



The Matele Hills from
Kabragalla Estate, Old Coffee Fields,
Knightley House (Kallibooka district)
Hastings, N.S.W.
Gordon C.
2nd

Print Room Acquisitions

- IRIS BLOKKER, HINDE HAEST, ERIK HINTERDING, MARIJE JANSSEN,
CHARLES KANG, HUIGEN LEEFLANG, AUSTÉJA MACKELAITÉ,
HANS ROOSEBOOM AND JOYCE ZELÉN •

I GIOVANNI BATTISTA FONTANA (Verona 1541-1587 Innsbruck)
Madonna with Christ Child Making a Sign of Blessing in a Landscape, 1573
Etching and engraving, 199 x 160 mm
Signed and dated lower left: *Battista fontana* / 1573

This etching provides a direct, intimate view of the Virgin and Child, set in a landscape. With an introspective gaze, seemingly lost in thought, Mary sits in front of a large tree with her body facing right. The Christ Child, making a sign of blessing, gazes intently in the opposite direction, ostensibly peering at someone left of the picture plane. The tree and a traversing fence separate the composition's foreground from a simple building and a vista of trees in the background. This demarcation is an unmistakable reference to the *hortus conclusus*, or enclosed garden, a traditional motif symbolizing Mary's virginity.

The concentrated composition and the monumental figures rendered with strong light-and-dark contrasts set before a landscape background are characteristic of Veneto printmaking. Various painters in Venice, but also in nearby Verona, took up the etching needle in addition to the brush. Battista Franco, father and son Del Moro and other masters were thus able to build

an oeuvre of painterly etchings after their own designs. Already for some time, the Rijksmuseum Print Room has displayed a growing interest in Veneto printmaking as a collection area, most notably since its acquisition of a sixteenth-century Venetian print album (see Joyce Zelen in *The Rijksmuseum Bulletin* 63 (2015), pp. 3-52). Compiled in Venice around 1568-70 for Johann Georg I Zobel von Giebelstadt, a young German prelate, this album contains not only works by Del Moro and Franco, but also a number of exceedingly rare etchings by Giovanni Battista Fontana.

Fontana created the present etching during his time at the Austrian court of Archduke Ferdinand II of Tyrol (1529-1595), from 1562 in Vienna and from 1573 in Innsbruck, where he was appointed court painter to the renowned art-loving nobleman. Dating from that same year, the etching may very well have been made to demonstrate the printmaker's skill to the

archduke, a known print enthusiast. Most striking about this print is the unprecedented quality and freshness of the impression, which looks as if it has just come off the press. Against the white of the paper, the etched lines stand out sharply. The light-grey tones in the foreground and background were achieved by applying a so-called 'plate tone', i.e. a film of ink purposely left behind by printmakers prior to printing the copper plate. The result is a painterly effect more commonly employed by Veneto painter-etchers.

The etching is described together with a little over seventy other works in the first *catalogue raisonné* (1818) of Fontana's prints, compiled by print connoisseur Adam von Bartsch. Since Bartsch, however, no one has been able to localize an impression of this print, including the compilers of the *Illustrated Bartsch*, who therefore provided no illustration of it in their catalogue. The present impression, reproduced here for the first time, was discovered only recently. Stamped on the reverse is the collector's mark of the Cabinet Brentano-Birkenstock, established by Johann Melchior von Birckenstock (1738-1809), who from 1765 onwards assembled a first-rate collection of prints and drawings in Vienna. He was also a friend of other prominent collectors in Vienna, including Count Albert von Sachsen-Teschen (founder of the Albertina collection), and Bartsch, the 'Kurator' of the imperial print collections. This association raises the likelihood that Bartsch's description of Fontana's etching was based on this copy in the collection of his friend Von Birckenstock. Another impression of the same print is today preserved in the old princely Waldburg-Wolfegg collection.

