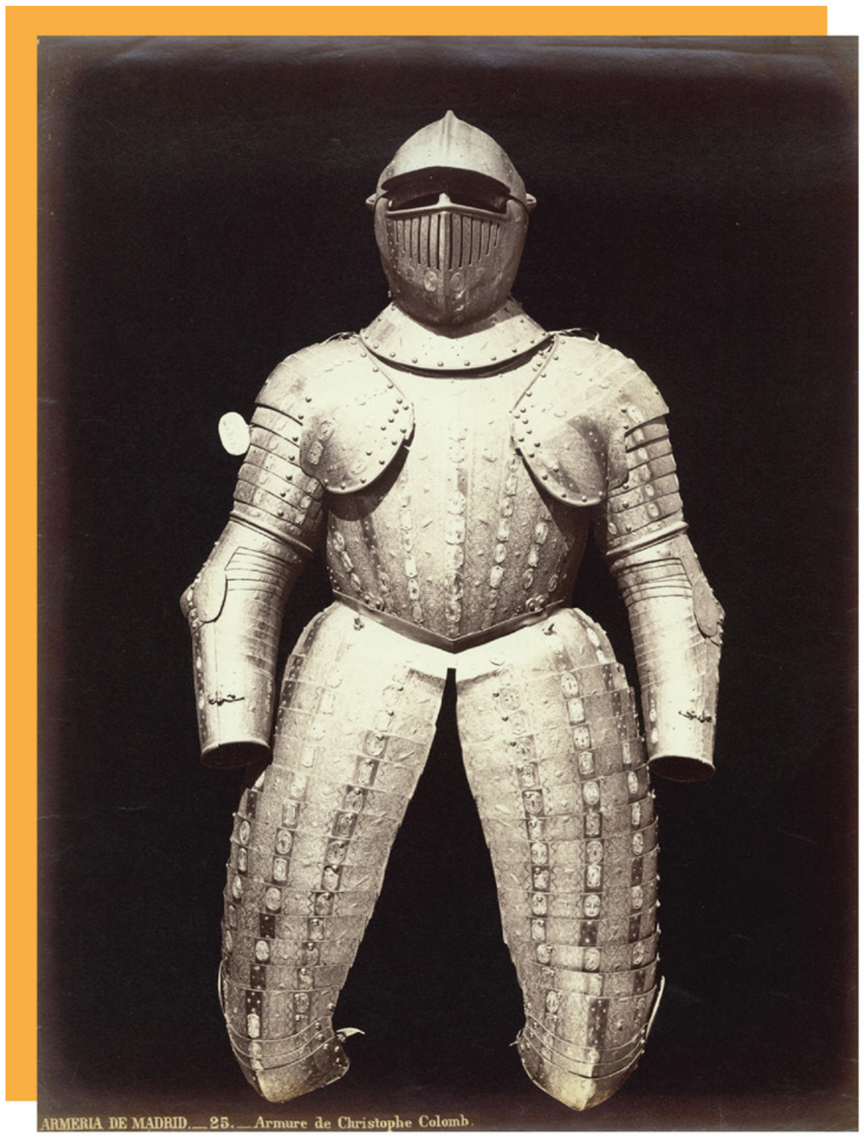
Ed Van Der Elsken, *Saint-Germain-des-Prés*,
1953, France

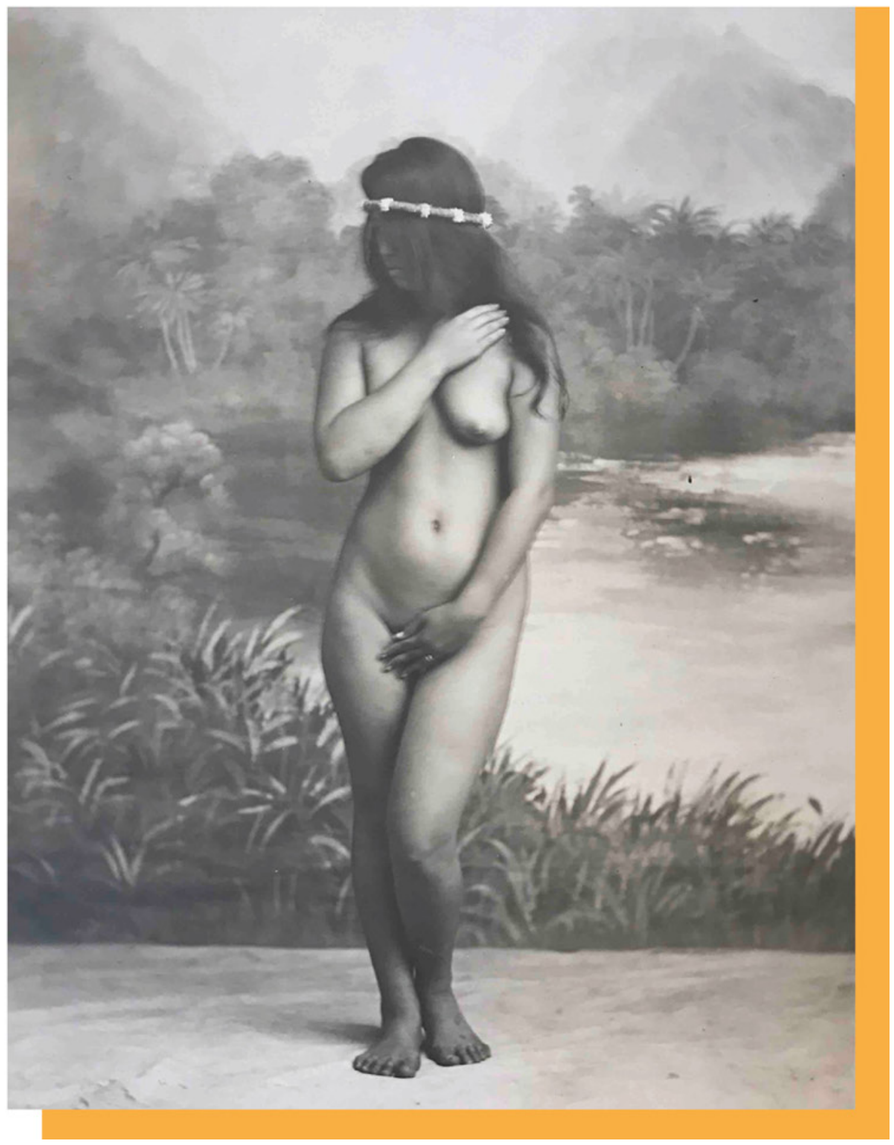


Nan Goldin, *Kim in Rhinestones, Paris*, 1991, France

That gesture tells everything, the vocation to a subjective gaze, extraordinarily autobiographical in revolt, in suffering, in the search for authenticity. And the emblematic gesture is the tear that reinvents and makes unique the portrait of Vali Myers, alias Ann, protagonist of *Love on the Left Bank*, a revolutionary book by Ed Van Der Elsken, who in the 1950s explores the youth revolt among cafes, pavements, the caves of the existentialist Saint-Germain-des-Prés, in Paris. The story is enlightening: Gerd Sander was very fond of Van Der Elsken's work; the two had met, Sander had expressed his enthusiasm precisely for that image and without a second thought Van Der Elsken had torn the print from the album which contained it and had offered it to the gallery owner and nephew of the great German photographer.
If Gerd Sander, also a very refined printer of his grandfather's work, jealously preserved this imperfect image according to the classic criteria of conservation, if Julian Sander presented it at the latest Paris Photo in the exhibition-homage to his father, who passed away the year last, and if today this image is part of a collection that has in its DNA the uprooting from the norm and the exploration of the underground, it is precisely because this image, on the edge of laceration, has the power to tell and bring together many lives.
Of course it is the life of Ed Van Der Elsken and his community living on the sidelines of the law, with which he identifies and grows as an author - «I want to photograph people like me» said the Dutch photographer - and of which he narrates loves, violence, births, sex, disease, pain, illusions, death. And of course thirty years later in this «tribe», as Vali Myers called it, found herself Nan Goldin, soul of *The Ballad of the Sexual Dependency*, exhibited for the first time in Arles in 1986, she who considered Ed Van Der Elsken «a lover or a brother» at her side in the dive in the Bowery, among the protagonists of the New York underground. In place of Vali, Cookie Mueller, Trixie, Susan and their companions appear. Living, shooting and self portraying is the only rule, and even after moving to Paris, Nan Goldin enters and lives in the happily contested community of Le Carrousel, and in the capital's most famous cabaret en travesti she portrays her star, Kim Harlow, posing in the dressing room. Again it is a hugging look, a new family, again it is finding yourself at the center because at the margins, again it is courage, freedom. Miracle of the hands that tear, caress, dance, mend.

Jean Laurent, *Armour of Christopher Columbus*,
1870 ca., Spain





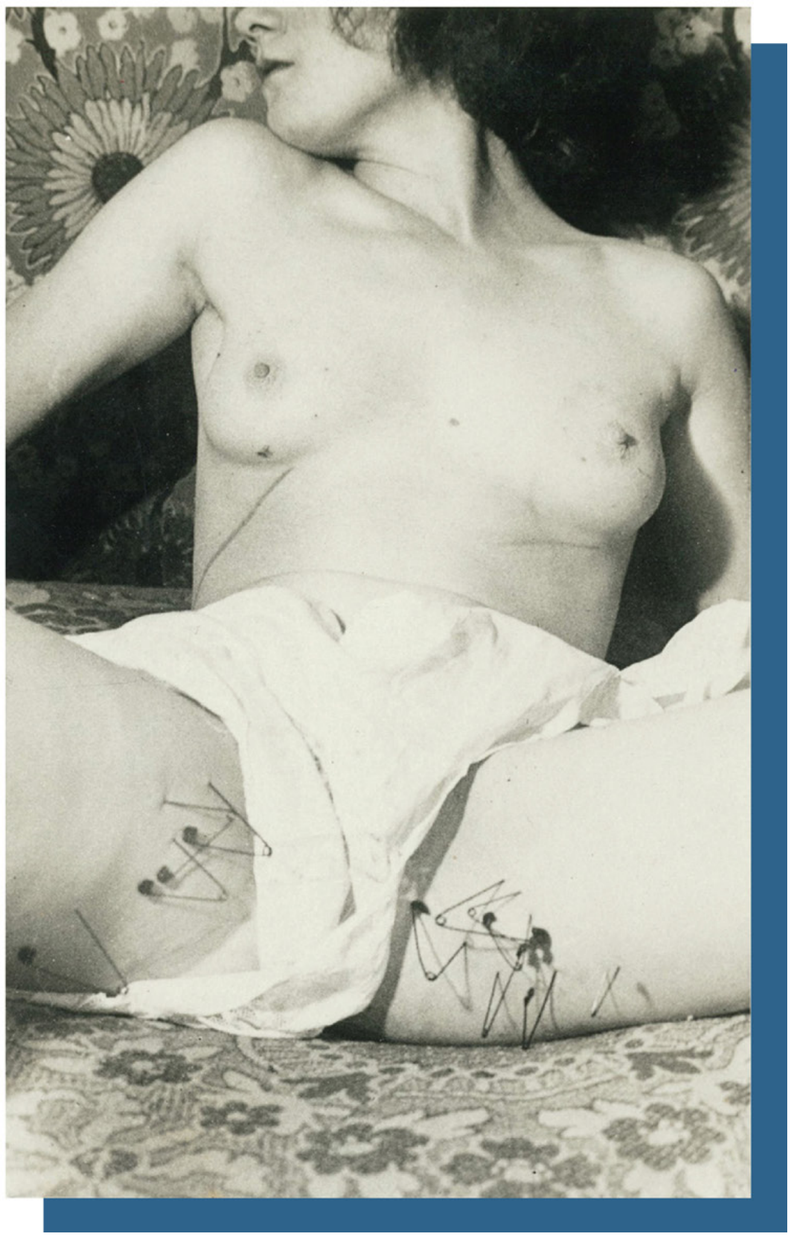
Lucien Gauthier, *Vénus Tahitienne*, 1920 ca., Tahiti

Surely in the excitement of the preparations of 1492, Christopher Columbus had not noticed that aboard his caravel, en route to those lands that he imagined were India, there was the wonderful Venus by Botticelli painted just a few years earlier. And perhaps not even Lucien Gauthier, born in Paris in 1875, at twenty-seven a bank employee in San Francisco, at twenty-nine fleeing to Polynesia, had not felt the presence of Aphrodite, golden and smiling next to him. Yet when he arrives in Tahiti and opens his studio, Gauthier photographs as if he had stayed at home, as if he were still strolling through the rooms of the Louvre or the Uffizi. One moment, time to update the classic painted backdrop, among palm trees, beach and rocks, and an unsuspecting young Tahitian woman takes the pose that in another part of the world celebrates the birth of the goddess of love, truth and its opposite, deception. Another idea of the body, of nudity and modesty that overlaps with the delicate violence of the eyes on the lives of others.

Had he known these images, which will have extraordinary luck the day after Gauthier's return to Paris in 1921, perhaps Aby Warburg, who inspired this collection, would have included them in his illustrated atlas of *Mnemosyne*. The legacy of the past is projected onto the present through the process of memory, said the great German scholar. And precisely Venus is the symbolic form of the survival of the past. So what is this Polynesian divinity, with black and not blond hair loose on the shoulders, with amber and not white marble skin, with a strong foot and not one as light as a flower, if not a very ancient Western memory, so rooted, overbearing and indispensable to be projected on the present and deform it? A defence and attack weapon, our memory, almost another armour, heavy, shining, chiseled down to the smallest detail like that of Christopher Columbus, which Jean Laurent photographed in Madrid, in the collections of the Prado Museum.

Next to this armour of virility, never empty despite the darkness in which it floats, the Venus of Tahiti tries to launch its arrows. She too has come out of the sea and on a shell she has landed, she too walks in a fragrant garden and if she wore a tunic the wind would lift the edges in a wonderful drapery. This Venus, who was not born in Kythera, but on another island, is also the Venus Pandemos, « the generator of all things ». Except they are all things of *our* part of the world.

Paolo Ventura, *The painter's story #04*,
2019, Italy



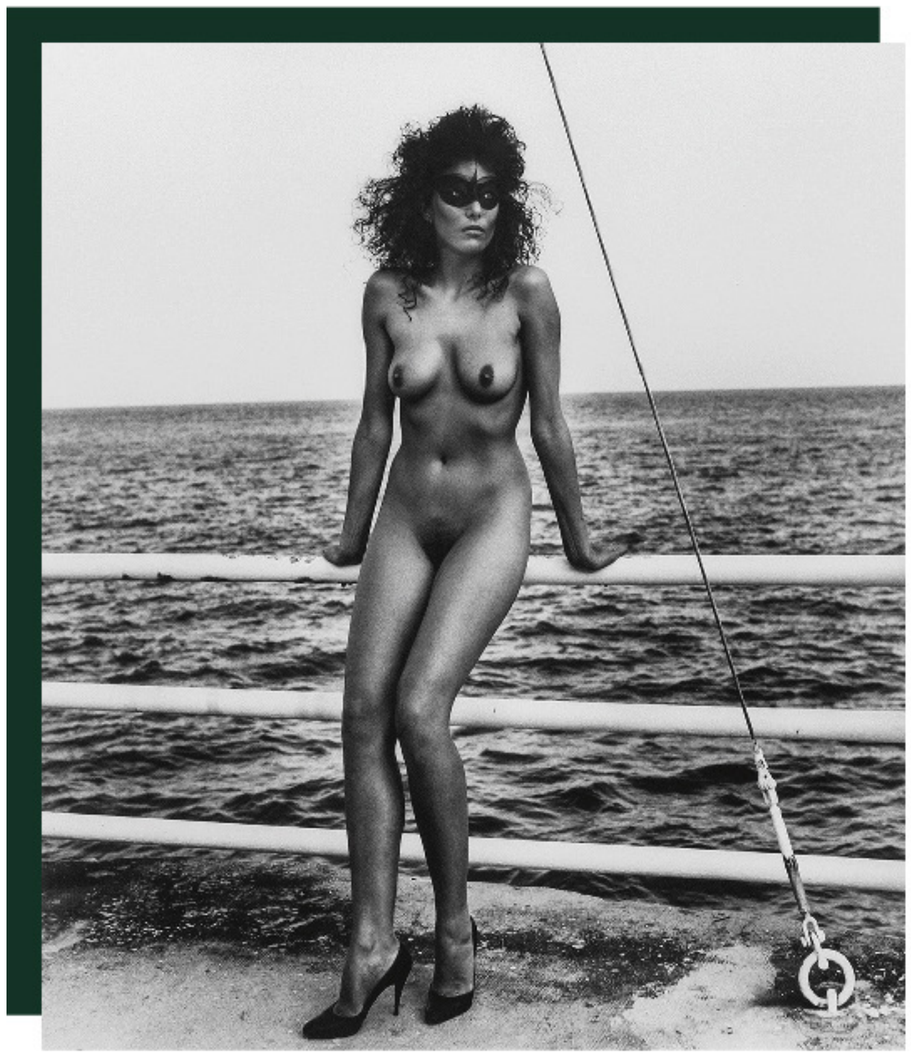
Anonymous, *Entrecuisse épinglée*,
1930 ca., France

We would like to say that we feel the blood flowing in our veins, it would be very romantic, but it is not true. We only know the mechanics of this phenomenon, the heart beating and carrying oxygen-rich blood to every fibre of the body. Our body is an invisible organism, closed and protected by the soft surface of the skin, and we do not want to see anything of what happens inside, in its flesh, in its fluids, in its guts, in its processes. Opening the body, even if only in our mind, would mean to hurt it, and we suffer terribly. But images know no limits, they are stronger than fear and disgust. And so, in a part of the Western world that has made wounds the symbol of a god-man and of our salvation, the images open up and invite us to enter.

It had never happened before that a trickle of blood ran on a model's face, eyes and complexion the colour of ice, and came to stain a wonderful haute couture shirt. But Paolo Ventura, an extraordinary artist who was born contemplating war photographs and reconstructed their violence even in his work in fashion, knows that images open the body of reality and are violent by nature. He knows that where the face and body do not betray the spasm of pain and suffer intact in their beauty, looking there, we suffer more. And we continue to suffer because we cannot look away, not even when we observe a crown of pins and thorns that martyrise the thighs of a woman, who's lying on a bed of flowers. A crucifixion from the 1930s, so much the white drapery resting on the sex is equal to that of Christ on the cross.

So why do we look at suffering? Why do these « open images », and the definition comes from Georges Didi-Huberman, enchant us and prevent us from closing our eyes? Because these « open images » are perhaps initiatory rites, they are the secret access to enter the darkness of physicality and bring us closer to that cognitive experience which is always pain. A small wound, a stripping and the body opens and invites us to look at the unwatchable. And if we seek our most truthful portrait, we are this splendid and terrible shapeless thing, this dark body, this horror that makes us breathe.