HL

LITERATURE:

W.L. Strauss (ed.), *The Illustrated Bartsch*, vol. 1-, New York 1978-, vol. 32, p. 320, no. 2 ('Location undertermined')
 Adam von Bartsch, *Le Peintre Graveur*, 21 vols., Vienna 1803-21, vol. 16., p. 216, no. 2

PROVENANCE:

...; Cabinet Brentano-Birkenstock, Vienna (Lugt 345); ...; the dealer Nicolaas Teeuwisse, Berlin; from whom to the museum, 2025, with the support of the F.G. Waller-Fonds (inv. no. RP-P-2025-94).



2 ANONYMOUS, CIRCLE OF PIETER DE MOLIJN (London 1595-1661 Haarlem)

Star Singers (Three Kings Celebration), c. 1625-36
Pen and brush in brown, black chalk, 118 x 183 mm

It is Epiphany eve. A crowd of people gathers beneath a glowing star. In their midst a boy crouches, holding up a star-shaped paper lantern on a pole. To his right, a man pulls on the string that makes the star spin. They are accompanied by singing figures to their right and onlookers to their left, including a couple watching in delight from their doorway. In the foreground of the drawing, ecstatic children reach with outstretched hands towards the spectacle. Their infectious enthusiasm – perceptible though they are depicted from behind – conveys the joy of the celebrations to the beholder, attesting to the remarkable skill of the anonymous artist who created the scene.

From around 1600 onwards, Epiphany – or Twelfth Night – was celebrated as a traditional, though unofficial, holiday in the Netherlands. The commemoration of the three kings who followed the star to Bethlehem, bearing gifts for the Christ Child, originates in medieval church liturgy. During the sixteenth century, official processions and plays organized by the Church made way for folk celebrations held both indoors and in the streets, where merriment prevailed. Charity played an important role, with the so-called ‘star singers’ receiving gifts of food and money in return for their songs, as can be seen in the exchange between two figures on the drawing’s left side. Despite the ongoing restrictions on these unofficial festivities imposed by the Church, Twelfth Night continued to be celebrated among all levels of society.

The exuberant indoor feasting and drinking, during which one of the revellers would be crowned king – in reference to King Herod – was a popular subject primarily in painting, as affirmed by the many works by artists like Jan Steen and Jacob Jordaens. The theme of the star singers, however, was more popular in the graphic arts, as they presented an excellent opportunity for the artist to demonstrate his skill in creating dramatic lighting effects. In 1651, Rembrandt produced an etching in which two shining stars penetrate the deep darkness of night to illuminate a group of star singers (inv. no. RP-P-1962-55).

One of the earliest depictions of star singers is Jan van de Velde II’s 1630 engraving after Pieter de Molijn (inv. no. RP-P-1937-366). The print is probably the reason why the present drawing

was attributed to De Molijn. In his *catalogue raisonné* of De Molijn’s drawings, Hans-Ulrich Beck lists the drawing as an early work by the Haarlem artist. This attribution, however, has since been rejected. The dynamic composition, comprising a large group of figures, is remarkably well executed, while the brushwork demonstrates a strong mastery of light and shadow. Additionally, the endearingly round faces with their striking, open eyes, rendered in sweeping arcs, are uniquely characteristic. The same applies to the accentuated cheekbones. Neither of these stylistic features is convincingly reflected in De Molijn’s other drawings.

In the context of the present drawing, one specific print is of particular interest (inv. no. RP-P-OB-19.905). Dated 1636 and signed ‘A. Theod’ – identified by Hollstein in 1984 as one ‘A(braham?) Theodore’ – this unique sheet is the sole surviving print by this otherwise unknown engraver. The connection between the print and the drawing is apparent, though there are some significant differences. For example, no less than seven figures have been added to the print, detracting from the carefully balanced composition of its drawn counterpart. Given the difference in style, it is unlikely that both works were created by the same artist. For the time being, the identity of the draughtsman who created this cosy tableau will therefore remain unknown.