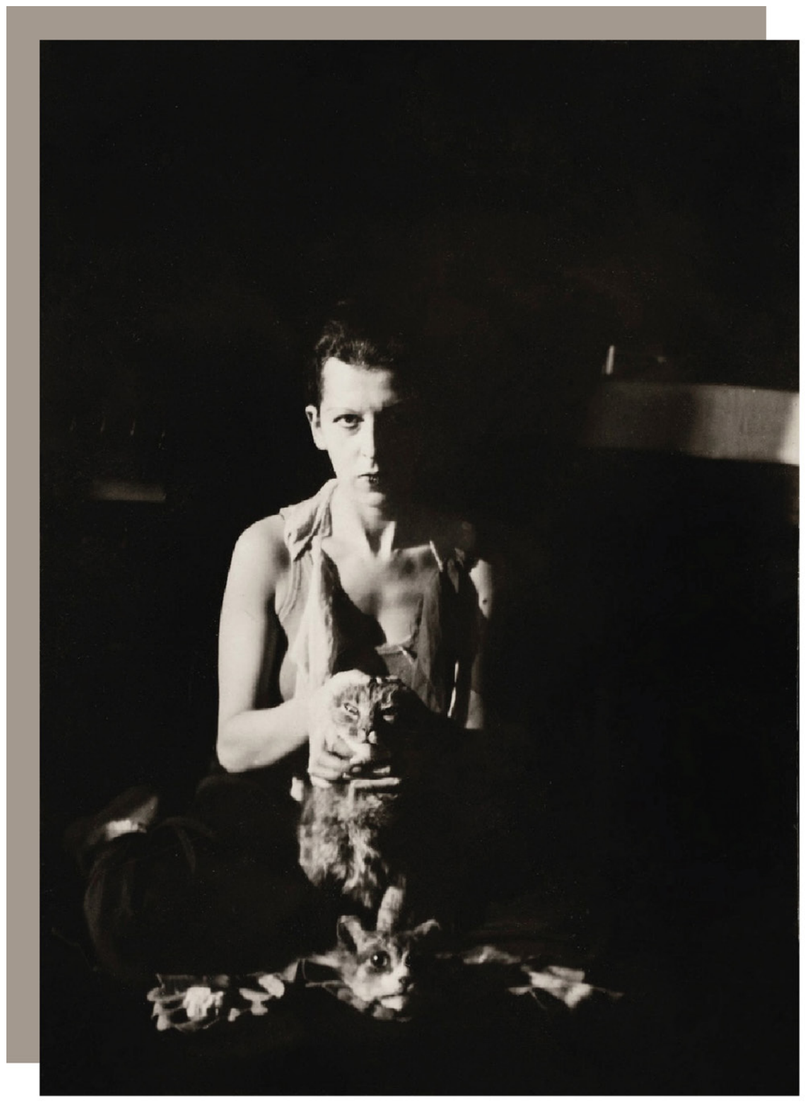
Helmut Newton, *Masked nude by the sea*, Montecarlo, 1981, Monaco



Monsieur X, *Untitled*, 1930 ca., France

Originally, high heels were for men. A convenience that allowed safer grip on the stirrups on horseback. A privilege, because kings were entitled to the height of the throne even when walking, a carmine-coloured throne to be precise, like the red heel that raised the stature of Louis XIV. This game of stilts and waders would have continued wonderfully if Napoleon in 1804, on the occasion of his coronation as emperor, had not preferred flat shoes to the more aristocratic rise. And yes, the man was small, but his ego definitely didn't need *Ancien Régime* tricks.
For women, heels were used above all to protect clothes from mud, but even with respect to this simple device, the Neoclassical had preferred to impose plantar humility. Fortunately, everything changes in the Victorian era and changes because, since 1839, photography has recorded the return to shoes of greater height. Faced with the realism of the lens, those foot prostheses lengthen the lines of the body and make them more beautiful and desirable. Undress a woman, yes, discover her in her recesses too, but the shoes must remain. Also for another reason, as the mysterious Monsieur X, a member of the French upper middle class, had well guessed, who in Paris in the 1930s loved to portray the girls of a Pigalle *maison close*. Never full nude, what a banality, but always a coat on very light skin, a silk shirt, a hat and always shoes, even where the open legs show the origin of the world, because it is the shoes, accompanying every step in everyday life, to give truth to women's bodies and the desire they arouse.
Not even Helmut Newton, who grew up in the 1930s in Berlin, in the city that made women wear every perversion, would have renounced black, shiny, stiletto shoes, because he wanted to talk about real women and about real feminine power, in spite of the protests that his images raised each time. And so even under the sun of the Monte Carlo Riviera, Newton, who loved the gaze of Franz Rehfeld, Brassaï and Charles Guyette, offered his amazons the most dizzying décolleté. A mask to make night during the day, hair disheveled not only from the wind, high heels, and desire could walk safe and satisfied. And the Cinderellas, armed with the feigned modesty of low shoes, unreal for lack of seductive power, would stay home, by the fireplace.

Claude Cahun, *Autoportrait au Chat*, 1927 ca., France



Gillian Wearing, *Cahun and Wearing*, 2017, England

Even Claude Cahun's cats are two, a double, a multiple of feline personalities. One is lying on the ground and his eye is in turn an animal replica, instinctive and mysterious, of the artist's eye. The other is in the hands of his queen-mistress, who perhaps caresses him, perhaps holds him back or something more, because she gently seems to take his breath away. When Claude Cahun makes this self-portrait in 1927 she is thirty-three years old, she has already met and fallen in love with Suzanne Malherbe, aka Marcel Moore, a lifelong partner, and she has already changed her name three times, transforming her original and feminine Lucy Renée Mathilde Schwob into the masculine Daniel Douglas, who shortly after becomes Claude Courlis to arrive at the definitive and fluid, even at a family level, Claude Cahun. The metamorphosis of names tells of a new birth without natural father and mother or gender definition, where the name Claude is both male and female in the French language and Cahun is the surname of the maternal grandmother, also Mathilde.

The vertical of the three names, of the three sexual identities, including the neutral one, as well as the vertical of the three generations, ancestors, parents, children, therefore develops in parallel to the compositional vertical of the self-portrait, and both lines reveal that overlapping of masks, genres, codes of men and animals, memories, essentially appearances, which form our ego. And this richness of meaning must have been so original, so layered, because it was Claude Cahun who gave the self-portrait, now in the collection of Ettore Molinario, to Robert Desnos, who in turn had offered it to Youki Foujita, who was his muse and lover. An intimate gift, at every step.

François Leperlier, the greatest scholar of the artist, recalled that Claude Cahun's search was for an « inner exoticism », an individual, intimate and narcissistic gaze on one's own individuality. It was surrealism, it was anarchy, it was baroque exhibitionism, it was sublimation of the obscene, dandyism, it was the cult of the self professed by Max Stirner, an author much studied by Claude Cahun, but it was always, at any emotional temperature, a private dialogue. The artist wrote: « The happiest moment of my life? The dream, imagining being Other ». To politics, history belonged different gestures, equally strong and concrete, such as the resistance against the Nazis that Lucy and Suzanne - in intimacy and among friends these were the names they used and not those of invention - had fought on the island of Jersey, where they had moved in 1937.

Eighty years later, in 2017, Gillian Wearing, star of the Young British Artists, winner of the Turner Prize in 1997, enters the current that feeds on the genius of Claude Cahun - such as Pierre Molinier, Gina Pane, Urs Lüthi, Cindy Sherman - and pushes homage to the extreme by becoming Claude Cahun herself. Side by side, the young artist and her male and female teacher, Gillian and her adoptive double reveal another game of masks, more contemporary, now external to the ego because it is a game of quotes. The vertical that crosses the unconscious of Claude Cahun becomes the horizontal of our history, the chronicle of the days, being « post » to something that has already happened. Again it is a discourse on identity, on masks, but it is above all on the masks that women have worn to play the roles most dear to the male imagination. And despite « embodying » Claude Cahun, Gillian is openly feminist, she talks about women and defends them. And maybe that's why she prefers dogs to cats.

Sanne Sannes, *Untitled*, 1959, The Netherlands

Sarah Jones, *Analist (Couch) (I)*, 2007, England

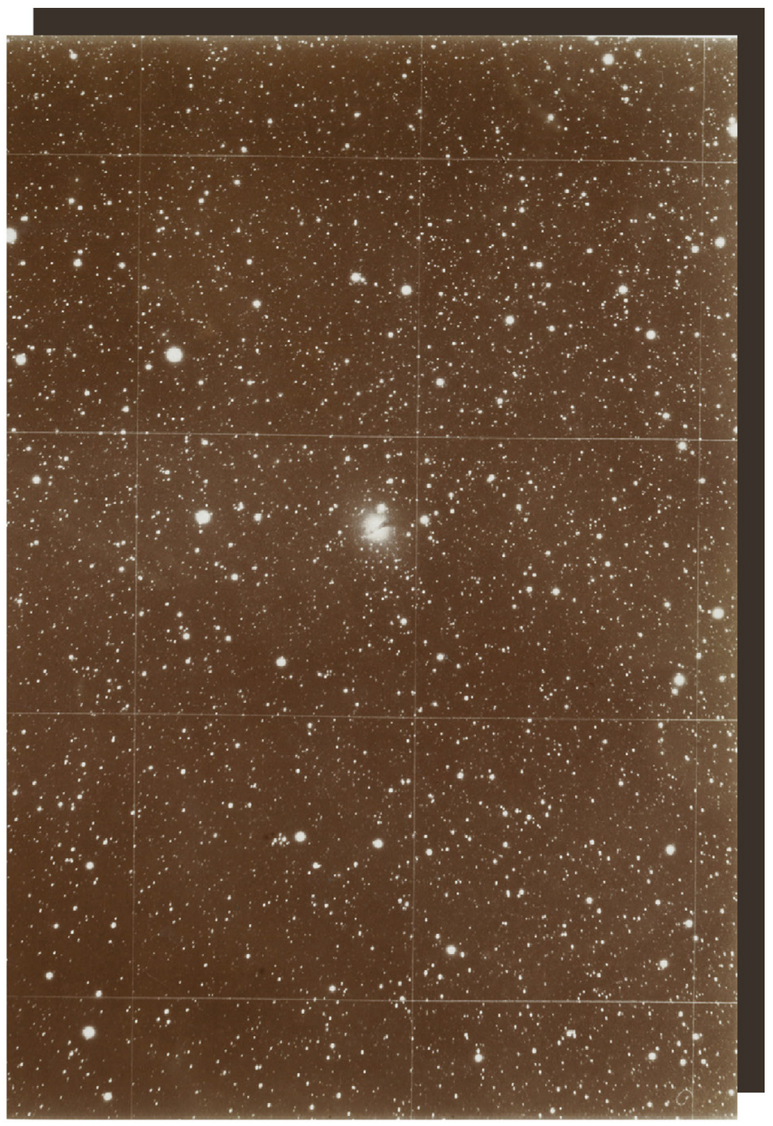
Those who have not tried, do not know the pain and the desperate pleasure of lying on the analyst's couch. The body reclines and it is as if it were
re-entering between the edges of a wound that is still warm. Something, perhaps the muscles, falls asleep, for it is a bed after all. And something deep inside awakens, begins to move, to throb, to bleed. Once upon a time people were born in a bed at home. And it is this awareness of the unborn child, this bed for a new labor, that Sarah Jones has photographed since 1997 in her long series dedicated to the space that every therapist sets up for their patients. Among these rooms, where painful and therefore saving words resound, the room with the « red bed » is the most emblematic. Miracle of a color that reminds us of the cloak of the Magdalene in Masaccio's crucifixion as in the *redroom*, *murder* in the mirror, in Stanley Kubrick's chamber of horrors.
Yet, it is precisely in such an overlapping of tragic space and the experience of love and loss that ideally another extraordinary author like Sanne Sannes has decided, in a short and very intense career, to stage the scene of his obsessions. At the center of the gaze are the face and the female body; of women Sannes loved to portray the emergence of pleasure, the movement of spasm at 1/25 of a second. Other beds, just unmade, other births, other deaths as such are orgasms. And above all other wounds, this time inflicted by the author himself who left marks, scratches, cuts on the living and delicate substance of the negative.
After Sanne's tragic death at the age of thirty, his work was long forgotten. Four decades later his brother, Rob G. Sannes, awoke him from a deep sleep, yet another bed, and brought him back to light. The interest was immediate, so much so that the image currently in Ettore Molinario's collection - a single enlargement made in 1966 for the Sannes exhibition at the Arnhem Museum - was already being negotiated to enter the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. What those engravings on a woman's face hide or reveal, whether it's love gone or rejected, or maybe loneliness, we do not know. We know instead that the first volume published by Sannes was entitled *Oog om Oog*, eye for an eye. Revenge, extreme challenge, violent union? My gaze that crosses yours and owns you? Perhaps. And perhaps it is no coincidence that Sigmund Freud « invents » the analyst's couch and isolates the patient because it was impossible for him to sustain for long those eyes that are thirsty for pain and answers.

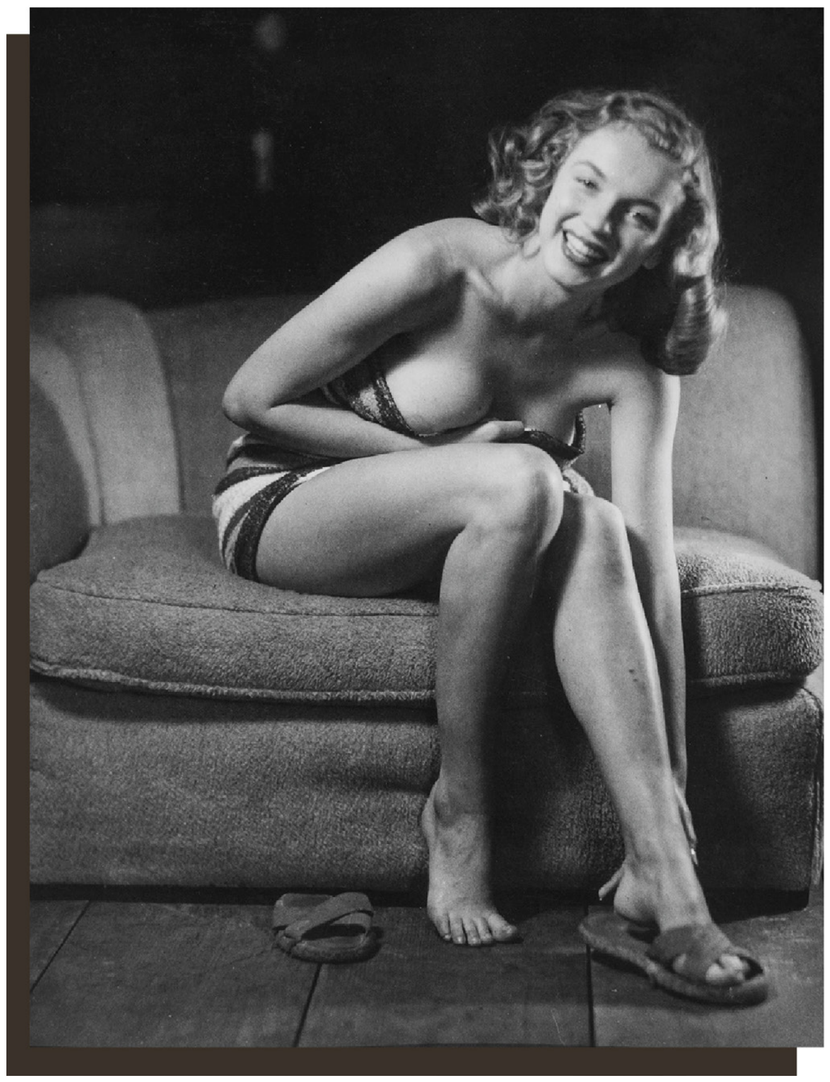
Albert Rudomine, *L'Inconnue de la Seine*, 1927 ca., France

Pierre Molinier, *Le Chaman*, 1968, France

They had laid her on a black marble bed and exhibited her in the large window of the Paris morgue, on the Quai de l'Archevêché, in the hope that someone would recognise that young woman, fished out lifeless from the waters of the Seine. But despite the crowd that gathered in front of the morgue, the destination of the Sunday walk at the end of the nineteenth century, no one had claimed her body, no one had given a name to her still intact face and her inexplicably smiling lips. Such a delicate smile, as if the girl, who committed suicide, had glimpsed a light beyond the darkness and had brought back a message of bliss to the living.
The first to be moved by the mystery of this beauty is the medical examiner's assistant who instructs Michel Lorenzi, originally from Lucca and emigrated to France around 1870, to take a cast of her face. Shortly after, the death mask is exhibited among the masterpieces of sculpture in the atelier window, at 19 rue Racine, and there it remains anonymous until, in 1900, Richard Le Gallienne describes it in the novel *L'Adorateur d'image*. In 1902 Rainer Maria Rilke, then engaged in drafting the biography of Auguste Rodin, passes in front of the same address, it's love at first sight and that siren from beyond the grave enters one of the most famous works of the German poet, *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*. The book ignites passion across Europe.
In the spell of the « Inconnue de la Seine », as Vladimir Nabokov baptised it, other famous victims parade at a macabre dance rhythm, André Breton, Alberto Giacometti, Salvador Dalí, Picasso, Man Ray, Louis-Ferdinand Céline and in 1927 Albert Rudomine who portrays the « Mona Lisa of Suicides », according to the definition by Louis Aragon, using the same lights with which in the studio he illuminates the faces of the actors and later the sculptures of Rodin.
Yet none of these characters, however assiduous of other dimensions of reality, dreamlike and frightening as they are, agree to truly join the mystery of the Unknown and her mask. Too dangerous perhaps, and the words of Maurice Blanchot are useless when he imagines that « that teenager with her eyes closed died in a moment of extreme happiness ». We must therefore wait for Pierre Molinier, the shaman Molinier, the man-woman, for that plaster cast to breathe again and to transform itself into the most authentic face of the artist, in his feminine double, which emerges from the deep waters of the ego and completes the perfect androgyny of the body. Legend has it that the artist at eighteen, in 1918, photographed his sister Julienne, who died of Spanish flu, also beautiful and a virgin in the white dress of her first communion. Molinier had locked himself in the wake room and lay down on that lifeless body, had enjoyed, had spilled his sperm, and those drops were « the best of me », a fraternal gift for Julienne to enter, she too happy and content, in the realm of the dead. After all, that necrophilic fantasy was just another smile, a dedication to lovers of fetishism, the only ones, like Pierre Molinier himself who would take his own life in 1976, capable of transforming death into the most extreme pleasure.

John Franklin-Adams, *Nebula*, 1905 ca., South Africa





Earl Moran, *Marilyn Monroe*, 1948, United States

If they had met as children, and it doesn't matter if they belonged to different eras, and if they had spent a night together, those nights by the window, nights still observed with the naked eye, John and Norma would have talked about the stars. They both dreamed of them and they both wanted to be part of that immense expanse of lights, each in their own way. John was John Franklin-Adams, astronomer and photographer, member of the Royal Astronomical Society since 1897. Norma was Norma Jean Baker, who at twenty was still Norma Jean Dougherty, her first husband's surname, and was about to become Marilyn Monroe.
John Franklin-Adams, English and polyglot in a nebula of languages from Spain to Italy and from Russia to Scandinavia, had begun to study the stars in his forties. His heroes were John William Draper, who had photographed the moon in 1840, Jean Bernard Foucault who had portrayed the sun for the first time in 1845, Julius Berkowski, his first solar eclipse observed in 1851, and finally Paul Pierre and Prosper Mathieu Henry who in 1886 had looked up to Jupiter and Saturn. But John Franklin-Adams wanted more. An insurer of the Lloyd company, he wanted to secure eternal glory, and in two long photographic expeditions in the southern hemisphere, in Cape Town, and in the northern hemisphere, in the observatory built in his home of Argyllshire, had produced the first photographic sky atlas. Two hundred and six plates, each divided into the squares engraved on the same objective. Easier, even more feasible, to count the stars on each celestial tile, and it is the enterprise to which Franklin-Adams would devote the rest of his life.
Norma Jean had also begun to look at the stars through a square, that of the window of her room in her Los Angeles orphanage. Beyond the shutters the luminous sign of RKO Radio Pictures shone. But back then, when Norma was eight years old, the name of that major that boasted stars like Katharine Hepburn, Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers, Cary Grant and Bette Davis, reminded her only of the smell of the glue on her mother's fingers, employed in the editing department by RKO itself. Another eight years had to pass, and by then she was already a child bride, for Norma Jean to understand that the silver screen was her vault of heaven and that the luminous bodies of Ingrid Bergman, Joan Crawford, Gene Tierney and Jennifer Jones, her adored divas, formed a constellation of which one day surely she would be part.
The famous pin-up portraitist Earl Moran was one of the first to guess that that girl with lips born to smile with innocence and pleasure would become a movie star. A matter of photogenicity and of reaction to the stellar dust of the spotlights. Moran had selected Norma from the Blue Book Modeling Agency catalog and for four years, during which photographer and model would become friends, he portrayed her in his studio paying her $10 an hour. The couch Norma lay on was probably staved in, the towel she covered herself with wasn't the scarlet dress that would wrap her body one day, and man's slippers were a universe away from the stiletto heels that punctuated her stupendous stride. Yet a star, more incandescent than a Supernova, was being born. Scientists say the first stars were born thirteen billion years ago from a cloud of hydrogen and helium. Eternally in love with Marilyn, we all know that of all the stars she has been the last.

Consuelo Fould, *Poupées, Sur le Trapéze*, 1920 ca., France

Cindy Sherman, *Untitled #127/A*, 1983, United States

Our destiny is born with our name. And the destiny of Consuelo Fould, French painter and inventor, began in 1861 when her mother, Valérie Simonin, actress and writer, chose for her daughter the name of the protagonist of a novel by George Sand, precisely *Consuelo*. And like Sand, pseudonym of Amantine Aurore Lucile Dupin, Valérie gave herself a male identity, that of Gustave Haller, to sign her books, among them *L'enfer des femmes*. Even Valérie's second daughter, another painter in the family, will choose to be ideally a man, signing the canvases with the name Georges Achille-Fould, where Georges is a tribute to her stepfather, Prince Georges Stirbey while Achille honours the memory of her paternal grandfather, Achille Fould, minister of the finances of Louis Napoléon Bonaparte.

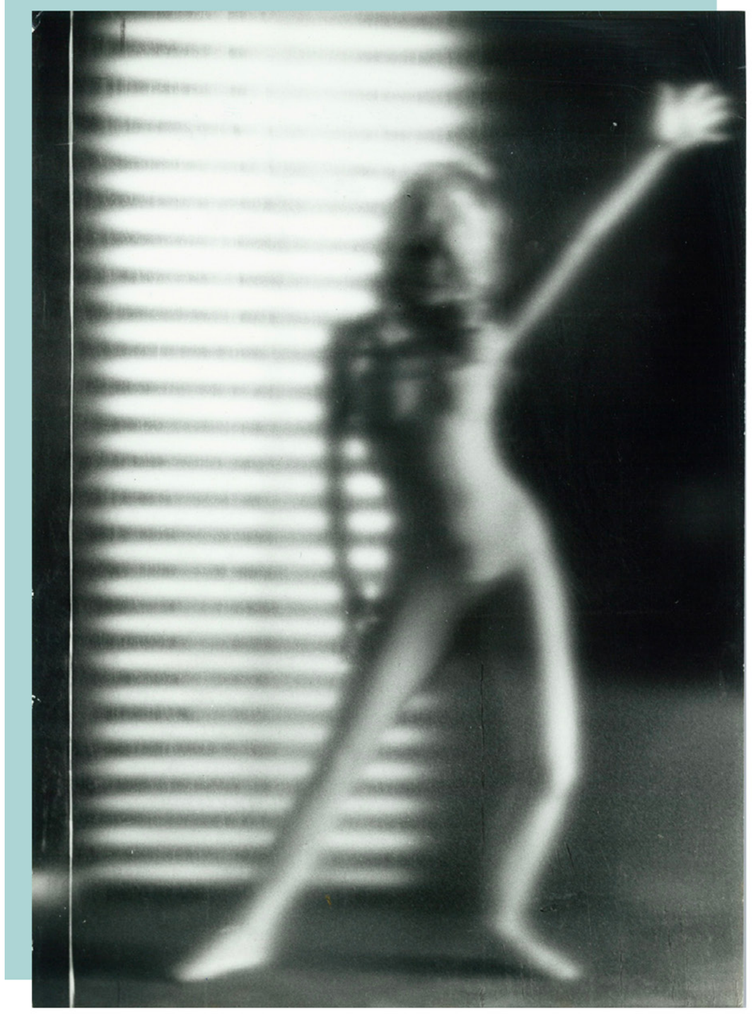
In this jungle of names, which transforms the female identity and strengthen it in the transition to the male, Consuelo Fould decides to take another path and reaffirms her right to keep her name, becoming emancipated as a woman of talent. She was a woman who had a great desire to refute Voltaire, when the philosopher complained of knowing «very wise women as well as women warriors, but never women inventors».

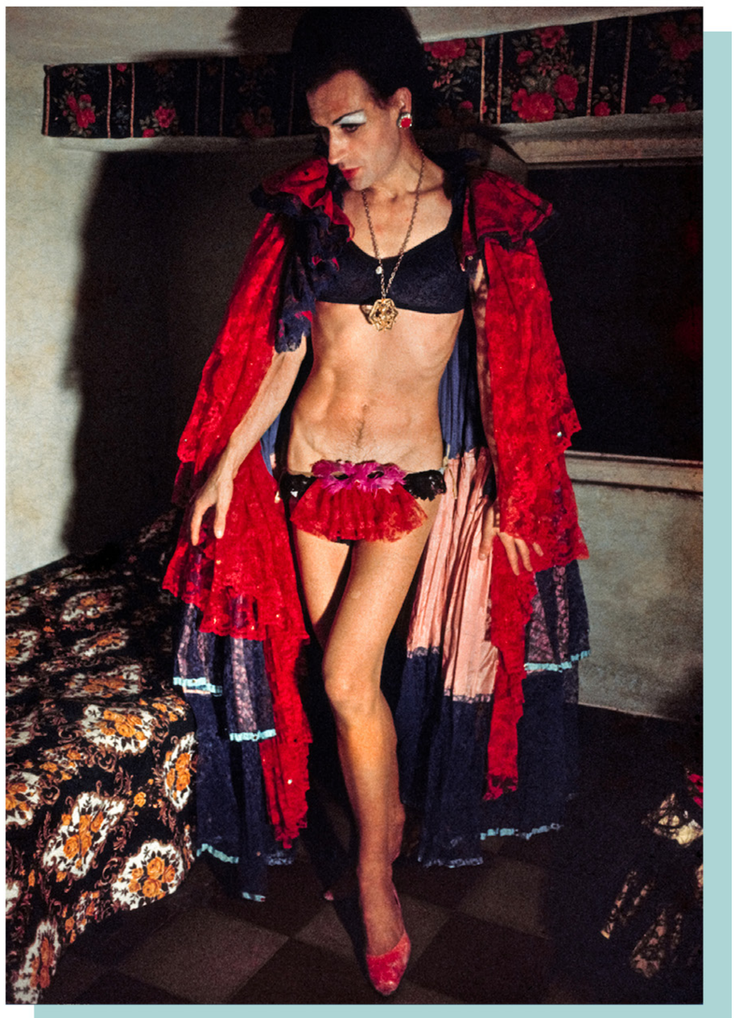
In 1897, the first newspaper directed, edited and even administered by women alone, *La Fronde*, was born in France. And among many intuitions Marguerite Durand, editor of the magazine, had the one of giving news of the patents born from the female genius. Between 1899 and 1903 *La Fronde* presented 531 patents among which five, concerning various models of corset, belonged to Consuelo Fould. In 1919 this very modern painter in an almost advertising style - her portraits will be the cover of the first illustrated magazines - had also registered the patent for a jointed doll and had photographed her creatures in a series of images that exalted the ductility of the poses and roles.

Certainly the history of humanity did not changed its course, not even with the invention of a special upholstery nail, another Fould's patent, but we are captivated by the irony of a woman who announces herself as an inventor by instilling mobility, therefore breath, warmth and change, to the stereotypes of the female world. Was it a coincidence that in 1920 the Opéra Garnier celebrated the four hundredth performance of the ballet *Coppélia*, the story of a mechanical doll that comes to life? A coincidence, we would like to add, if in the early 1980's Cindy Sherman began her long and extraordinary analysis of femininity reinterpreting the «dolls», the stereotypes of Hollywood cinema?

In 1983 Dianne Benson had the idea of involving Sherman to promote the most original clothes of her boutique in SoHo. And the artist, faithful to her autobiographical vision, worn her clothes and took the pose of hundreds of models before her, denouncing the rigidity and submission of women to the standard of beauty imposed by fashion. Had Cindy been a girl of the early twentieth century, in a rope and beaded bustier, she could have performed together with Consuelo Fould's acrobats. She too would rock upside down. And she too, in the name of the mother, the daughter and the spirit of the new century, would have patented another destiny.

Walter Carone, *Brigitte Bardot in La bride sur le cou by Roger Vadim*, 1961, France





Lisetta Carmi, *Lo spagnolo, Lola Montez (from "I Travestiti" Series)*, 1965 ca., Italy

For Lisetta they were sisters, roommates in that big house that every city tolerates in its darkest and therefore most desired places. Lisetta Carmi, a talented pianist and later an extraordinary photographer, met « her » transvestites for the first time on New Year's Eve in 1965. The occasion is a party in a small apartment in the Genoa ghetto; they are there, butterflies, fawns, otherworldly sylphs who in this world unite male and female nature, and then there are some customers, other friends, and there is Carmi, who discreetly asks to be allowed to portray the protagonists of the evening and promises to offer the images the next day. So at the beginning of the new year, a fundamental relationship is born in Lisetta's history, which will lead to the birth of a unique book in the Italian and international panorama, *I Travestiti*, released in 1972 and, like its protagonists, opposed, mocked, censored. A destiny that Carmi already foresaw, having chosen since the beginning of her career to document life on the margins, any existence that struggled to get out of the dictatorship of a role imposed by others. They could be the exploited *camalli* of the port of Genoa, they could be the deceased of the monumental cemetery of Staglieno, who begged for another life, and it could be Lisetta herself who in the 60s moved away from any traditional category of the feminine, when being a woman meant to adhere to the decalogue of male impositions.

Therefore, it might come as a surprise Carmi's closeness to men who fought to transform themselves into the emblems of the most seductive femininity of the time, because they were women-women, like Audrey Hepburn, Twiggy, Brigitte Bardot, Mina, Dalida - women for the male, cover women - that transvestites aspired to look like. Though Lisetta Carmi never dwelt exclusively on the final point of the metamorphosis, since it was the process of personal transformation that captivated her, the permanent revolution that destabilises every category and voluntarily announces the crisis of roles. And thanks to this profound consonance of feelings, the photographer was able to enter the daily intimacy of the bedrooms, the hairdressing salons, to stand in front of the mirror, behind the nylon curtains that, similar to theatre curtains, were the places where the disguise happened.

She had to be different from anyone else, Lisetta, in order to be able to witness the movements of the inner ghost that tore apart an ego to which society had entrusted a different kind of feeling. And following the make-up phases of Audrey, Cabiria, Gilda, Morena, as the transvestites were named, and contemplating the beauty of the transformation, Carmi had imagined Brigitte Bardot's ectoplasm pushing to come out of a male body and cover it with a second transparent skin. In 1961 Lola Montez, « the Spaniard », one of the four portraits of Lisetta Carmi present in the Ettore Molinario Collection, had probably seen the film *La bride sur le cou*. In the Italian adaptation the shower scene was censored. In it a naked B.B. danced behind a glass, herself a ghost of male desires, born out of the imagination of Roger Vadim, her husband, Pygmalion and director even when the love story was over. He had wanted her to be blonde, as he later did with Catherine Deneuve and Jane Fonda, he had taught her how to pout; he, like in the title of the famous film *Et Dieu créa la femme*, had moulded her in the clay of his desires and in the desire of millions more viewers. But what is more revolutionary, a man who decides the fate of a woman, or a man who becomes a woman to finally be free?

Agata Wieczorek, *Disguised portrait I (from Fetish of the Image Series)*, 2019, Poland

André Kertész, *Untitled (Advertisement for Diana Slip)*, 1930 ca., France

I first met the work and then the author. And behind the great portraits of that extraordinary genre of actor-performer-explorer that are the *Maskers*, I didn't imagine finding a young woman like Agata Wieczorek. Sometimes the imagination superimposes the body of the photograph and the body of whoever creates it. Not in this case, where the extreme subversion of the theme corresponds to an innocent look that reminds of Alice in Wonderland, blue gaze and blond hair. After all, isn't it Lewis Carroll's creature who meets the Cheshire Cat on her initiatory journey? And isn't it the Cheshire Cat who reminds the lost girl that the choice of one's way depends on where one wants to go? There are no entrances or exits, just possibilities. Valuable advice, which Agata has welcomed and it is precisely the audacity to wander and set her gaze on other realities, even other identities, that pushed me towards her work.

I was her first collector and I believe that the extraordinary images of the series *Fetish of the Image* a nd *Second Skin*, taken in the transition between the film school in Łódź, Poland where Agata was born in 1992, and the entrance to Le Fresnoy in France, have found in my world a welcoming home, nocturnal even in the solar hours, phantasmagorical in the labyrinth of references, coincidences, memories. And this dialogue is the evidence. When I started wondering about which photograph to combine with the mysterious face portrayed by Agata, a male face in depth and a female one on the surface, I found many answers. Instinctively I could have chosen Pierre Molinier, another essential *masker*, or Yasumasa Morimura, or Joel Peter Witkin, because in a certain way this portrait is an exhumation, or even Roger Ballen and his cemetery ghosts. I could have chosen Charles Guyette for fetish consonance in a New York of the 50s, or an anonymous German at work ten years later. Instead I decided for André Kertész, not the known one from the *Distorsions*, but his unpublished and clandestine work created for Diana Slip's «particulière» lingerie maison.

Also in this case, behind the female name is a man, Léon Vidal, who in the 1930s had launched a challenge to the queen of «modern lingerie», Yva Richard, by opening a fashion house and a publishing house both of which promised access to the realm of fetishism. Corsets, patent leather boots that detract from naturalness to the touch, whips, gloves, stockings and suspenders, and all of this photographed by Brassaï, Roger Schall, André Kertész, and narrated in the pages of the Éditions du Couvre-Feu. The ideal time is the curfew, a tribute to the dark and its followers. Yet in his atelier Kertész had created a luminous set to enhance the very white flesh of the two protagonists and the exciting sparkle of the skin. There is no pain, as the fetish culture wants, because it is always all about play and theatre, still a thin shadow does arch behind the Dominatrix. And I believe that this shadow is the open way that the Cheshire Cat mentions, not foreseen by any map, not even a mental one. Surely it is the same route that Chrissie Seams, a man under the silicone of a female skin, has loved to travel for many years. And above all I believe that Agata, the new Alice in Wonderland, will find other ways to penetrate the darkness and will always be beside us in the free fall of our masks.

Shin'ichi Suzuki I, *Unidentified Samurai in Armour, Yokohama*, 1870 ca., Japan

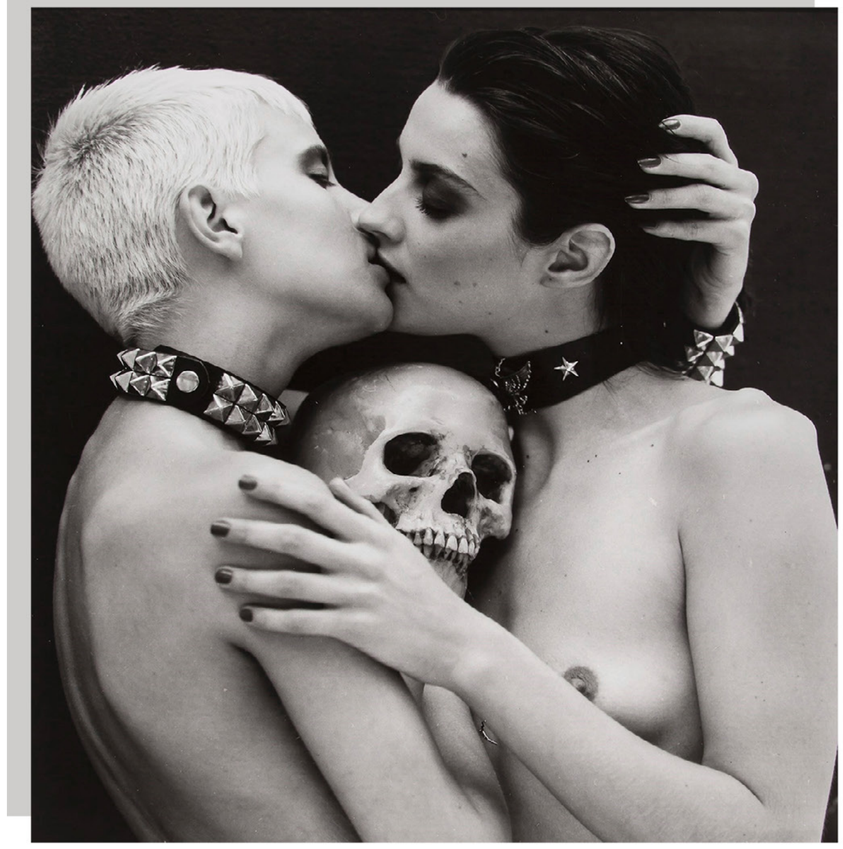
Studio Harcourt, *Serge Lifar dans "Le chevalier et la demoiselle"*, 1941, France

No samurai would ever want to be a *ronin*, a « wave man », a wanderer. A fault, that of freedom and the lack of a lord to whom to offer one's services, which he had to atone for, if he was a man of courage, by performing *harakiri*. The young samurai, portrayed around the 1870s by Suzuki Shin'ichi I, was experiencing an equal drama, if not greater because the entire warrior class was dismissed, since the rulers of the Meiji era had preferred a regular European-inspired kind of army. As if centuries of Japanese history had been condemned to the ultimate sacrifice, when facing the lens those melancholy eyes knew that they would no longer contemplate the fury of battle, nor would they follow the sparkle of the *katana*, where the soul of the samurai resided, nor the gleam of the shorter blade, called *wakizashi*. The armour, the surplice, the helmet would remain helpless, lifeless objects, horrible souvenirs, and no one would compare the splendour of the cherry blossoms to the grandiose sight of a samurai wrapped in his armour. « Among the flowers the cherry tree, among the men the warrior » one would say to evoke the supreme beauty. But also its fragility, because as a gust of wind made the white petals fall, so the samurai died under an enemy sword blow. At the same time in Europe, on the latest waves of romanticism and the neo Gothic revival, the myth of the errant knight flourished in another way, in all its introspective richness, and the character of that lonely man, without borders, faithful to his independence, for this was the absolute value, became a symbol of the only possible life. Outside the social rules. Outside the gears of the economy. Outside a sentimental horizon already so bourgeois as to force the fate of men and women into the family. On horseback, even in the forests of the metropolis, modern knights fought other crusades and celebrated solitude, which was above all an unequal battle against senselessness, ineradicable violence, the evil in everyone's existence.

In the terrible years of the Second World War, this symbolic figure inspired Serge Lifar, dancer of the *Ballets Russes*, choreographer, maître de ballet of the Paris Opera, theorist, writer, in a word one of the greats who revolutionized the dance of the twentieth century.

In 1941 Lifar creates the ballet *Le Chevalier et la Demoiselle*, and the lady, transformed by a sorcerer into a white doe, is a hypothesis of love, but above all it represents occupied Paris, and to the capital belong his theatre, his corps de ballet, his orchestra. A city within a city to defend, even at the cost of heavy compromises with the Nazi leaders. In the Harcourt Studio, founded in 1933 by Cosette Harcourt, Lifar wore the stage costume. The armour was embroidered on the legs and on the chest, and the spear, slightly oblique because even in static nature everything is in motion, brought back memories of the deeds of medieval tournaments. But perhaps the image of another war had returned to the dancer's mind and of another knight errant, himself a boy, who in 1922 at the age of seventeen, alone, left Kiev invaded by the Bolsheviks, and fleeing by sleigh through the woods of Polonia reached Warsaw, and from there, in January 1923, arrived in Paris and joined the company of Sergej Diaghilev. « I was a free citizen of the universe in the freest capital in the world » Lifar recalled in his autobiography. It was a hundred years ago. What would the knight Lifar have done today in his city at war once more?

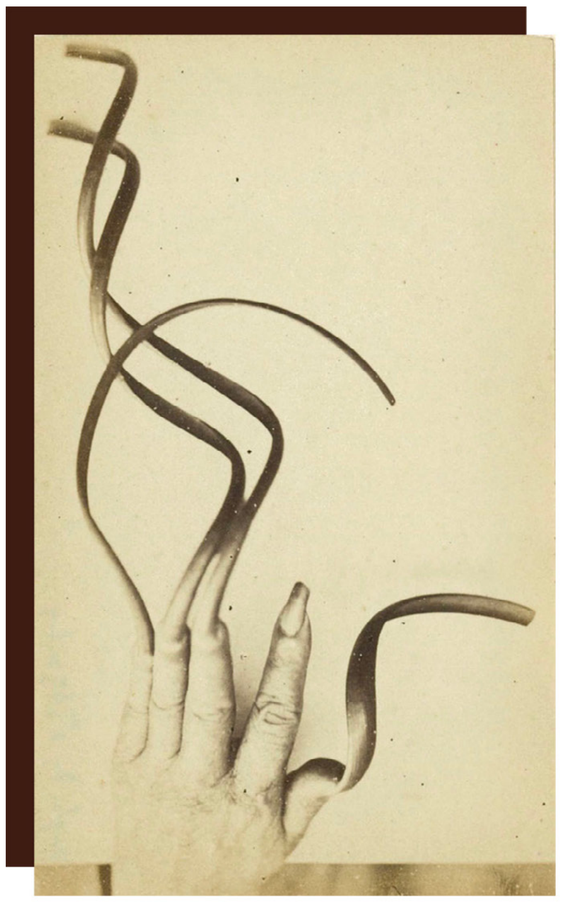
David Bailey, *Angie Hill and Catherine Bailey Kissing*, 1986, England



Patrick Tosani, *Masque n. 16*, 2000, France

In 1649 Oliver Cromwell, as a good parliamentarian, had condemned King Charles I to death by beheading, then abolished the monarchy and established the republic, the Commonwealth of England. As evidenced by the recent coronation of Charles III, Cromwell's experiment was unsuccessful, to the point that his proponent was in turn sentenced to the gallows. A bizarre condemnation indeed, having been the body of Cromwell, who died of malaria in 1658, subjected to the ritual of posthumous execution on January 30th, 1661. Beheaded, the body was thrown into a common grave and the head was stuck on a pole and displayed in front of Westminster Abbey, where in April of the same year Charles II had been proclaimed king. One hundred and fifty years later in London, the skull of Oliver Cromwell, a very precious trophy, reappeared at the house of Josiah Wilkinson, a surgeon, who used to have breakfast together with the head of the ancient revolutionary and in a mixture of horror and wonder the privilege was also extended to his most intimate guests. It was a decidedly cumbersome presence that *memento mori*, or even political *vanitas*, so much so that in 1960 Canon Horace Wilkinson, descendant of Josiah, finally gave the relic a dignified and eternal resting-place under the floor of the antechapel of Sidney Sussex College, in Cambridge. In the story of crossed destinies, again in 1960, twenty-two-year-old David Bailey entered John Cole's photographic studio and shortly thereafter signed his first contract with British *Vogue*. *Swinging London* could not find a better interpreter. In his own way, another version of the libertarian Cromwell.
Naturally, we do not know who the skull belongs to, nor whether it is a man or a woman, that Catherine Dyer, model and fourth wife of the photographer, and the actress Angie Hill passionately embrace in their kiss. But we know that in this curious *ménage à trois* between the living and the dead, the head separated from the body, fascinating and horrible at the same time, overturns our categories of reference because, as Frances Larson explains in her admirable volume *Severed, A History of Heads Lost and Heads Found*, «the skull is simultaneously a person and a thing, conditions which together confirm and deny each other». In short, that skull, so lovingly pressed to the breast, declares that there is no antithesis between us and the objects, and above all it reminds us, the origin of every still life and human despair, that inside us there is another skull.
Patrick Tosani, architect and artist, tells a similar story; he made a head, that is at the same time living flesh and pure fiction, out of a pair of trousers soaked in glue, pressed and turned upside down. Even Tosani's « head » is a person and an object, it is a biological command center, seat of four of our five senses, and simultaneously a death mask. And like the empty sockets of a skull, these strange openings, into which we usually insert a part of our body, connect life and death, and invite us to look at the world from the other world. Indifferent and enigmatic, Tosani's red skull is happy to spell out his sinister motto: « As you are today, so I was, and as I am today, so you will be ». May God save the king and, democratically, all of us too.