1B

LITERATURE:

- Benjamin Perronet, *Catalogue of Old Master and Swedish Drawings around 1900*, Paris 2025, pp. 26-29
Hans-Ulrich Beck, *Pieter Molyn, 1595-1661: Katalog der Handzeichnungen*, Doornspijk 1998, no. 4
Eberhard W. Kornfeld, François Lachenal, Monika Lichtenfeld and Frits Lugt, *Holländische Zeichnungen des 17. Jahrhunderts*, Ingelheim 1964, no. 52



PROVENANCE:

...; collection Count Moriz von Fries (1777-1826), Vienna (L. 2903); ...; collection Maurice Delacre (1862-1938), Ghent; his widow, Magdeleine Delacre, née Fanyau (1875-1960); ? sale, Maurice Delacre, Bern (Gutekunst & Klipstein), 21 June 1949 *sqq*; ? acquired by Eberhard W. Kornfeld (1923-2023), Bern (L. 913b); his sale, Bern (Galerie Kornfeld), 12 September, 2024, no. 2142, as Pieter de Molijn, to the dealer Benjamin Peronnet, Paris; from whom to the museum, 2025, with the support of the I.Q. van Regteren Altena Fonds/Rijksmuseum Fonds

(inv. no. RP-T-2025-24).

3 JAN LIEVENS (Leiden 1607-1674 Amsterdam)

Standing Man Wearing a Cloak, c. 1629-30

Graphite and white chalk on grey prepared paper, 196 x 114 mm

Although his fame was later eclipsed by that of his friend Rembrandt, the young Jan Lievens had deeply impressed his contemporaries. Apprenticed to his first master at the age of eight, he was something of a child prodigy, who, in the words of his biographer Jan Jansz Orlers (1570-1646) 'astounded numerous connoisseurs of art' with his 'consummate skill' as early as the age of twelve. By his early twenties, when the present drawing was made, Lievens was a rising star among the Leiden artists of his generation, with patrons like Frederik Hendrik (1584-1647), Stadholder of Holland, and ambitions for an international career.

Standing Man Wearing a Cloak is small in dimension but monumental in its effect. As was typical for Lievens, the figure is not directly preparatory for any known painting or print and seems to have been conceived as an independent, exploratory study. Nevertheless, the man's expressive, pathos-laden face and heavy cloak, rendered with close attention to the effects of light and dark, clearly links the drawing to biblical scenes – a major preoccupation for the artist throughout the sixteen twenties. The figure's pose, together with close visual affinities to a drawing of St Peter in the Albertina in Vienna (inv. no. 8906), has led scholars to identify him as St John the Evangelist. However, the complete absence of specific attributes, along with the fact that St John is traditionally depicted – including in other works by Lievens – as a young, clean-shaven man, casts doubt on this identification. In fact, the man in the present drawing seems most closely related to the bearded, upward-gazing and deeply emotionally charged figure of Christ in the *Raising of Lazarus* (1631, Brighton & Hove Museums, inv. no. FA000001), one of the most innovative history paintings from the artist's early period.

The late sixteen twenties marked an experimental phase in Lievens's development as a draughtsman. Working in close collaboration – and in competition – with Rembrandt, he employed a wide range of media, from pen and ink and washes to various chalks and, as seen in the present sheet, graphite. The technique of preparing paper with a light wash can almost certainly be traced to his teacher, Pieter Lastman (1583-1633). Like Rembrandt – who had also studied with the

Amsterdam painter – Lievens adopted Lastman's practice of tinting his papers with a wash, especially when making figure drawings in red chalk. In the present sheet, he used a light-grey wash to establish a mid-tone, upon which both darker and lighter tones were layered to effectively convey the impression of a monumental, three-dimensional form.