Émile Gsell, *Main d'Annamite, Annam*,
1870 ca., Cochinchina



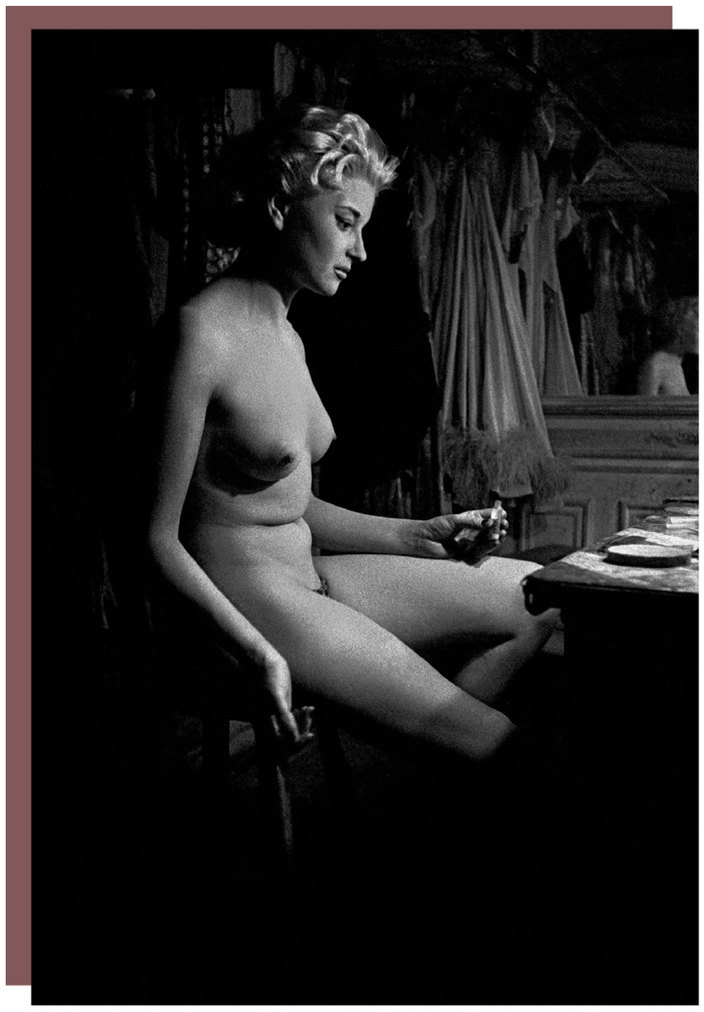
Adolphe Braun, *Bouquet de fleurs*,
1855 ca., France

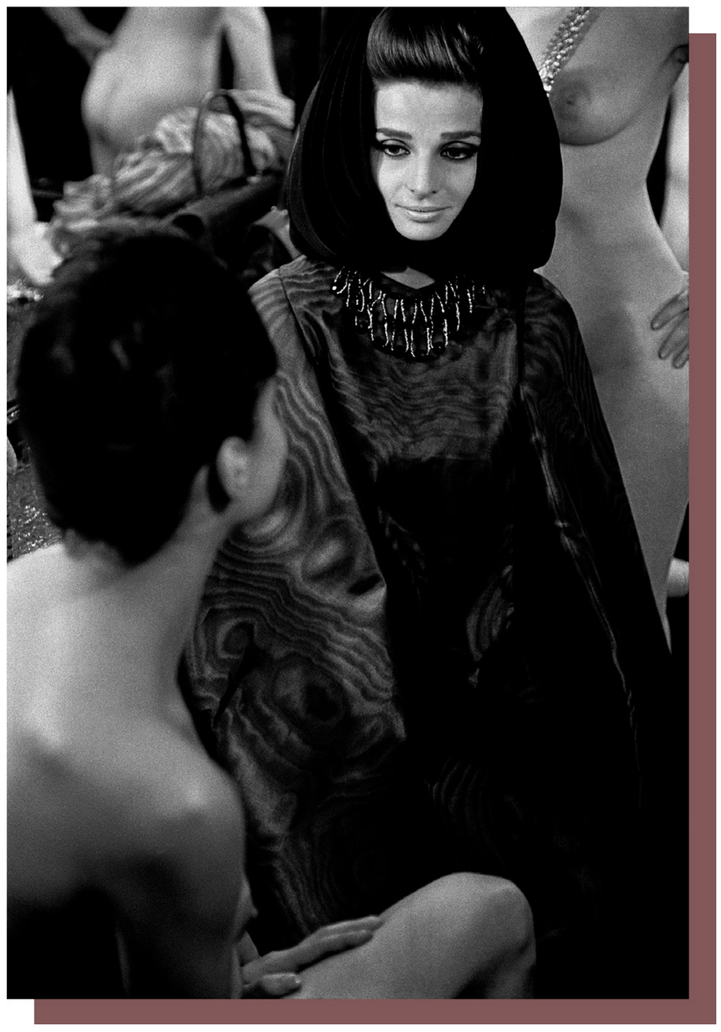
He must have seen them going up the Mekong, and they were not yet those spectacular nails, but lianas that wrapped around the trunks, mangroves and rivulets of current that anticipated the danger of the rapids. In June 1866, a century and a half ago, Émile Gsell was hired as a photographer by the *Commission d'exploration du Mékong* and set off to discover that mythical river in the wake of Ernest Doudart de Lagrée. In Cochinchina, Émile had arrived at the age of twenty-eight as a soldier in the French army and in addition to his military training had received an enviable photographic training, so much so that photography had become his calling. Sailing from Cambodia to Siam, to which the temple ruins of Angkor Wat then belonged, Gsell had discovered a powerful nature and an architecture that joined and echoed it. That embrace was another way to grow. To the elegance of the gardens, boulevards and parks that dotted Paris, and thus to the gracefulness of Adolphe Braun's splendid floral arrangements, was countered an inner force, wild, anarchic, immeasurably free to express itself.

In 1850, Adolphe Braun, a skilled draughtsman and graphic designer in charge of a studio that supplied patterns for fabrics and wallpapers, had started photographing dahlias, peonies, hydrangeas, tulips, carnations, roses, rhododendrons, and then ears of corn, leaves and field grasses. By 1855, three hundred of these images, of the highest quality and already a 'product' of the emerging photographic industry, had been collected in the gigantic portfolio *Fleurs photographiées* and presented at the International Exhibition in Paris to the acclaim of Empress Eugénie. Blooming in every domestic space, from walls to furnishings to clothes, Braun's works had the not inconsiderable task of bringing nature, cut down and domesticated, into the everyday life of the city and its inhabitants. This is how one grew up in a bourgeois drawing room.

In the East, Émile Gsell had discovered instead that even the body could blossom and change shape, and the proof lay in those very long nails, male and female, that looked like shoots and stems prefiguring the energy of Art Nouveau. Perhaps one of the most famous images, an emblem of an exotic strangeness, saleable in the West, was the hand of a dignitary from the kingdom of Annam, formerly China and now Vietnam, which Gsell had portrayed between 1866, when he opened the first photographic studio in Saigon, and 1879, the year of his death. The possessor of such an exuberance of keratin has thus nobly declared his rejection of all contact. Yet that arabesque that stretches the fingers and makes the hand a garden is also a gift and therefore a bond. In a poem by Chao Chai, a poetess of the Tang dynasty, a woman decides to offer her lover what is most precious to her and so she cuts her nails, which have been growing protected for years, wraps them in silk and sends them to the man far away. A thousand years later, in the novel *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, Ts'ao Hsüeh-ch'in - a mandarin whose family oversaw the imperial textile factories - tells of a maid who, on her deathbed, also cuts her nails and offers them to her lord as proof of affection and eternal devotion. We cut a flower and let a life, a spring outside of us, speak of love on our behalf. Elsewhere the gift is growth, it is time taking shape, it is our body becoming nature.

Frank Horvat, *Le Sphynx*, 1956, France

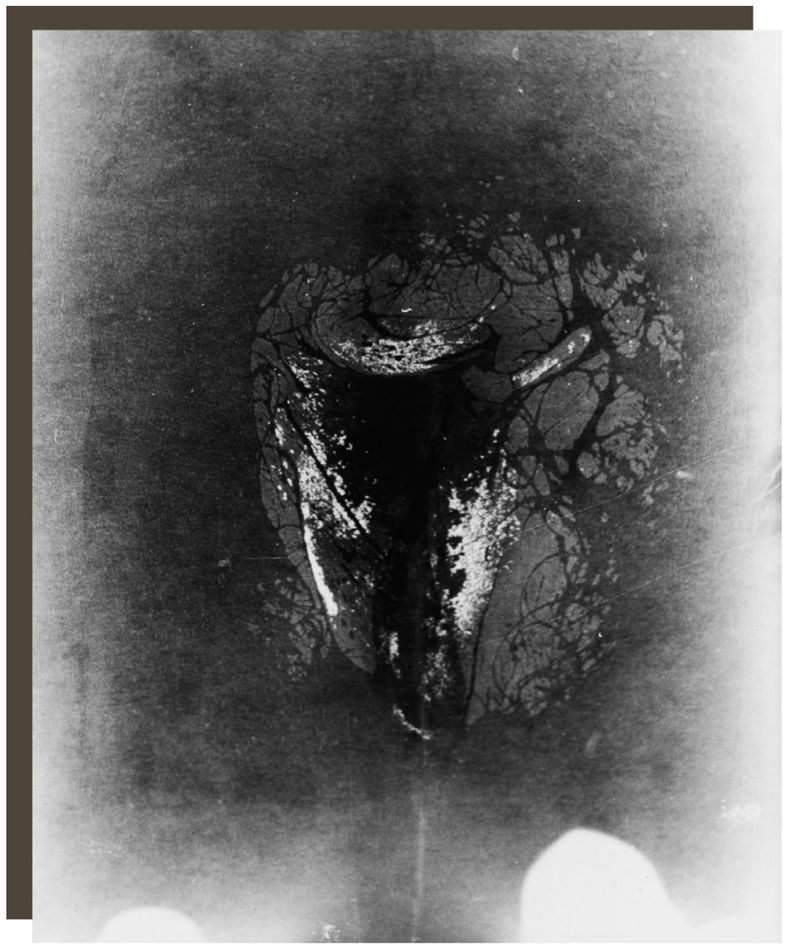




Frank Horvat, *Iris Bianchi and Crazy Horse strippers*, 1962, France

He looked at them and let himself be looked at. Frank Horvat looked at women and made them one of the themes of his very long career, in reportage, in fashion, in research. Like no other great author, he let women return his gaze and even photograph him. I don't think it was a matter of equality, feminism has nothing to do with it, instead it was a subtle game of seduction and perhaps self-analysis at a time when the camera was still an object for the few and those few were almost all men.
In 1956, at the age of twenty-eight, after a long journey in India and Pakistan, after having lived in London, after having been chosen by Edward Steichen for the epic exhibition *The Family of Man*, Frank Horvat arrives in Paris. And in Paris, Black Star agency asks him to report on the night, the hot night of Pigalle, the night of men who look at women. Bribing the usher, Horvat enters the *Le Sphynx* cabaret and here he meets Yvette, a twenty-year-old stripper, as beautiful as one of Antonio Canova's *Three Graces,* the same light in her skin, the same softness in her body. Only the hair, which recalls Marilyn Monroe in the movie *Bus Stop*, shot that same year, speaks of the present. When Fiammetta Horvat, the master's wonderful daughter, showed me this image, essential in my collection, she also showed me the contact-sheets. In the sequence of thirty-six frames, a very short distance from the one chosen for the press, Horvat portrays himself in the dressing room mirror together with Yvette. A moment later offers the camera to the girl, who shortly becomes « his » girlfriend, and he let her portray him. Four shots, two blurry, two in focus. Four, like the cardinal points for a woman to explore male power in every direction, and touch the instrument that makes the photographic gaze so predatory and different from the others.
If I decided to start this collection thirty years ago it is because photography has allowed me to look and see, to look at myself and to be looked at for the man I am. And when, five minutes after having chosen Yvette, I felt that I should have « another Horvat », I understood that the image-companion, my other companion on the journey inside the work of this extraordinary author - to whom the Jeu de Paume dedicates a magnificent retrospective - should be the image that brings together Iris Bianchi, in French high fashion for *Harper's Bazaar*, and the strippers of the *Crazy Horse*. No one before Frank Horvat had gone so far in the game of provocation and awareness. No one, not even Helmut Newton, had yet said that the nude is actually a dress, and that fashion is dressing and undressing, and that the audience for this show, strip-tease or catwalk, is only one: male desire.
With extreme elegance, anticipating Fellini in *8½* and Truffaut in *The Man Who Loved Women*, Horvat had imagined that it was precisely women who told this little truth, no longer contemplating the photographer or his reflection in the mirror, but looking at each other in a game of allusions and correspondences. That encounter between women was the dream of a harem where every creature danced, dressed, smiled and offered itself in its nakedness to Horvat's gaze, to mine, to that of every man. It was a dream, the most sublime of all. I don't know how to take pictures, but great photographers take pictures for me too.

Paolo Gioli, *Vulva*, Italy, 2004



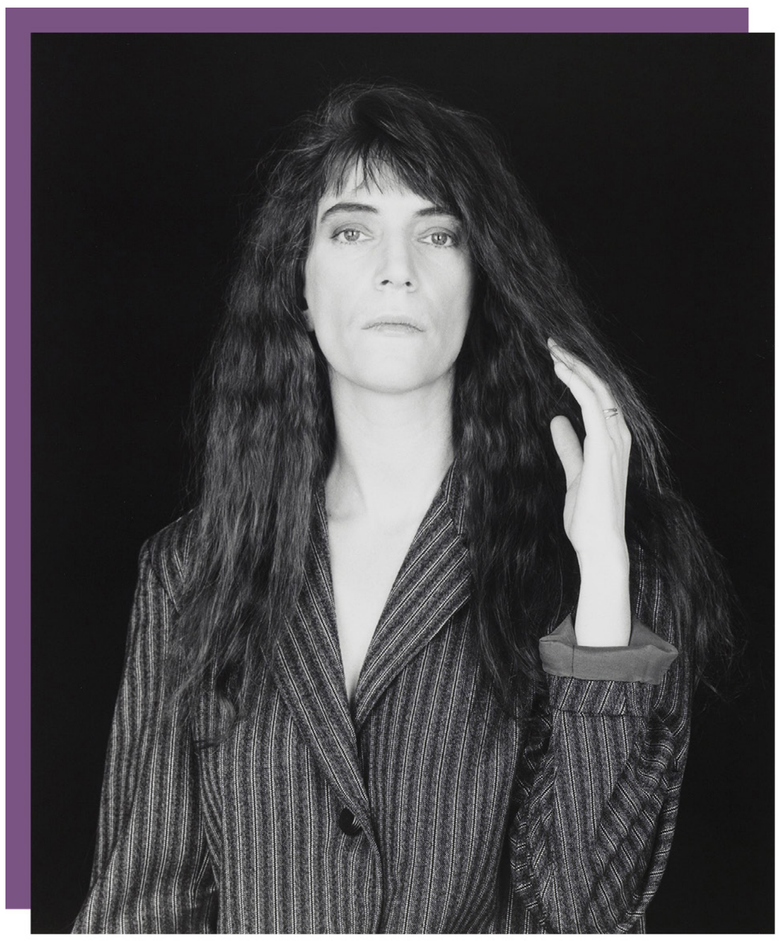
S. Lt. Ioanid, *WW1 trench,* Romania 1917

June 26, 1917 was one of the many days of the First World War. The American ships had arrived at the port of Saint-Nazaire, in Brittany, and had unloaded the first fourteen thousand soldiers, ready for the massacre. On the Italian front, the Alpine troops were fighting the famous Battle of Ortigara against the Austrians. In Romania, at eight in the morning, pilot-sergeant Iliescu was flying at an altitude of 2,100 meters and from that height sub-lieutenant-observer Ioanid had photographed a very long trench. From the plane it looked like a river watering the fields; a thin road ran parallel to the watercourse then divided and along the hypotenuse it joined the corners of an imaginary triangle. There was no trace of the men who lived in that furrow dug in the earth, zigzagging every ten meters to prevent a shot from targeting the entire trench. Cries, desperation, illness, and death did not reach the sky. Too heavy, too dense. It was the censorship of heights, a way of distancing oneself from the war and its horror.

Already in 1859 Gaspard-Félix Tournachon, known as Nadar, had photographed Paris from above, taking a camera with him on board a balloon. But when in the same year Napoleon III offered him fifty thousand francs to create an aerial topography of the military campaign in Italy, Nadar declined. Fantasising, we can imagine the reason: Nadar, the great master of the portrait, the man who represented men and women as monuments to life, with those bodies, those faces, those looks so true, that man could not tolerate being at the service of those who, using photography, would have destined those same bodies to suffering. It happened almost a hundred years before Robert Oppenheimer's moral drama, the genius who in the aftermath of the explosion of the atomic bomb said of himself « now I have become Death, the destroyer of worlds ». Nadar made his choice. In his way he was a pacifist.

In the realm of imaginary correspondences, Nadar would have loved Paolo Gioli's work very much, because no other artist like Gioli has explored not only the mystery and beauty of the body, but the time to capture it - in his famous *Photofinishes* - and the distance to enhance the material, dark and threatening in the *Sconosciuti*, carnal in the magnificent *Naturae*, to which the image in the collection belongs. Resetting the coordinates of space and opening up to another depth of field, Paolo Gioli had placed a blank sheet of paper on a body and in the darkness of his studio he had illuminated it with a flash. The extremely violent light, nearly like an explosion, had crossed the paper, revealing through contact what it had encountered: a vulva, its heart-shaped lips, its humours, its hairy buds, and that black void that attracts and multiplies the life and the fear of living. Another trench in which to sink, a warm trench of woman and nature-wife in which to enjoy and die. This is the anguish of men who in times of peace immerse themselves in the female abyss and in war seek it by digging the earth.

Robert Mapplethorpe, *Patti Smith*,
United States, 1986

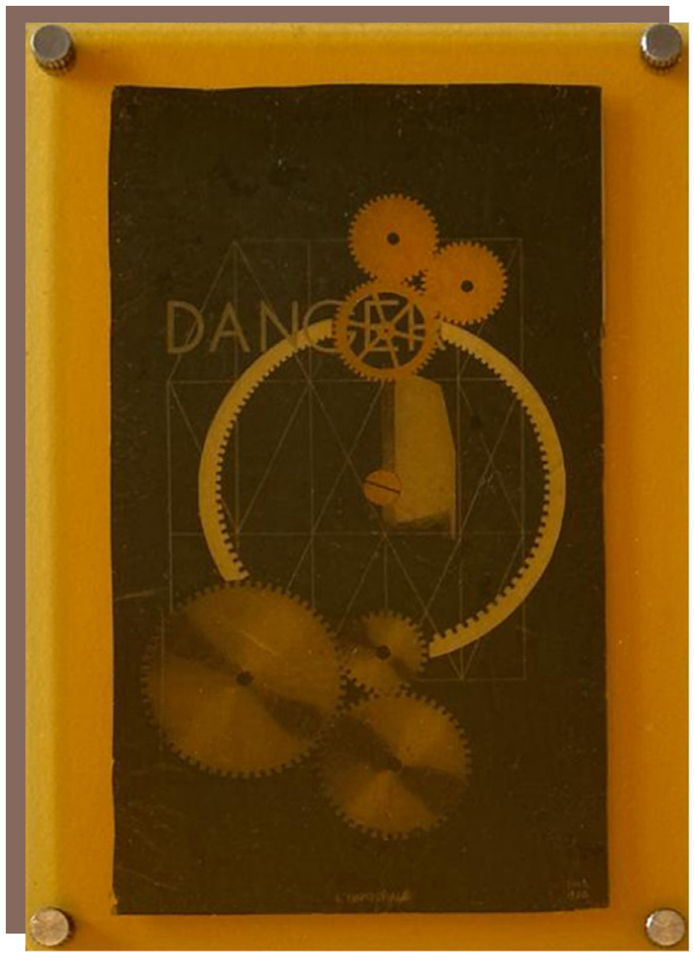


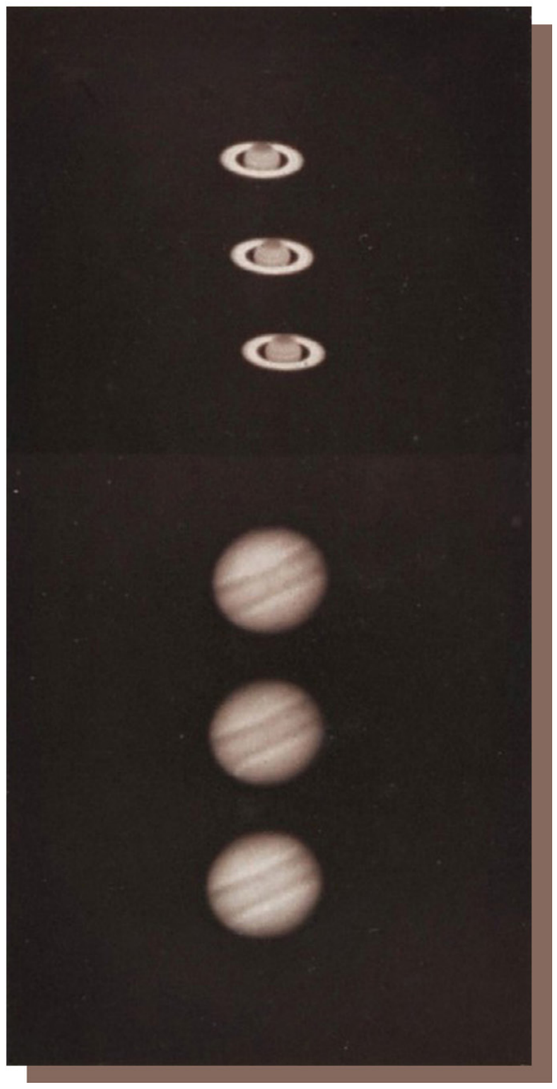
Robert Mapplethorpe, *Lisa Lyon*,
United States, 1981

Accadeva quarant'anni fa e uso questo verbo tra il mito e la fiaba, perché quando il 5 marzo 1983 si aprirono le porte della galleria di Leo Castelli a New York e il pubblico scoprì il corpo di Lisa Lyon, ritratto da Robert Mapplethorpe, fu come trovarsi di fronte a una creatura venuta da un altro mondo. Una creatura che parlava la lingua della scultura classica, che ricordava la pittura di Michelangelo, le sue Sibille, e che avvolta di pelle e di seta, in corsetto e frusta, in guêpière e ghepardo, ridisegnava il profilo della più temibile dominatrice. Io ero tra il pubblico e di fronte a quella donna che aveva vinto il primo campionato di body building femminile e che aveva tenuto sulle spalle Arnold Schwarzenegger, lei alta solo un metro e sessanta centimetri, qualcosa anche dentro di me aveva iniziato a trasformarsi, a costruirsi. Ripensandoci lucidamente quattro decenni dopo, credo fosse il piacere di vedere riunito in un unico corpo il femminile e il maschile, e i codici, i gesti, che definivano fino allora entrambi i generi. Lisa, donna e uomo insieme. Lisa, spirito primaverile, nata il 13 maggio 1953, che di questa stagione conosceva la potenza primitiva della terra e la delicatezza del germoglio.
Oggi posseggo, e insisto sull'accezione fisica del possesso, una delle immagini che vidi allora e che da allora, raccolte nel celebre volume uscito sempre nel 1983, mi hanno accompagnato nella mia storia di collezionista. Potrei dire che intorno al corpo di Lisa Lyon ho costruito il mio sguardo. Ipnotizzato dal suo trasformismo muscolare, ho cercato e trovato le stesse emozioni nelle metamorfosi della Contessa di Castiglione e della Marchesa Casati. Insieme a Lisa sono entrato nei cabaret berlinesi degli anni '30, sono sceso nelle cantine segrete del *fetish* newyorkese e sono risalito alle sue origini e ai suoi padri nobili, Charles Guyette, Irving Klaw, John Willie, figli tutti del mio amatissimo Franz Rehfeld. E naturalmente Lisa mi ha portato a Robert Mapplethorpe. Nonostante anni fa abbia avuto la fortuna di acquistare uno dei suoi capolavori, *Man in Polyester Suit*, ho preferito cedere quest'immagine, vertice dello *Z Portfolio*, e ricomporre il pantheon femminile del grande fotografo americano. E allora ecco che accanto a Lisa Lyon, è comparsa Patti Smith. Retro e fronte della stessa carta da gioco.
Abbiamo tutti letto e riletto *Just Kids*, ma dell'unione tra Patti Smith e Robert Mapplethorpe non volevo gli esordi né la vita da ragazzi, nati entrambi nel 1946, ma volevo il congedo doloroso che spetta a due adulti, che si sono amati e mai lasciati anche quando le strade della vita e del desiderio hanno preso altre direzioni. Nel 1986, a quarantatré anni, Patti Smith posa di fronte a Robert. Lei aspetta un figlio, lui è già malato. Il ritratto è un omaggio alla celebrità che entrambi hanno così potentemente, muscolarmente cercato e ottenuto, ed è un'altra forma di body building. Lo sguardo di Patti Smith è frontale, il volto severo e radioso di luce insieme, il corpo è stretto dalla corazza di una giacca maschile, che però lascia splendere il collo fino alla piega del seno. E poi, a sedurmi, è quella mano di Madonna metropolitana, che benedice e saluta. Non è più Michelangelo, ma è Giotto. Alla fine della sua vita, Mapplethorpe torna alle origini della pittura italiana. E nell'arte italiana resta anche quando sceglie uno scrittoio di Gio Ponti per il suo studio, l'ultimo, bellissimo sulla 23° strada. Non lo sapevo ancora, ma tra le donne di Mapplethorpe c'è anche mia moglie, Rossella Colombari, che del design italiano è re e regina.

Dialogues - Collezione Ettore Molinario

Man Ray,
Danger/Dancer,
1920, France





Paul-Pierre and Prosper Henry,
Saturne et son anneau, Jupiter,
1886, France

In 1886, for the first time in the history of astronomy, Paul-Pierre Henry and his brother Prosper, opticians, astronomers, pioneers of astrophotography, successfully photographed the planets Saturn and Jupiter. For the first time, the ice rings around Saturn and the coloured bands that punctuate the surface of Jupiter appear clear. But above all, in the small, deep and warm sky of a woodburytype, the most famous father and son in the solar system appear next to each other for the first time. It is a story of terror, of death, of inexorable defeat. The myth tells that Saturn devoured his children for fear that one of them would take his place, as the oracle had predicted, and this is how Goya paints him, with his black mouth wide open resembling another universe, illuminated by a comet of blood. Jupiter, though, manages to escape the curse, because his mother replaces him with a stone as soon as he is born, and Saturn swallows it without realising the deception. Once grown, Jupiter will therefore be free to kill his father and take his place at the top of Olympus. The prophecy is fulfilled, as it had happened before. Didn't Saturn remember that he himself had emasculated his father Uranus, ancient god of the sky, with a sickle? Didn't he remember that divinity who governed agriculture and his slow times, that he too had hated his parent and had dreamed of his death? No one can stop time, not even a god, and it is no coincidence, cruelly, that Jupiter, the son, is the largest planet in the solar system, and Saturn, the father, is the second.
Billions of millions of years after the birth of our universe and just thirty-four years after the undertaking of Paul-Pierre and Prosper Henry, another demiurge, perhaps the most Apollonian and Dionysian for the beauty and cruelty of his work, had set in motion an equal astral mechanism, an equal complexity of gears, but with the ingenious provocation expected of a Dada artist he had changed its meaning. From a gear of death it had turned into an erotic gear. In 1920 in New York, under the influence of Marcel Duchamp, Man Ray created one of the most powerful images of the American Dada season, it is that mysterious mechanism of cogwheels and words, of which the Ettore Molinario Collection now possesses the negative. In its three-dimensional physicality *Danger/Dancer*, where a simple syllable changes the semantic orbit of the work, is a spray-painted glass plate, which Man Ray exhibited at the Société Anonyme in New York and in 1921 at the Librairie Six in Paris. Shortly afterwards André Breton purchased it and kept it in his collection until his death in 1966. Today it is the property of the Center Pompidou.
In his *Self-Portrait*, Man Ray said he had attended a Spanish dance show on Broadway and the swirling of the full skirts had suggested to him an equally seductive and dangerous dance, contemporary because it was made of gears and primitive in its violence, such as *Danger/Dancer*. The mechanism of the drives is all-consuming, whatever the desire might be, to stop the flow of time and generations or to possess a body. In his wicked wisdom, Man Ray had added a side note and written « Impossible » at the bottom of the negative. As if to say that no one can escape this devouring of mouths and cogwheels, this hunger for death and love.

Vik Muniz, *The sower, After Van Gogh*,
France, 2011

Inez Van lamsweerde, *Jade*, The Netherlands, 1996

At fifty I decided to change my life, I left high finance, my successful career for more than two decades, and I re-enrolled at university, choosing the course of study I would have chosen as a boy: art. Once I graduated I traveled around the world for three years, visiting one museum after the other. It was my personal Grand Tour, my great journey into the world of images. And they were images that I could « come upon » in real life. One of these first encounters, absolutely decisive, was with the collection of the Kröller-Müller Museum, in Otterlo, Holland. Vincent Van Gogh's *The Sower* was there. After infinite reproductions, I could *encounter*, and I insist on this verb, the original image. I finally saw what for me was one of the most incredible « reversal » of colours in the history of art, that totally yellow sky, beyond the sun, that wheat sky, which joined a land brushed with blue, and on that land of sky and clouds walked a man and this man was sowing. I too would have reaped the fruits of his sowing, because ten years later, during a second Grand Tour within the photographic image, I would have met another sower naturally inspired by Van Gogh, but of a different nature. Stemming of a « different seed », I dare say.

I refer to the magnificent reinvention that Vik Muniz created in a church in Avignon, not far from the place where Van Gogh used to paint, recomposing his masterpiece thanks to a mosaic of seeds, dried petals, lavender ears, leaves, twigs. Now, at the beginning of the third millennium, photography looked at painting in peace, or rather recomposed it, adding the scent of flowers and wild herbs to its realism. And I felt Muniz's work strongly, and I wanted to « encounter » it every day in my collection, because I understood that it sutured not only a historical and cultural rift, the eternal conflict between painting and photography, but also one of my most intimate tears. Rediscovering the images of the great masters, I too recomposed my image, my sky and my earth, stitching together the cold, rational, visionary part of me - whereas finance needs to guess the future - to that equally intense, but more solitary, silent, sometimes melancholic part of me that seeked immersion in art.

Over the years I would have looked for other equally powerful photographs, other doors that would connect photography and painting. So when, and not by chance, I returned to the Neatherlands, this time to Amsterdam, and I was faced with the monumental and fragile beauty of Jade, portrayed by Inez Van Lamsweerde, much courted fashion photographer, I had no doubts, that portrait had to be mine. Of course, I could have chosen another image of Inez, for example one of her famous ironic « boy » self-portraits, with a beard and moustache, taken in New York in 2010. But it would have been an obvious, almost imposed choice, given my long research on gender identity. I wanted something else. So when I saw the sculptural dress that wraps Jade, that precious fabric edged in white, I thought of the same dress painted by Hans Memling for his famous *Woman in Prayer*. Once again a contemporary artist had recalled and reinvented a classic, and Jade's inky face, impossible against the light of her skin, was another splendid chromatic inversion that joins together distant worlds. Day and night, together. The body we are born with and the body we rewrite throughout our lives. And painting and photography, both rivals and siblings, finally meet.

Paul Coze, *Étude de chevelure*,
France, 1950 ca.

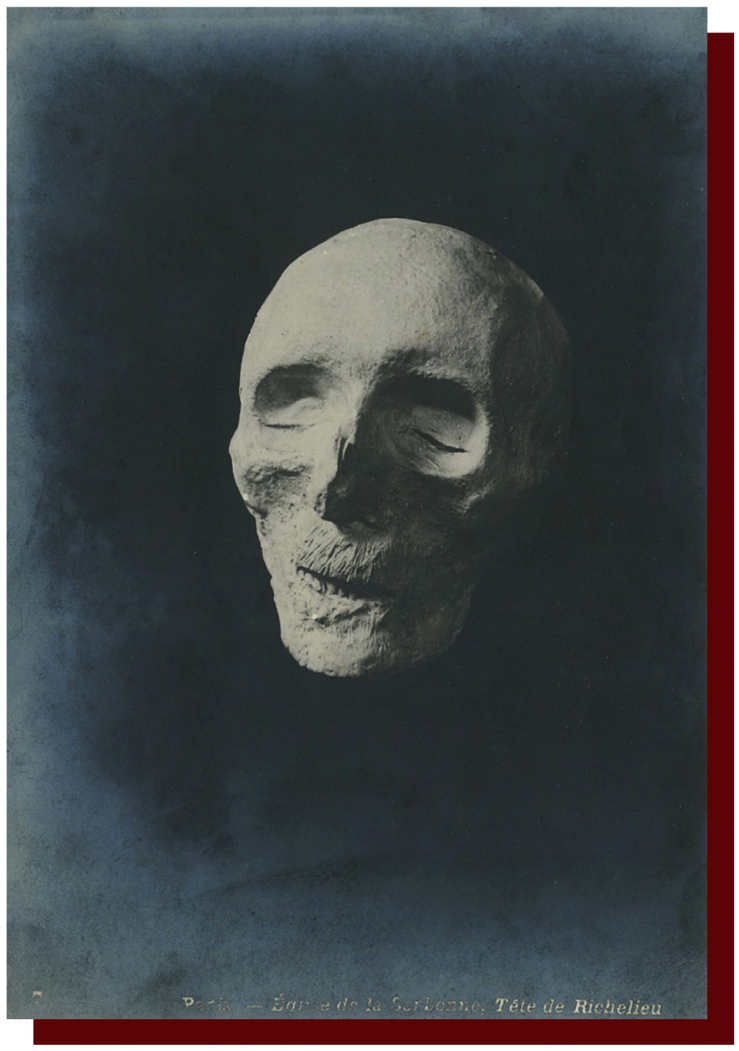
Joel Peter Witkin, *Man with dog,*
United States, 1990

How good is Joel Peter Witkin in making fun of those who believe that the scandal is sex, and that it's even supreme scandal if in one body the sex is double, a set of attributes such as the set of jewels, earrings and necklaces, which a very sweet hermaphrodite shows with polite naturalness. How good is Witkin, a baroque artist in search of wonders, a romantic artist in search of photogenic darkness, to cause a stir by showing what nature creates, even when bizarre, and what men would like to hide, and therefore would like to look at more closely. He's capable, cultured and elegant Joel Peter Witkin, because his *Man with dog* boasts at least two very noble precedents, *Naked man being a woman* by Diane Arbus, 1968, and, going back in the history of art, the portrait of Eleonora from Toledo, painted by Bronzino in 1545. Framing the face of the beautiful wife of Cosimo I de' Medici was a corolla of brown hair, held back by a circlet of gold and precious stones. A masterpiece of composure that nineteenth-century Victorian women, who inspired *Man with dog*, took as a model, rolling the braids on the sides of their heads or in a crown around the oval of their faces. Any trichological exuberance was allowed and coveted, in the sense of the richness of the hair and its light, as long as it was kept « under lock and key » in the most elaborate hairstyles. And the middle parting? It's like the right path, morally necessary to keep good and evil in balance.

But what happens or rather what has always happened since the birth of the Greek theatre, when a woman decides to untie ribbons, combs, hairpins, and releases the beauty of her hair in infinite streams? What happens is what Paul Coze obsessively documented in the 1950s, messing up the hair of his wonderful girls. But above all, what happens is what Joel Peter Witkin, who studied poetry before photography, discovered by reading one of the most beautiful pages of *Spleen, A hemisphere in a hair*, where Charles Baudelaire pleads his woman to « breathe for a long time the smell of your hair », and to immerse his face in it « as a thirsty person does in spring water ». And in the « ember of your hair », red we imagine, the French poet breathed « the smell of tobacco mixed to opium and sugar ».

We don't know with what fragrances, whether vanilla, coconut oil, ointment, the angel who posed in Witkin's studio in 1990 had imbued the air. But we know what was it that little griffin-dog was guarding - from one of the images on his collar. And the treasure, as Joel Peter Witkin reminds us, is the power of desire, the creative and destructive power of love and death, which resides in the hair and, in a broader sense, in their moderate and dangerous composure. Didn't the master of Albuquerque leave us a precious clue by tying the portrait of Salomé to one of the garters of his model? And who was Salomé if not the woman who lets her hair down and, dancing in a blinding vortex, conquers Herod, intoxicates him and dominates him until she obtains the most horrible gift, the head of the Baptist? How good is Joel Peter Witkin at deceiving us, how good is he at combing our fears by showing what is a simple and quiet physical attribute, and instead hiding in the most luxuriant braid, black as ebony and night, what desire is capable of doing when it's set free.

Roger Ballen, *Waif*, South Africa, 2012



Anonymous, *Tête de Richelieu*, France, 1894

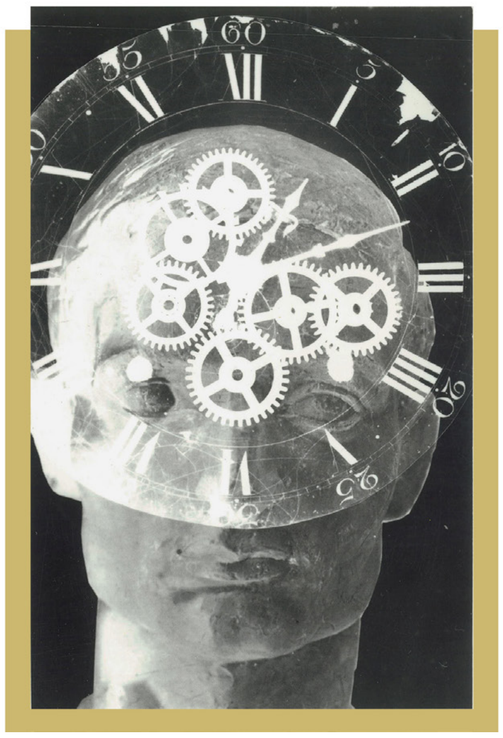
The apparition occurred on 5 December 1793 after one hundred and fifty years of deep sleep, when a handful of revolutionaries profaned the tomb of Cardinal Richelieu, built by the former prime minister in the heart of the Sorbonne, where he had been student and rector. A few months after the beginning of the Regime of Terror, the remains of the supreme enemy appeared, he who had strengthened the monarchy of Louis XIII and pushed it towards absolutism. Richelieu was « the powerful statesman who made France and Europe tremble with his policies » as we read in *The Three Musketeers*. Of his mortal remains the rebels kept only the skull and in an instant that head, which had imagined a military destiny for itself but had studied theology instead, the head that had led a king and his armies in one of the longest European wars, the head that had founded the French Academy, regulated the French language and institutionalised the theatre transforming it into an instrument of political consensus, well, that head became a ball between the feet of a group of children who, laughing and dribbling, rolled it around the streets of Paris.
So the legend goes and it is said that Abbot Boshamp, moved to pity, picked it up and kept it with him, entrusting it in his will to Nicolas Armez, mayor of Plourivo in Brittany. A village too small for such an honour, so much so that the prefect of the Côtes-du-Nord claimed the relic and only after contemplating it for a long time did he return it to the Sorbonne and its eternal home. It could have been the longed-awaited rest for a man like Richelieu who in life was the subject of infinite conspiracies and of many succeeded in beheading their perpetrators. But it was not the case because in 1894 Gabriel Hanotaux, the Cardinal's biographer, asked to have the famous head exhumed again, at which point it was photographed and printed in hundreds of copies. And then yes, becoming a demonic souvenir of Paris, Armand-Jean du Plessis Duke of Richelieu conquered supreme power.
Just like the frightening ghost of Roger Ballen, inspired by the engravings left on the windows of a former women's mental hospital and collected in the extraordinary volume *The Theatre of Apparitions*, so that sixteenth-century face by date of birth but universal by destiny continued to disturb dreams, revealing the madness of those who yearn for the absolute government of themselves, of others and of the world, and take no leave from that absoluteness, not even in death and are therefore forced to wander among the ghosts. This is what Richelieu's face tells us, and a warning of this torture were the eye sockets empty like craters, the eyelids on which the eyelashes could still be counted and from which one might fear a glow from the afterlife would eventually emerge. Of course, should we not have just a post-mortem portrait of the Cardinal's body and if photography was an invention of the 17th century, maybe we would also retain the image of a Richelieu intent on cuddling one of his beloved cats in the rooms of his princely residence, now the Palais-Royal, just a stone's throw from the Louvre. He had fourteen of them, mostly Angoras, and we like to remember at least three names: Lucifer, Ludovic-le-Cruel, Ludoviska. In other words, photography does not devise destiny, it can only attest it.

August Sander, *Sekretarin beim Westdeutschen Rundfunk in Köln*, 1931, Germany

Edward Weston, Natacha Rambova, 1916, United States

She inhaled, she relaxed and the smoke dispersed, blending into the grey background. In August Sander's studio, the secretary of German Western Radio in Cologne, the famous *Sekretärin beim Westdeutschen Rundfunk in Köln*, had just created one of the most extraordinary portraits of twentieth-century photography. Yet those parted lips of hers, which had tasted the flavour of tobacco, tell an even greater story. From that mouth of hers and from that dark line that announces the internal darkness of her body between the soft turgidity of her flesh, something was coming out along with the smoke. Something ineffable and precious, something so close to Henri Bergson's « vital impetus », the *élan vital* that the French philosopher had proposed in 1907 as a creative principle and drive towards anyone's most authentic realisation. It is no coincidence that in Sander's *Men of the 20th Century*, in the dictatorship of the title which considers only the male gender as humanity, it is women who announce the impetus of the new times and above all challenge photography, pushing it to create an image out of the invisibility of this energy. After all, what is the black material of *Sekretärin*'s dress, irregular, soft and vibrant in the silk folds, if not a new internal force that finally came out and was transformed into a second skin?
Four years earlier, in 1927, another twentieth-century woman had triggered this reaction, Helene, wife of the painter Peter Abelen. Sander had entrusted her with the most dangerous gesture, the smallest and potentially apocalyptic of all, the lighting of a match. And looking at Helene's hands holding a box of matches, looking at her lips and teeth holding a cigarette, a very thin white line that accompanies the curvature of her body, and looking at those eyes ready to set the scene on fire, one cannot help but feel that the invisible spirit of the 20th century had already taken shape and become a female body. Body, in fact, physicality, weight, pace, starting the journey in the everyday world. Body and not ghost, but sometimes it is the spirits who first announce the happy news.
Edward Weston had portrayed Natacha Rambova in 1916. Natacha was born Winifred Kimball Shaughnessy in Salt Lake City, studied in England, fled to Russia, where she devoted herself to dancing, and changed her name there. The return to America, and the impossibility of going back to Moscow due to the October Revolution, pushed her to make other changes and in Hollywood Natacha became a set and costume designer for the films of Cecil De Mille, art director of Alla Nazimova, later wife of Rudolph Valentino. Fatal for both was the set of the film *The Lady of the Camellias*.
In Rambova's portrait, pictorialism imposes a weightless material on Weston, as if the body was still searching for its identity behind a smoke screen of very light veils. The energy is entirely photographic, because it is the light of the demiurge-photographer, as well as the precious process of platinum printing, that transmits the vibrations of the dancer. A few years later, in 1924, everything changes in Edward Weston's gaze and it will be a woman, Tina Modotti, her generous and sculptural body under the Mexico City sun, that will make every veil fall and suggest to Weston yet another way of seeing things and to transfigure them, sensing the hidden power of those things themselves, the *èlan vital*. It's nice to think that from Mexico to the Weimar Republic, in front of two giants of photography, it was the new women of the twentieth century who embodied and made visible that creative vigour that makes every life a project.

Jürgen Klauke, *Umarmung*, 1973, Germany

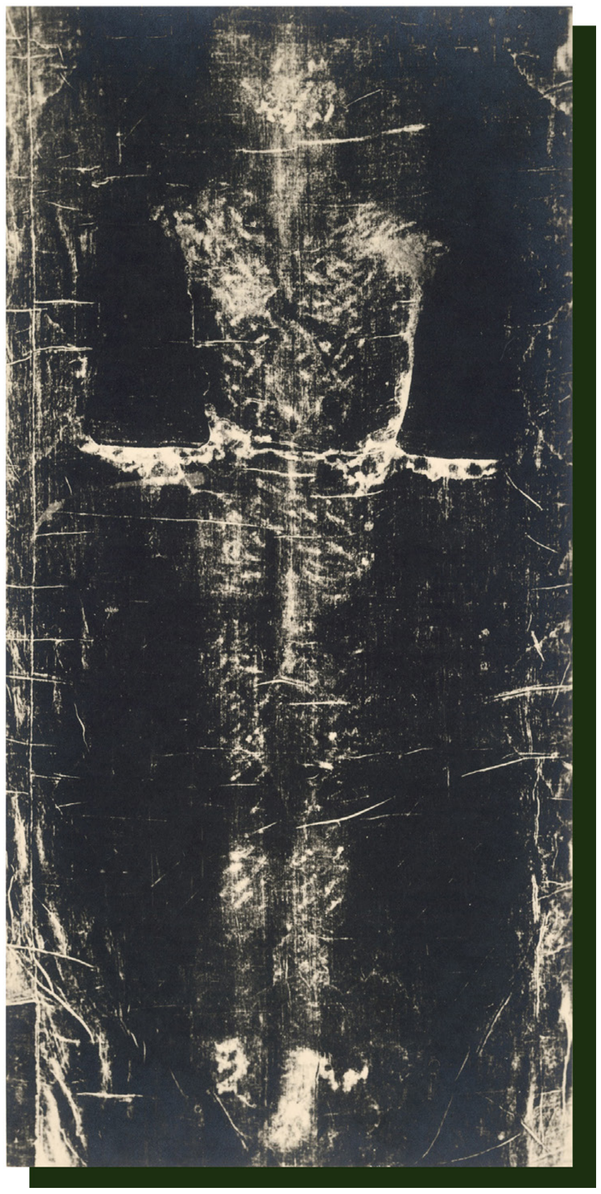


Gyula Szabó, *Untitled* , Hungary, 1960 ca.

It happened exactly fifty years ago, and it is an important anniversary. In April 1974, the exhibition *Transformer: Aspects of Travesty* , curated by Jean-Christophe Ammann, shone at the Kunstmuseum in medieval Lucerne. If there is an event, a vision and a handful of provocative and revolutionary agents who inspired me, here they are, and one of the cornerstones of my collection is precisely the study of the artists who made of that exhibition their flagship. Indeed I could say that over the years I have moved in search of the protagonists of that time; I would like them all next to me. After Pierre Molinier, Urs Lüthi, The Cockettes, came Jurgen Klauke, a diptych, that I have always loved very much, is his *Umarmung* , a word that in German means embrace. Embracing the stranger within us and by embracing them subvert every gender because, as Klauke recalled, « I am the man who loves women and I am the man who seduces men ». I am, added the artist, gentle and brutal, conqueror and victim, penetrating and penetrated. In one word, I am a saboteur of the peace. Public and private. Sabotage is a wonderful verb. Sabotage derives from « sabot », the French word for the clog that at the beginning of the industrial revolution, in a scenario of absolute poverty, workers inserted into the gears to block them, in order to protest and interrupt an alienating work rhythm. I don't know if Gyula Szabó was a saboteur, but I know that showing the mental gears that determine us, those gears that form the time we live in and its laws, is a form of sabotage. And yes, in these monstrous gears, between cogwheels that devour the freedom to imagine oneself as fluid, different and therefore equal to oneself, Jurgen Klauke slipped his sabot. A *sui generis* kind of sabot, certainly, more red leather boot than wooden sole, more Michelangelo's torso from which phalluses or faun horns unexpectedly emerge. More lipstick, mascara and a shaved head. More irony than violence. More Body Art.

At the end of the 1960s Jurgen Klauke began to sabotage the boredom of respectability and became a genderless creature, human and animal at the same time, so close to the world of Hieronymus Bosch. At the beginning of *transformism* , for him as for an entire generation, was Lou Reed's seminal album, *Transformer* , released in 1972, and coincidentally David Bowie was among the producers, another splendid transformer who in the same years inaugurated the eternal season of Glam Rock. In 1972 Jurgen self-published the artist's book *Ich & Ich* , meaning I & I, where he completed his artistic transition by alternating drawings with Polaroids. Two years later the *Transformer* exhibition opened and the title, in scarlet red, was a tribute to Reed's album. The introduction to the exhibition catalogue was signed by Brian Eno and on the cover, hanging on the wall, there were jeans, cowboy boots and close by an evening dress, a fox stole and a pair of transparent pumps. He, she, and « in between », the « drag zone ». At the time, Lou Reed defined himself as « pansexual ». And should Jurgen Klauke, wild Pan of our revolts, return to us, we would follow him into the thickest and hottest of all forests.

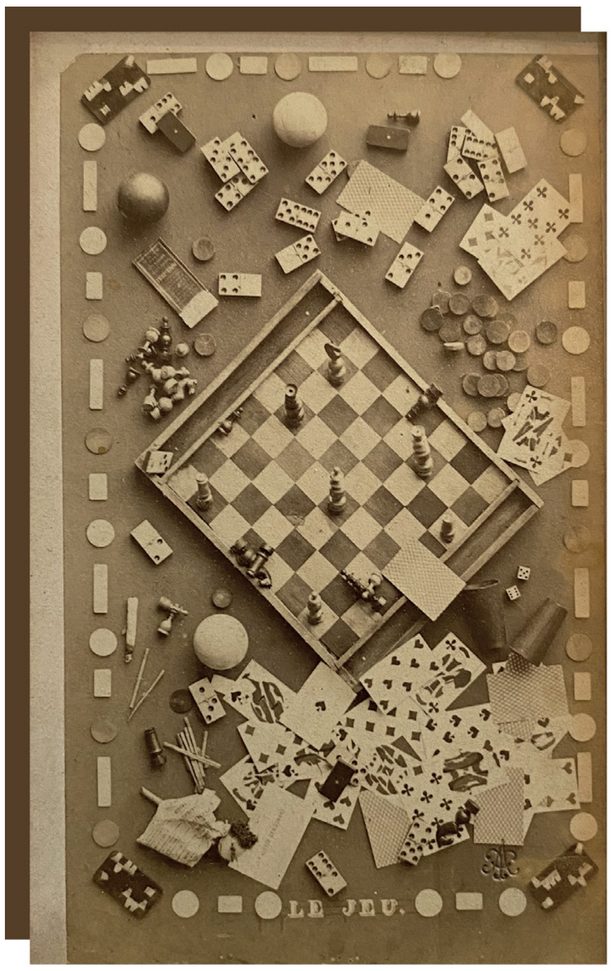
Andres Serrano,
La Chinoise Madonna, 2011, United States

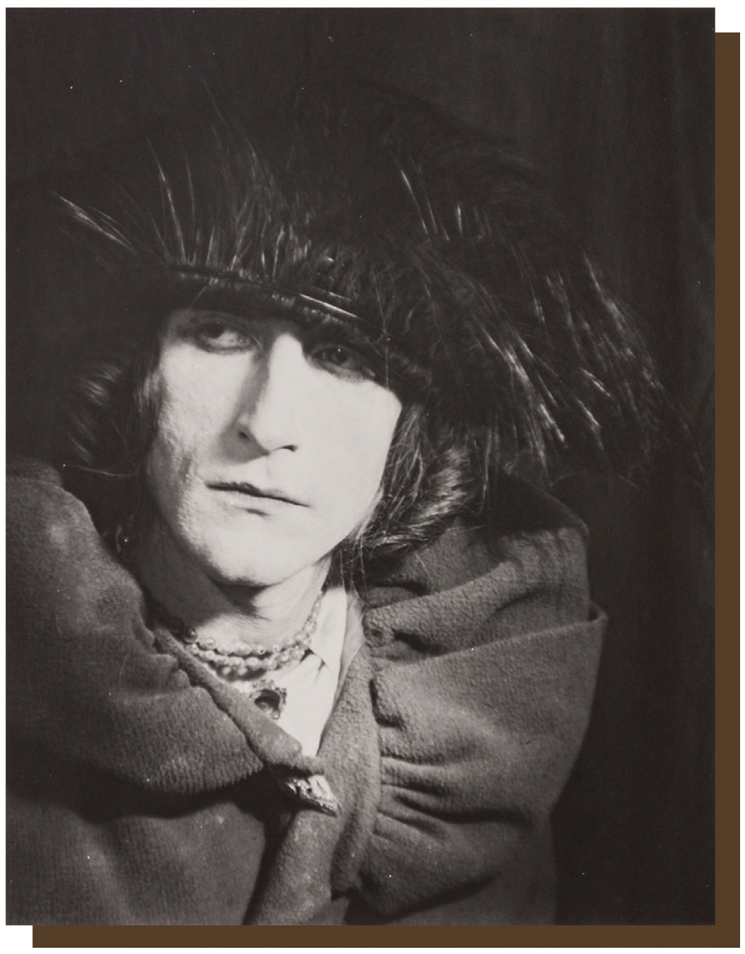


Barrie Schwortz, *Sacra Sindone*, 1978, Italy

It is a simple intuition, a mother and her son. And the bond that links them in the news of every day, of all times and in the whole world, becomes the story of the mother and son of God. An image that passes from the earthly dimension to the otherworldly one, from news to faith. This is the miracle of Christianity, which anticipates by eighteen centuries the miracle of the photographic image and of the faith it has fuelled ever since. It is also the theme that Andres Serrano has been investigating for forty years. At the time he created the Holy Works cycle, to which *La Chinoise Madonna* belongs, Serrano, who was born and bred in a devout Catholic family, had already signed, as a young blasphemous artist as many consider him, his *Piss Christ*, the famous crucifix immersed in urine. Twenty years later the reflection softens, a friend of Andres and her son become the Virgin and Child. Small variations: mother and son are Chinese from Brooklyn, and the blue veil that envelops the Madonna, a prefiguration of the vault of heaven, is instead orange, a color sacred to Buddhism. Yet the message gets through, it transcends everyday life and becomes a symbol. The success of a religion that makes everyday life its message.
A son is born, the son becomes a man and every man is destined to die. Respecting the « photographic » nature of its story, Christianity completes the life cycle of Jesus in the most extreme and spectacular of images, the most organic and the most sublime, the most scientifically false and the truest because the heart of every believer is always in search of proof that confirms the divine word. Faith and believer are the terms of the problem. And if we talk about Christian faith and a « faithful » image, of a copy of the truth and the revelation of the truth, then we talk about the Holy Shroud.
The linen sheet, that's the meaning of the word « shroud », arrived in Turin in 1578. Certainly that cloth, over four meters long and more than one meter wide, wrapped the body of a man, tortured and crucified. No one can say whether it is the body of Christ, but the correspondence with the Gospels is precise. When the Shroud was exhibited to the public in 1722, a foreign ambassador noted the presence of over one hundred thousand believers. None of them had any doubts. And to ensure that no doubt was ever raised in the future, on the 29th of May 1898 the lawyer Secondo Pia, an amateur photographer from Turin, obtained permission to photograph the extraordinary relic for the first time. On the cloth, as if it were a photographic negative, Pia discovered a body, and above all a face, imprinted. By the way, the medieval world already knew the Shroud, but no one had raised the question of its authenticity, those who wanted to venerate it as the portrait of the son of God were free to do so, and equal respect for those who did not feel the need for such a tangible proof. The nineteenth century, the positivist era of the negative-positive process of photography, changed the temperature: since photography « revealed » the face of Christ, that face is authentic. In 1931 Secondo Pia's shots were followed by those of Giuseppe Enrie, which were more precise, not only because Enrie was a professional, but also because at the time the materials were more sensitive. So in 1978, the scientists of the STURP, The Shroud of Turin Research Project, arrived in Turin from the Los Alamos laboratories of New Mexico, directed at the time of the Second World War by Robert Oppenheimer, father of the atomic bomb. Among them is one of the most famous scientific photographers of the time, Barrie Schwortz, who shot the Shroud and created perhaps the most dramatic images of it. The back is striking for its symbolic power, almost fetishistic in the traces of the whippings, and it is with this charge of earthly pain and pleasure that the Shroud enters Ettore Molinario's collection. But this sacred image also brings its doubts and uncertainties to the collection. Where does faith in images lead us, to illuminate our path or to lose it? What if every photograph, loved, sought, recognised and collected, was our personal, very fragile Shroud?

Allain De Torbéchet & Cie, *Le Jeu*,
1863, France





Man Ray,
Portrait of Rrose Sélavy (Marcel Duchamp),
1921, France

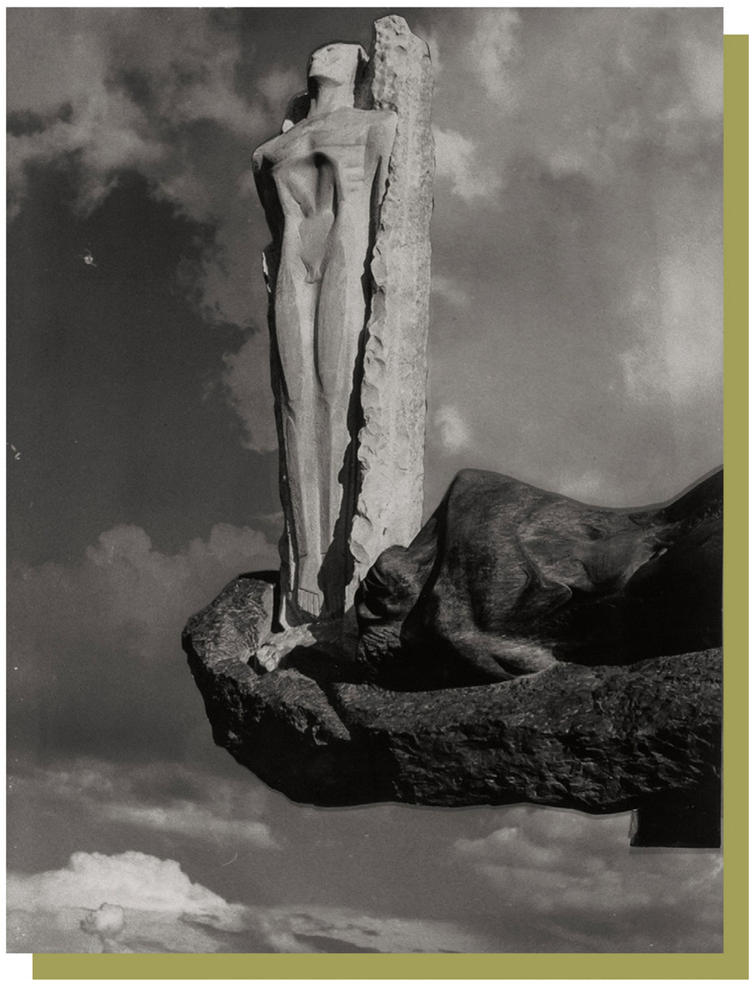
What reality denies, fantasy eagerly makes its own. So let's try to imagine a chess match between two of the most singular players in history, a woman and a man, a very elegant amazon in court battles and an equally elegant dandy who killed painting and invented different gestures to be an artist. At the sides of the chessboard, Marcel Duchamp, we know everything about him, and Beatrice d'Este, wife of Ludovico il Moro in 15th century Milan and a famous chess player, so much so that she changed its destiny. In fact, Beatrice is responsible for the advancement of the Queen to the most important piece on the chessboard, the only one to radiate her power on every square. After Beatrice, the King, the *Shāh* in Persian chess, is only a prey, a symbol to be protected, captured and killed in the *Shāh māt*, which we translate as « checkmate » but which literally means « the king has no escape ».
Also Marcel Duchamp, born a painter, felt that painting no longer had a chance at the beginning of the twentieth century and that not even the cowardly castling technique was enough in the desperate effort to save it. We need to imagine another game, a different scheme, even of personal identity. And to help him in the undertaking that changes the fate of artistic thought in the 20th century are chess. Marcel approached the chessboard at the age of thirteen in 1900. Ten years later Duchamp was a serial player and on Sundays challenged his group of cubist friends, including Picabia. When he moved to New York in 1915, Marcel played with the poet Alfred Kreymborg, the psychiatrist Ernest Southard and the collector Walter Arensberg. The following year he met his lifelong accomplice, in and out of chess, Man Ray. And in 1924, together with Man Ray, Marcel played chess in René Clair's famous film, *Entr'acte*. But the real game was another, on a larger chessboard, and like all victorious wars this one also needed long preparation. In 1912 Duchamp broke up with painting, in 1917 he exposed the idea of the urinal, because the piece itself would be censored, and from then on art was about choosing the object, a ready made one, no longer making it. And then in 1921 Marcel becomes a woman, name Rrose, surname Selavy, Rrose Selavy in French, or *Rose is life* and in the anagram *Eros is life*. Co-author of the transformation that unites the masculine and the feminine, and that makes a living being its photograph, that is to say an object, is Man Ray. Of course, disguise can be seen as a radical denunciation of the crisis experienced by artistic creation in the years surrounding the First World War. Of course, it is the artist-man who becomes the woman-image and calls into question the virility of the creative genius. Of course, if we don't consider chess, that's how it is. But if we remain on the chessboard, if we break it down into the sixty-four black and white squares, perhaps we can attempt a further reading and imagine that Duchamp-Rrose Selavy is King and Queen together, both prey and supreme aggressor, both defence and lightning attack. Let it be everything, in the infinite game of combinations. And in this moving of the pieces, true ready-mades of destiny, in this drawing of trajectories in the air, the chess player is the true artist. Marcel Duchamp said: « Not all artists are chess players, but all chess players are artists ».
Exceptions to the rule exist, and the happiest, also due to biographical closeness, is Marcel Duchamp's first wife, Lydie Sarazin-Levassor. A filibuster marriage because Duchamp, in his forties, was penniless and Lydie, twenty-four, was rich. Brief courtship followed by the wedding, Picabia as witness and Man Ray at the camera to film the ceremony, but on the honeymoon the groom spends his time playing chess. One, two, three, every evening, and so on returning to Paris until one night, while her husband is asleep, Lydie glues all the pieces to the board and in her own way declares checkmate. Endgame because games aren't played anymore. Six months after the wedding, on January 28 1928, Lydie and Marcel divorced. He continued to play chess, even in the French national team, and she wrote her memoirs. And at least in our imagination, the prize for the most modern and cruel artist, the one who eliminates every move and silences destiny, goes to her, Queen of Queens.

Fratelli Alinari,
Il cratere del Vesuvio, 1907, Italy

Giorgio Sommer,
Anfiteatro di Pompei, 1880 ca., Italy

My first dive was into the pages of *Journey to the Center of the Earth*. Initiatory reading at the canonical age and then a constant return, as if one after the other those layers of paper took me not only into the bowels of our planet, but inside me, into the deep cavities where the free and darkest voice echoes most authentic. This year marks the 150th anniversary of the first Italian translation of Jules Verne's novel, ten years after the release of the original edition in 1864. For me this anniversary is a great celebration because I have become a marine speleologist and collector of photography, synonymous concepts for me, thanks to this book I read as a boy. Precisely a boy, because I felt like Axel's companion, the protagonist and nephew of Professor Lidenbrock, and together with Axel I imagined translating the parchment in runic and by deciphering it I understood that the entrance door to the most incredible of journeys was the crater of a volcano. But above all, together with Axel I also took "abyss lessons" on the bell tower of the Frelsers Kirke in Copenhagen and trained in what I would joyfully do years later: look deeply, challenge the abyss without fear, feel that the darkness of a sea cave, almost one hundred meters from the earth's surface, is a house, another house, as intimate as it is frightening, yet welcoming. A perfect home. And this is where my collection took shape.
In Jules Verne's masterpiece the journey begins in the extinct crater of the Sneffels volcano, in Iceland. The two heroes, joined by Hans, the Icelandic guide, follow the directions of the mysterious map and following a shadow that points towards the bottom of the volcano at midday, they locate the entrance, the chasm that begins the journey into the Earth. Over the years I have underlined these lines several times and I cannot help but report them in their beauty. Axel writes: «I bent over a sheer rock edge and looked down. My hair stood on end. The feeling of emptiness took over me. I felt my centre of gravity shift and dizziness rise to my brain like an intoxication. Nothing more terrible than this attraction of the abyss. I was about to let myself fall. One hand held me back: Hans'.» Exhilaration, attraction, abyss, these are magic words for me.
Tracing the story of the birth of my collection, I have repeatedly recalled that my first abyss, the first shift in emotional gravity, was *Man with dog* by Joel Peter Witkin. But the first "place" that had the prophetic gift of uniting my dreams, my obsessions and the concreteness of reality was the crater of Vesuvius, portrayed by the Alinari Brothers. Sinking into this image, in an instant I retraced all my ages, the adolescence of the paper journey, the first maturity of self-discovery, the full maturity that I experience today. And even today it is enough for me to contemplate this ancient albumin to find myself: I am on the edge of the volcano, the chasm is in front of me, the dark spot on the opposite wall stares at me like the empty eye socket of a skull. I also hear the crunching of stones under my shoes. This is how I discovered the greatness of Italian photography from the nineteenth century onwards, sensing the remote time of my impulses which I believed were linked only to contemporary images. But no. Not even thinking back to the extraordinary ending of *Journey to the Center of the Earth* when Axel, Professor Lidenbrock and Hans navigate the magma wave of the Stromboli volcano and return to the surface. To see the light of day again, I preferred to stay close to Vesuvius and the gaze of Giorgio Sommer, another magnificent protagonist of the Grand Tour season. A moment and I found myself at the center of the Roman amphitheater of Pompei. Like the figurine that had the task of scaling the architecture, I too am alone. I walk, I walk along the oval of the arena, I count the steps on which twenty thousand spectators once sat and I see the gladiators enter, ready to challenge each other. Every time an image enters the collection, it is like this, a journey, a gamble, a fight, a show.

Roy Kemp, *Victoria Williams*
1964, United States



Carlo Mollino, *Monumento ai caduti per la libertà*
1946, Italy

When I read it for the first time, and I had just started my collection, I realised I had met my mentor. It is easy to fall in love with Carlo Mollino, absolute genius. Less obvious is to follow him through the mysterious pages of his extraordinary volume *Message from the Darkroom* and make the authors cited by the great architect your own authors. Or even more, to assume Mollino's gaze on photography and on the «fantasies of an impossible everyday life» as your own gaze. We think of Mollino and our thought goes instinctively to his famous nudes, and through a play of reflections and deep harmonies I believe he would have liked the body of a burlesque starlet like Victoria Williams, the domestic set that surprises her among paper backdrops, a carpet as red as her lips, her walking décolleté and the watch on her wrist, because when you are naked and you offer the splendour of your body to the world it is always important to know what time it is. Definitely a Mollinian woman, my Victoria. But strange to say, it is not that chapter of Mollino's research that struck me the most. It is something else.
Which else means the entire course of his book, starting from the first chapter, *A Short History of Taste in Photography* and from the image chosen to illustrate it. For Mollino, «the oldest photograph in the world», dated 1826, is not the famous view from Nicéphore Niépce's window, but his laid table. A still life for a single guest, a bowl, a bottle of wine, a piece of bread, a knife, a spoon on a white tablecloth. In front of the mystery of the camera, which Mollino calls «the black box suspected of too many gratuitous wonders», as in front of the creation of our double, we are alone. But maybe I didn't want to be so alone so, like a skier in fresh snow, and Mollino was an acrobatic skier, I began to follow in his footsteps. I slipped into it starting from his woman-obsession who also became mine, the Countess of Castiglione. Mollino calls her princess and says of her: «Being a mannequin, no matter how beautiful, has never been her strong point». She wanted to be a «person», the Countess. Following the pages of *Message from the Darkroom* I searched for and found other Mollinian «people» such as Charles Baudelaire portrayed by Etienne Carjat, Julia Margaret Cameron, «nonchalantly Pre-Raphaelite», Atget, and I imagine the joy when he immersed himself, says Mollino, in a «forest of squalid objects», and then Edward Steichen, «who senses the limits and the rapid extinction in a closed circle of pictorial photography», and finally Man Ray, the «mad entomologist».
Speaking of Man Ray, Mollino speaks of himself. He writes: «The encounter with Man Ray takes place in the silence of the night or dawn, the fires of every will extinguished». The pinnacle are the famous rayograms, «phosphorescent larvae in the night of a negative». For Carlo Mollino, Man Ray's secret was his «unprejudiced eclecticism». Eclecticism, an attitude of the soul that I love very much. And following the critical eclecticism of Mollino, who was architect, designer, photographer, skier, pilot of crazy speeds, I too have looked at astronomical photography, from the formation of stars to lunar craters, and I too would like a portrait of Cléo de Mérode among the ballerinas of the Opéra, and I too would feel the need in my collection for the frightening wonder of a «nucleus and protoplasm of a plant cell», magnified twelve hundred times. I would like everything that Mollino wanted and I also deeply feel his faith in photography, when on the last page of his writing, Mollino himself admitted to encountering «photographs, concrete poetry, even on fragile sheets, between one pulping and another of the ephemeral life of today's paper». If it hadn't been for his solitary gaze, for his sense of time passing and his attempt to stem it with the strength of those wonderful *fragile sheets,* I would never have chosen for my collection the image by Carlo Mollino that I love most of all, the collage of the *Monumento ai caduti per la libertà*. If there is something that helps us resist against every fragility, between one waste and another, it is our awareness of being alone.

Anonymous, *Untitled*, 1880 ca., England

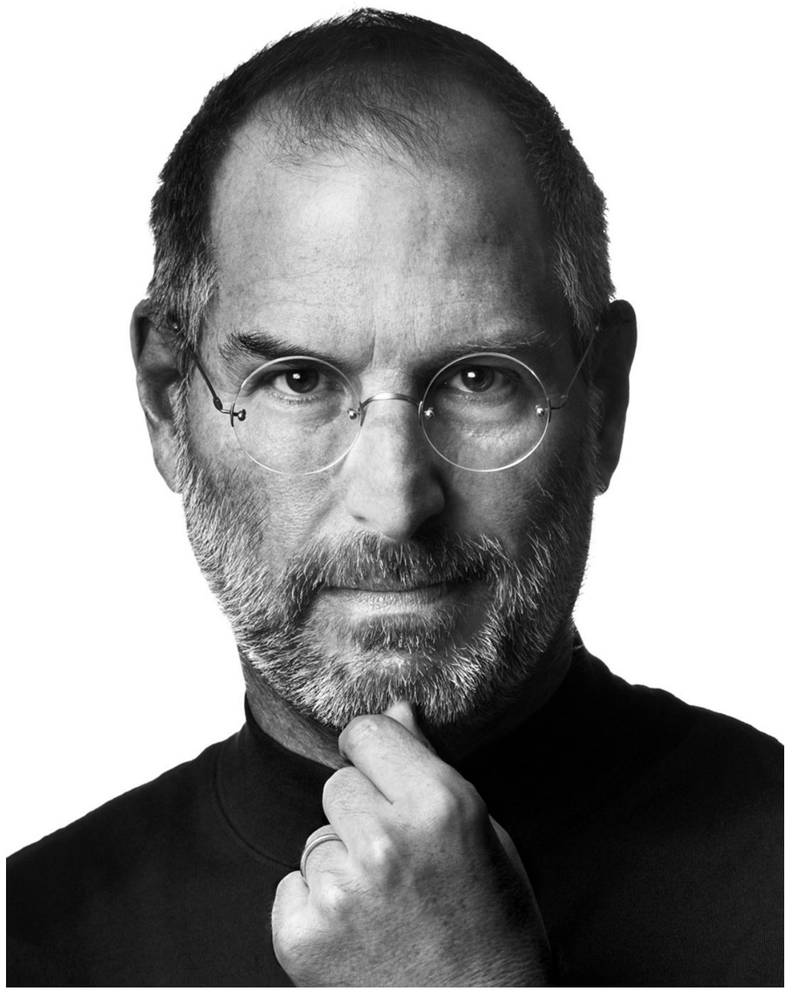
Peter Hujar, *Ethyl Eichelberger as Auntie Belle Emme,* 1979,
United States

He was imposing, over six feet tall, and to that height were added stiletto heels and an eighteenth-century-inspired wig. When he appeared on stage, possibly on the stage of the Pyramid Club or P.S. 122, Ethyl Eichelberger paid homage not only to the verticalism of New York, not only to the drag culture, of which he was the greatest interpreter, not only to the *grandes dames* of tragedy and history, Nefertiti, Jocasta, Clytemnestra, Medea, Lucrezia Borgia, but also, and in retrospect, to a formidable decade, the 70s and 80s of the Lower East Side for which I feel, like many, a devouring nostalgia. Some might say: «Paris in the 1920s». I say: «1979», when Ethyl posed as Auntie Belle Emme, a parody of *Gone with the Wind*, in the studio that Peter Hujar owned at 189 2nd Avenue. That space where David Wojnarowicz, Hujar's partner and extraordinary artist, would live until his death, was a loft above the Eden Theater, formally occupied by Jackie Curtis, Andy Warhol's drag diva and star of a film like *Flesh* alongside Joe Dallesandro, Candy Darling and Patti D'Arbanville. Remember the song *Lady D'Arbanville*? It was her when Cat Stevens loved her, and these were the coordinates of the time, sublime. Yet, among all of them, the artist I would have really liked to know is Peter Hujar, because I love his juxtapositions, his depth and sincere immediacy, his "Avedonian" technical perfection and his sentimental closeness to the subjects he portrayed, that belongs to someone looking for a new family, warm, authentic, far from the devastating version that the registry office sometimes imposes you by chance.

In Peter Hujar's family there was Ethyl, a name that in Old English was feminine and whispered nobility. And together with Ethyl there were people like Vince Aletti, Susan Sontag, Fran Lebowitz, Divine, John Waters, William Burroughs, Paul Morrissey. What wasn't there, lucky them, was the quote. Everything was authentic at the time, true alternative culture opposed to true dominant culture, true and powerful drag freedom against true patriarchy, but let's also add matriarchy, of a white, racist, macho society.

And those immaculate gloves on Ethyl's arms and that glove that protected the hand of an Elizabethan gentleman, then, what do they tell us? According to legend, gloves were invented by the Graces, who rushed to wrap scented bandages around Venus's bleeding fingers. In a moment, gloves, historically a fashion of barbarian peoples, become a sign of authority. Variants: receiving a glove was an oath of imperial and papal loyalty, throwing a glove at a defendant was declaring his guilt, and it was enough to touch the opponent's cheek with a glove for the duel to begin. Here, I would like to do the same, I would like to lovingly remove Ethyl's white gloves and I would like to declare guilty a society that homogenises and digests everything, including the revolts of the past and the ruins that were a welcoming setting for those revolts. I would like to do justice in the most chivalrous way and avenge a revolution that a community of artists paid for with their lives, and which today has become a cheerful and very expensive ride on the fashion catwalks.

Albert Watson, *Steve Jobs, Cupertino, California*, 2006, United States



Hiroshi Sugimoto, *Distorted Universal Vision (Self-Portrait),* 2003, United States

I have always wished to make my life an experiment, to feel and understand, to experience to the limit and gain awareness. If I think about the Casa Museo that I created together with my wife, Rossella Colombari, I think precisely of this, of a very long experiment, started thirty years ago, that today represents our world between photography, design, architecture. This is why, when Francesca Malgara, director of the MIA Photo Fair (www.miafairbnpparibas.it), invited us to take part in this event, dedicated this year to the theme of dialogue, we accepted with joy. The challenge was to imagine a booth that reproduces our home "in vitro".

The direction of this existential laboratory is up to Rossella, she is the one who selected some pieces from her design collection and exposed them to my "reagent" par excellence, photography. And it is Rossella, again, who chose the geographical extremes of the exhibition space to better contain it and at the same time, paradoxically, to open it up beyond measure. The themes of our stand, key themes of the Casa Museo, are West and East, their encounter-clash, mutual fascination, contamination, inspiration. Among the many images on display, two faces, two opposite experiences punctuate the dialogue: on one side Hiroshi Sugimoto in his self-portrait, just entered into the collection, and on the other Steve Jobs in the historic portrait by Albert Watson, which I purchased many years ago, not only because like everyone else I consider Steve Jobs one of the absolute geniuses of our time, but because his conception of time was also fundamental to my personal and professional development. According to Albert Watson, Steve Jobs had given him an hour, no more, because he had other things to do and he hated photographers. To surprise him, Watson replied that he would portray him in just thirty minutes. Jobs just had to imagine himself in a meeting, leaning his head slightly toward four or five people who didn't understand his strategy, even though it was the right one. « Easy, it's what I do every day » Steve replied. Now, this burning through time, this experiencing the future and giving it a shape, when others can't see beyond the present, I felt it deeply, and if I have to briefly define the origin of every Western neurosis, I think precisely of the constant anxiety of projecting oneself beyond the present moment because life is too short.

It's a neurosis, mine too, and at a certain point I needed something different. I needed Hiroshi Sugimoto's time, his contemplative gaze that had already transformed the duration of a film into the absolute light of a movie screen. Light is our story, maybe. I too try the same experiment every day and try to align my inner time with the inexorable flow of the story that contains us all. I too would like Sugimoto's gaze, where the eyes see nothing but light because they have brought the splendour of inner peace to the surface. I try, and if I feel like I'm chomping at the bit, I think of Steve Jobs and that's fine too.

Eadweard Muybridge, *Femme à la balle*, 1887, England

Barbara Morgan, *Martha Graham: War Theme,* 1941, United States

Just before offering herself to Barbara Morgan's lens, Martha Graham had contracted - her back curved like a bow, her face pressed to her chest, her torso angled toward the ground, her body bent, her lungs slowly emptying. Then, suddenly, that same body stretched out, releasing energy, blossoming - her skirt turning into a sculpture of wind. Her chin lifted, becoming another mons Venus, reversed, almost a tribute to the geometric eroticism of Man Ray, and a precursor to that of Robert Mapplethorpe. Contraction and release, folding and explosion: these are words, experiences, emotions through which I've shaped my own feelings. When I came across this striking image of Martha Graham, chosen instinctively for its rarity and dramatic power, even more so than the iconic *The Kick*, I realized I had found a kindred spirit in the extraordinary American dancer. I'd even say an accomplice, someone who helped me reflect on the presence of dance, its necessary presence, in my collection. Dance as movement, « because movement never lies » said Martha Graham, who perhaps also drew on the teachings of her father, an alienist, a forerunner of the modern psychiatrist and a scholar of the relationship between movement and the psyche. But dance does not speak truth only when it mirrors life. It tells the truth when it allows life to « use our body, and sometimes this experience is pleasant, other times frightening, but always inevitable » continued the great American choreographer. To use the body to tell one's story, to reveal oneself, to transcend codes… how modern.

In the late 1920s, Martha Graham debuted with an all-female company, and only in 1938 did she begin to welcome male dancers. Her goal was to reclaim the female body as an artistic medium - "powerful and autonomous" - and to develop a method that originates from the womb. "A moving from the vagina," Graham said. From that epicentre, with a spasm, an internal whiplash, energy radiates outward to every part of the body. I like to emphasize this female centrality, this carnality of womanhood, rooted in the earth and spiraling upward from there. A woman who sometimes falls, as in Barbara Morgan's portrait, not by chance taken from the ballet *War Theme*, which echoes Robert Capa's *Falling Soldier*, and rises again, rotating her torso and head as if to follow every star in the sky.

The revolution of the 20th century is a woman like this: her task is to free us all, women and men alike. And then another great "American" photographer comes to mind, though English by birth, Eadweard Muybridge. A revolutionary, yes, but still rooted in the 19th century and its positivism, breaking movement down moment by moment in search of a hidden truth and beauty too fast for the naked eye to perceive. Muybridge places time under a microscope; Graham hides it within her body. And when Martha dances, it is that distant darkness, sometimes graceful, sometimes terrifying, that comes to light.

Sasha Stone, *Untitled (from "Speaking Shoes" series)*, 1932, Belgium

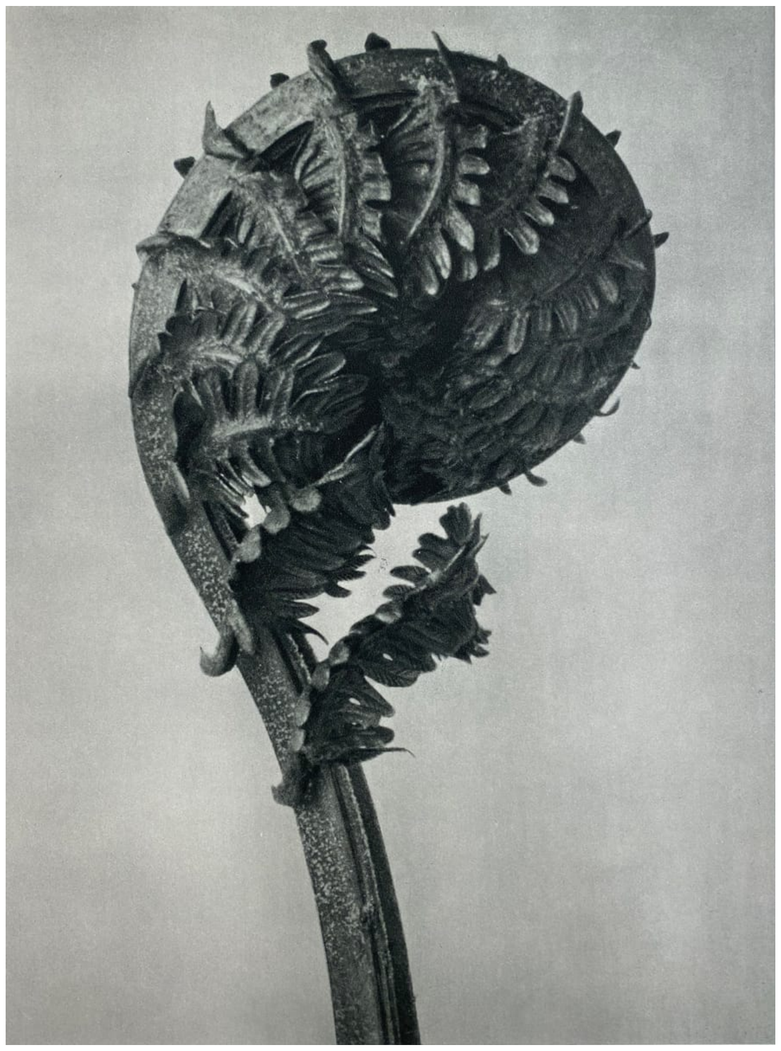
Todd Hido, *#3878*, 2005, United States

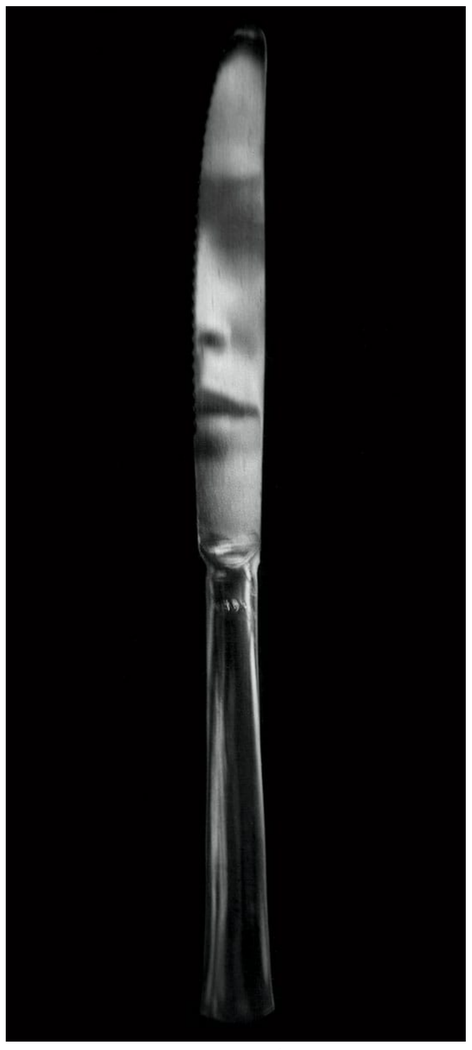
I never liked glass slippers, nor did I like those who wore them. Too fragile, needlessly precious, because they belong to fairy tales and their moral purity. My shoes, the ones I bow to like a vassal of fetishism, are quite different. They know asphalt, dust, the weight of a body, even the lightest, most alluring one. They are shoes that « speak » like those imagined by Sasha Stone, and perhaps once worn by his wife Cami. They were fashionable shoes in the 1930s, worn - and willingly immortalised - by Kiki de Montparnasse, Sonia Delaunay, and all the marvelous *filles de joie* that the mysterious Monsieur X loved to photograph in a *maison close* in Pigalle. A strand of pearls, sometimes a silk slip, the sex opened like a seashell and always those shoes, marking a man's desire and the lives of many women. Bare feet had no place there, too vulgar, too plain. The nudity they dreamed of was something else: it meant undressing chance itself and stepping into the intimacy of its game. It meant following that rhythm when it turned into the click of high heels on the sidewalk; then all it took was to climb the stairs, open a door, and if it was the door of a *maison close*, let the rest unfold.

To these shoes - which are, above all, a double object, an object that defines a shape while also bearing the imprint of what it holds - Sasha Stone added an extra element: another road, this time paved with signs, meant for us to walk. The road where Stone's feminine ghost strolls is paved with cards, and each card carries its own meaning. In that hand left abandoned on a table during a « reading » while the fortune teller pieces together the fragments of a vision, lie the ages of the masculine: a King of Spades and of Diamonds, a Jack of Spades, the Three of Hearts that marks the unfolding of every love story, the Six of Spades that brings sorrow, and then the Seven of Diamonds - success and money - and more hidden still, the Ace of Clubs, fortune, blossoming.

That the Ace is the most important card - the one up the sleeve - is a creation of the French Revolution, because the individual, the citizen, the singular being, with all their complexity and infinite roads ahead, is worth more than the King of any suit: hearts, spades, clubs, diamonds. The Ace sits atop the pyramid and « cuts » through any other card, just as the guillotine cut off the heads of kings, and as chance slices through any excess of calculation. « Chance is the only legitimate sovereign of the universe » Honoré de Balzac once said. And it is this sovereign, the most unpredictable, the most generous and indifferent, who also governs our intimacy, our fleeting or lasting encounters, perhaps in a Todd Hido interior, where everything exists as a suspension in colour and light. And surely, the King of Chance would never have worn the red-soled shoes of Louis XIV, but rather the worn, weary, utterly human shoes of Sasha Stone.

Karl Blossfeldt, *Untitled (from the series "Urformen der Kunst")*, 1929, Germany





Alain Fleischer, *L'Âme du Couteau*, 1982, France

Albert Einstein once said that coincidence « is God's way of remaining anonymous ». Now, I don't know whether God - a most discreet one, if anything - is truly behind that mysterious, unconscious, inexplicable force that draws certain lives to certain places where life flows more intensely. Still I can't help but be struck by the discovery that Karl Blossfeldt and Alain Fleischer began imagining and creating the images in this visual dialogue in the same city: Rome. Karl Blossfeldt arrived in Rome in 1890 at the age of twenty-five, supported by a scholarship. He was then a sculpture student at the Universität der Künste, the Berlin Academy of Fine Arts. A hundred years later, in 1985, Alain Fleischer also came to the Eternal City, now in his forties and the recipient of a photography fellowship from Villa Medici, the seat of the French Academy. Back in 1884, Blossfeldt had met his mentor, Moritz Meurer - a painter born in the very year photography was invented, 1839. Meurer was one of the first to study the morphology and structural principles of plants, turning their ornamental richness into both an artistic method and a teaching philosophy. In 1981, in Saint-Étienne, during a major retrospective of his work, Fleischer met Danielle Schirman - who from that moment on would become his wonderful life companion. A filmmaker herself, she too went on to receive the Villa Medici fellowship in 1987. Two artists, two deep connections, one city. Immersed in Rome's creative energy - regenerative in its endless variety of forms and the flowing of centuries - both Blossfeldt and Fleischer saw their destinies shift.

Under Meurer's guidance, Karl Blossfeldt had taken his very first photographs of flowers in Rome, highlighting their forms and that unique inner blend of function and raw, powerful beauty. It was this early work that would later lead to his artistic research, eventually collected in the 1928 volume *Urformen der Kunst (Art Forms in Nature)*, one of the most influential books of the twentieth century - so much so that even Walter Benjamin engaged with its ideas. Alain Fleischer - semiotician, anthropologist, writer in the language of the Marquis de Sade, photographer and filmmaker - took things further. He transformed the reflective surfaces of objects - like a knife, for instance, where Danielle's face appears mirrored - into generators of new images.

Is it perhaps the love of nature, and love itself - for images, for the act of creation - that turns every artist into a demiurge, and binds such unique destinies together? I like to think so. And I like to believe that Rome has something to do with it. Too much intensity, too much time, too many images covering every surface and giving birth to new ones - not to be affected by it seems impossible. And I'm reminded of yet another coincidence. In 1898, a few years after returning from Rome, Blossfeldt became a teacher at the very school where he had once been a student.

In 1997, Alain Fleischer founded, and has since directed, *Le Fresnoy - Studio National des Arts Contemporains*, where one of the youngest artists in my collection, Agata Wieczorek, trained. Rome, eternal teacher of life? Perhaps. But one thing is certain: Alain and Danielle never truly left Rome or its countryside. In their home, they grow beautiful plants and keep shaping their love in ever new forms.

Henri Manuel, *Maison centrale de Montpellier, scène de contention*, 1930 ca., France

Jacques Henri Lartigue, *Monte Carlo Beach, Août*, 1955, Monaco

That summer in Monte Carlo, seventy years ago, Capucine, Irwin Shaw, and Kirk Douglas – who at the time was playing Van Gogh in *Lust for Life* – had arranged to meet. So had John Schlesinger, actor and director, who would win an Oscar in 1970 for *Midnight Cowboy*, and the eternal Picasso who, in those very days, was submitting himself to the torment of acupuncture needles administered by Dr. Jeanne Creff.

What united the dazzling fates of that merry band of men and women was Jacques Henri Lartigue, who had photographed every celebrity, each guest and friend, pasting their portraits into his famous albums, just as he had been doing for more than fifty years. On one page – number 61, in the album dated 1955 – there suddenly appears, anonymous among so many stars, the body of a woman, delightfully tanned and beheaded. The crime, I believe, was having « killed » someone with the beauty of her golden bikini.

A few years earlier, even Rita Hayworth had worn the same lamé swimsuit, but it lacked a crucial detail: the black string – mournful, almost tacky – that both joined and divided the folds of fabric, offering the path to the secret that the fabric itself was hiding. It would have taken just a brush of the fingers against the tie, a furious climb along the switchbacks of the coveted mons Venus, a pause of penitence on the cold metal of the eyelets, and from there a burst forward – to the summit – to undo the knot, devilishly tangled by salt and sea water, and go beyond. Beyond all that bliss.

From 1928 to 1932, Henri Manuel, official portraitist of the French government, was commissioned by the Ministry of Justice to document twenty-one prisons and six reformatories across every region of the country. In his extensive reportage, intended to support the reform of the penal system, Manuel also photographed the female inmates of Montpellier prison. I do not know the name of the woman captured from behind, in the corner of her cell – almost a preview of the kind of set Irving Penn would later favour, nor do I know her crime. But I do know her punishment: a straitjacket, that prison within the prison, invented around 1770 by a French upholsterer named Guilleret. If only I could have, with the same longing that surprised me while admiring Lartigue's image, unfastened the strap of that armour, released that body – perhaps sick, mad, but now finally free, as each of us should be. To lose and rediscover the thread of our own story, to stretch and knot the thread that holds every image together, to retreat into the prison of one's own neurosis and then unravel in the pleasure of new discoveries. That's what a collector does, every single day.

Arnold Genthe, *Eleonora Duse*, 1923, United States

Lucien Waléry, *Untitled (from "Nus" series)*, 1920 ca., France

And one day I had to choose. I pictured myself in the theatre, *that* theatre which is now my home, and I imagined them stepping onto the stage together: Eleonora Duse and Sarah Bernhardt. And in that moment, I realized that the two were incompatible: one belonged to me, and the other – however sublime – perhaps did not. I chose Duse, the divine one, the first woman in the world to appear on the cover of *Time*, the first actress who allowed her characters to possess her, making her body an instrument through which they could be brought to life. « *You must forget yourself* » Duse used to say, ahead of the most revolutionary acting methods of the twentieth century, just think of Stanislavski.

Sarah Bernhardt was the opposite: whether she wore the garments of Phaedra, Cleopatra, the Lady of the Camellias, or Hamlet, she was always herself, unmistakable, statuesque even in the fluctuations of sexuality. Absolute ego, without a mask other than her own, eternal.

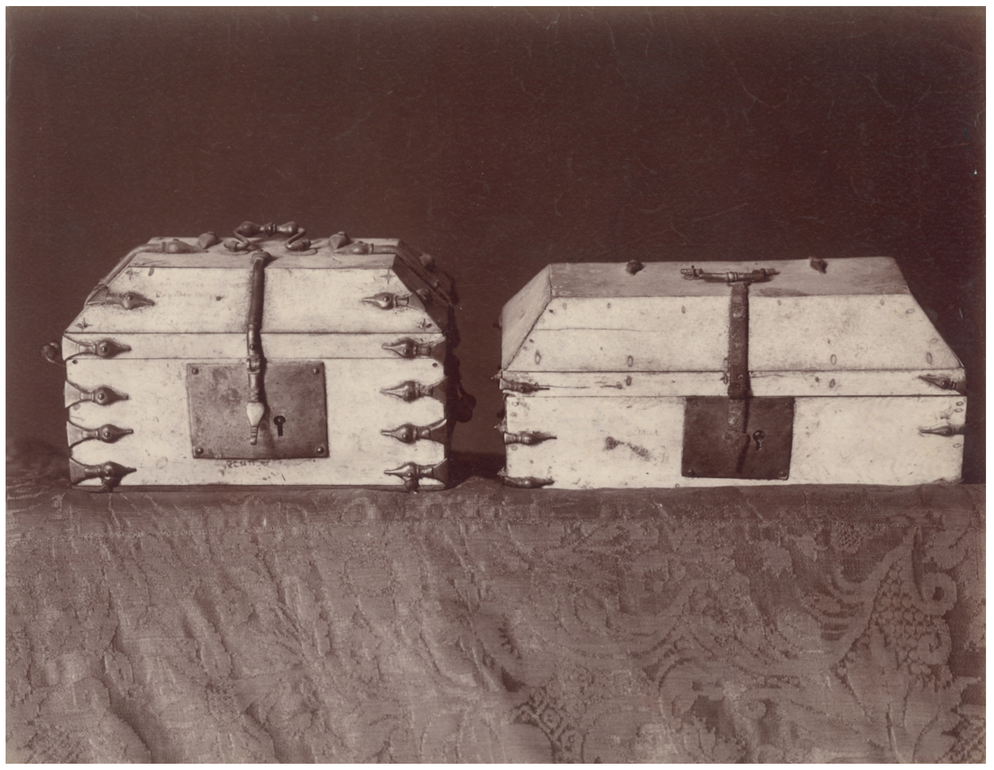
I believe that Arnold Genthe, an extraordinary and vibrant artist, meant precisely this when, in 1906, in the aftermath of San Francisco's devastating earthquake, he photographed the French actress in a carriage among the city's ruins. A catastrophe, and a woman with a magnificent hat, a feather boa, impassive. I can only imagine how Eleonora would have reacted – the woman who wept and ran across the stage, wild with emotion, and who, one day, to reveal the true soul of her character – the Princess of Baghdad – unfastened her corset and bared her breast. All of it unscripted, just as it was unscripted for a woman of that era not to wear makeup, neither on stage nor anywhere else.

Arnold Genthe met Eleonora Duse in New York in 1923, during what would be her final tour. The German photographer, originally a philologist and polyglot of both ancient and modern languages, had arrived in San Francisco in 1895, at the age of twenty-six, as tutor to the son of Baron Heinrich von Schroeder. Fifteen years later, after the experience of a long reportage in the city's Chinatown, he had become one of the most innovative and sought-after portrait photographers. A psychological portrait, slightly out of focus, almost like a vibration. New York, a neurotic metropolis, welcomed his new style.

When Genthe met her, Duse was sixty-three, her hair silver like her complexion, her profile emerging from the shadows, and her lips about to part in a sigh, a farewell. Around the same time, Stanisław Julian Ignacy Ostroróg, who in Paris would take the name Lucien Waléry – another invented destiny – produced a series of nudes, one of which was headless: a body awaiting a role. In exactly the same years, in Italy, Luigi Pirandello published his play *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. Duse was all of this. She was a body offered without reserve, even to the blows of love. Each time she transformed into *that* character, the only one among the infinite faces that crowded her psyche. And she was a woman capable of forgetting herself in order to remember other lives.

To act, painfully, is to make room for « the other » who dwells within us. Duse forever.

Kiki Smith, *Untitled (Upside down body with beads)*, 1995, United States



Giacomo Brogi, *Palermo, Palazzo Reale, Antico cofanetto della Cappella Palatina*, 1880 ca., Italy

To mystery – its contemplation, its fear, and therefore its desire – we are drawn early in life. A box, deceitfully called a gift, wrapped in that innocence and lightness to which unaware adults expose the eyes of their heirs: this is where the obsession begins to take root, in both mind and body.
Every tightly sealed wrapping challenges the senses, and at the same time, every container, seemingly inaccessible, invites a deep breath.
Calm! – both divine and diabolical practice – for secrets are revealed gradually, with the pain of waiting and distance serving as their reward.
This is what gifts teach us, where the gift is above all the art of imagination: to rush in, tear the paper, force a lock: it's madness. I was born restless, with a fire I had to learn to temper over the years. The proof? It took nearly thirty years for the image Kiki Smith created of her renowned sculpture *Upside Down Body with Beads* to find its companion – its elective and equally secret sister – in my collection.
The « encounter » took place just a few months ago in Palermo, in the Treasury of the Palatine Chapel, where an extraordinary collection of ivory boxes is kept, jewels of 13th-century Arab-Norman art, perhaps once containing other jewels. Giacomo Brogi, a Florentine, photographed them toward the end of the 19th century, a refined yet innocent souvenir of the Grand Tour. At first glance, the image is composed, quiet. And yet those pointed studs, like sharp claws clutching the box's corners as if it were flesh, that iron lock – simple and brutal – and the ivory that recalls the whiteness of skin, reveal such more. These boxes are places of power, hidden and precious, just like our cranial vault: the inviolable chest of our secrets, urges, memories, which the body, both a physical and political reality, then sets in motion, processes, digests, expels.
Our body, precisely, is Kiki Smith's kingdom. No other artist, in the New York struck by the AIDS epidemic, celebrated human fragility as she did: its fragmentary nature, its being life and illness at once. A structure of bones that supports and gives form, but also fluid: semen that fertilizes, infection that drains, excrement that completes the nutritional cycle. And our cranial box, faceless in Kiki Smith's work, just like the caskets that once guarded the treasures of the Norman kings, from Roger I to Emperor Frederick II, to the last descendant, Queen Maria of Sicily, what history do they celebrate? They are a gift: hard to accept, but necessary in order to reach awareness and maturity. Someone offering you the certainty that not everything can be known or controlled – every event, every desire. Someone inviting you to respect the indecipherable, the uncontrollable, the formless, even within yourself. A king's gift. An artist's gift.

Bettina Rheims, *Bénédicte, London*
(from "Modern Lovers" series), 1989, England

Agnès Geoffray, *Tout geste est renversement*, 2024, France

I was won over by the title, *Modern Lovers*, as if different eras, ancient and contemporary, could coexist within the sublime act of loving. Loving in modern times: a theme Bettina Rheims offered me in this way, with the cruel grace of her monumental photographs and the androgynous beings she portrayed between 1989 and 1990. Those were years of dazzling, booming economies, and at the same time of profound, threatening shifts, when the AIDS pandemic had darkened the joy of seduction and the freedom to meet, and when an army of adolescents began searching for an escape from it all. In their bodies, in their faces, in the provocative melancholy of their eyes, in that Mona Lisa smile – neither masculine nor feminine – a new balance emerged, a distance from the roles that until then had governed our adult game. *Modern Lovers* made me feel like a citizen of another world, of another era in which everything – despite my thirty-five years at the time – already felt defined, precise, irrevocable. I too wanted to step away from all of that. Like Charlie Chaplin in *Modern Times*, released in 1936 – another essential reflection on our century – I wanted a new path. I wanted to become a wanderer, and I wanted a little rascal by my side. What I wanted – and what I only understand today – was to feel that eternal energy, that eternal openness to tomorrow and all its uncertainties which youth, that green age still in formation, grants each of us at least once in a lifetime. I wanted it forever.

When, last summer at the Rencontres d'Arles, I came across Agnès Geoffray's work, I felt – thirty-five years after the release of *Modern Lovers* – that same feeling, that same disorientation in front of those female bodies: so young, so constrained, and so rebellious. They were actresses, I knew that; it was a staging, and therefore at a different distance from the « truth » of Bettina Rheims. But the script Agnès had offered her performers was extraordinary: to go back in time – but is it really a return to the past? – and to expose that male power, that repressive, moralistic paternalism which, in France, from the late nineteenth century to 1951, had locked away underage girls who were already too disobedient for their time in the so-called *Écoles de préservation pour jeunes filles*. What punished them then was their desire for independence, for freedom, for sensuality, judged as vice and perversion. What redeems them today are Agnès and her girls, who « swerve », a neologism coined by the artist, stepping courageously off the straight path laid out by others: flipping themselves upside down, legs in the air, leaping from walls and fences, running away barefoot, as if even shoes might restrain the body's natural euphoria. I look at these beings, all so modern; I look at myself, and I wish for their anger, their tenacity, perhaps even their age. I wish I could fall with them, lose my balance, and for a few meters walk on my hands too, bare against the asphalt.

Christopher Makos, *Andy Warhol - Lady Warhol (from "Altered Image" series),* 1981, United States

I wanted them all – every version, every nuance: Andy Warhol with those marvellous, impeccably groomed hands, resting on his jeans, on his hip, vaguely over his pubis, and intertwined with one another. Those hands that translate the vast feminine, from Botticelli's Venus to Marilyn Monroe for her blondness, to Faye Dunaway for her cruelty. At last I own one of the most beautiful Lady Warhols, a splendid portrait by Christopher Makos, interpreter, friend, and accomplice for ten years of the genius, of the man-woman who told us that we are all copies and all originals, « famous » for at least fifteen minutes of our lives. This dialogue lives in this way, within itself, like a mirror, a hallucination, multiplying in the contact sheet that Christopher kindly offered me to accompany his portrait. And as I look Andy Warhol in the eyes – a rare concession, since the king of Pop Art shunned the gaze of others – I also retrace the history of my collection, which, moreover, by coincidence – though do coincidences really exist? – shares the same initials as Christopher Ernesto Makos: CEM.

A brief note of chronicle. In 1981 Andy Warhol and Christopher Makos decided to reinterpret *Rrose Sélavy*, the famous portrait Marcel Duchamp commissioned from Man Ray while dressed in women's clothing – a work included in my collection. And once again, since coincidences do not exist, Christopher had been Man Ray's assistant in Paris and, in his book *White Trash* published in 1977, he reproduced the great surrealist's passport. Our passport for travelling through history – our own history too, the most intimate one – is instead Warhol's white, Kabuki-like face, framed by one of seven women's wigs and one men's wig, which Christopher had purchased from Jean Louis on 57th Street. The shoot – 349 frames divided into sixteen contact sheets – took place at the Factory, the last one, at 860 Broadway, Union Square. Today, in what can only be called a desecration given the sacredness of the site, it houses a Pecto branch, a shop for dogs and cats. I speak of a sacred place because, at the back of the studio where Warhol painted, against one of the walls draped with a white backdrop, a profound, initiatory – indeed sacred – transformation takes place. Of this metamorphosis Warhol allows us to contemplate the extremes: the face of a woman and the body of a man, dressed in Andy's classic wardrobe – white button-down shirt, checked tie, jeans, cowboy boots. Halston, the famous fashion designer, had proposed an evening gown: skirt, lace, décolletage. Warhol refused. It was not the drag effect he was after – not a caricature, but an alteration, a process, a becoming. Not by chance, the series is titled *Altered Image*.

The makeup required two hours: heavy, theatrical foundation, milky on Warhol's skin, which, according to Makos, was already of a dazzling luminosity. Then, slowly, like an image lying on the seabed of our mind, Warhol's feminine alteration began to take shape and rise to the surface: first the eyes, naturally blue and darkly lined; then the eyebrows, covered and redrawn; and finally the mouth, scarlet even though we do not see it. Incidentally, the makeup artist who transformed Warhol was the same one who made up the wealthy clients who commissioned his very expensive portraits. That, too, was an alteration: transforming oneself into the money that fame as a great artist guarantees, becoming a commodity of exchange. But I would not trade my Warhol – the Warhol who made me discover the « multiples » within myself – for anyone.