AM

LITERATURE:

Bernard Schnackenburg, *Jan Lievens: Friend and Rival of the Young Rembrandt with a Catalogue Raisonné of His Early Leiden Work, 1623-1632*, Petersberg 2016, pp. 102, 282-83

PROVENANCE:

...; ? London art market (as Pieter Lastman); anonymous sale, Amsterdam (Christie's), 14 November 1994, no. 46 (as Dutch school, first half of the 17th century); ...; anonymous sale, Amsterdam (Christie's), 1 November 1996, no. 116 (as Dutch school, first half of the 17th century); ...; Bilbao, private collection; from whom to Milan, private collection; from whom to the museum, 2025, through the mediation of the dealer Sabrier & Paunet, Paris, with the support of the I.Q. van Regteren Altena Fonds/Rijksmuseum Fonds (inv. no. RP-T-2025-103).



- 4 Ludovicus Gladialo (active c. 1692-1703)
Landscape with Ruin, c. 1700
 Paper, 85 x 112 mm
Pendant with Adoration of the Shepherds, 1702
 Paper, gilded brass, glass, 79 x 68 mm

In recent years, the art of papercutting has drawn renewed attention as a full-fledged area of collecting within the Rijksmuseum. This re-evaluation was accompanied by a substantial expansion of the collection, most notably through the purchase of forty papercuts in 2024 from the collection of Jan Peter and Joke (†) Verhave, both esteemed experts on the art of Dutch papercutting.

The absolute showpiece of this acquisition is a miniature papercutting, measuring only 8.5 by 11.2 centimetres, with a pastoral scene of a hunter and a second figure strolling near a monumental ruin, with a monkey and a variety of birds visible in the surrounding trees. The scene is framed by a finely executed ornamental border with vines and flowers. Another exceptional work, acquired by the Fine Arts department in 2023, is unmistakably by the same hand: likewise a miniature papercutting, with the dimensions 7.9 by 6.8 centimetres, mounted between two glass plates and set in an octagonal, gilt-brass pendant.

The central scene of the jewel features the Adoration of the Shepherds, set in a simple hut: two shepherds approach the manger in which the Christ Child lies sleeping; across from them, Mary kneels beside the makeshift crib, with Joseph standing behind her as the ox and ass look on. Monkeys and birds, similar to those in the paper-cut landscape with ruin, fill the trees surrounding this religious scene, framed by a Latin inscription meticulously cut into the paper, specifically, a line taken from Virgil's *Georgics* – 'IN TENVI LABOR AT TENVIS NON GLORIA' (My labour is humble, but the glory is not) – followed by the date 'ANNO DOMINI 1702'. A second inscription, enclosed within the outermost border, dedicates the pendant to Cosimo III de' Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany. Between the two inscriptions, a decorative floral band contains eight medallions, each filled with a winged cherub head.

The two miniatures, among the most refined surviving papercuttings from this period, display the same markedly high technical and aesthetic mastery. Every square millimetre is minutely detailed, executed with a razor-sharp

knife or a needle filed down to a cutting blade. The extreme level of detail raises the question of whether the maker used a magnifying glass, a hypothesis more commonly made with comparable micro-fine paper-cut works.

For many years, the two works were attributed to the Amsterdam-born artist Johannes van Achelom (1632/33-1711), the sole paper-cutter possessing a documented career at the court of Cosimo III de' Medici in Florence. Archival sources confirm that Van Achelom had served as court paper-cutter and chamberlain, and that he had produced several paper-cut portraits and coats of arms for the Medici family. The exceptional quality and clear stylistic coherence of the present works, together with the dedication to Cosimo on the Rijksmuseum pendant, were factors contributing to the long-held attribution.

Recent discoveries, however, have led to a thorough revision of this attribution. In his book on the art of papercutting, titled *Het scherp van de snede* (2023), Jan Peter Verhave devoted a chapter solely to Van Achelom. But in a brief epilogue added just prior to the study's publication, he announced the discovery of new information regarding two paper-cut works preserved in the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga in Lisbon, both closely related to the Rijksmuseum pieces in style and one apparently bearing the signature 'Ludovicus facibat'. The stylistic similarities have led to the reattribution of the present works to this master paper-cutter. Further research has since greatly expanded Ludovicus's known oeuvre from six works to the current number of thirteen, three of which are signed and four dated (between 1692 and 1703). One recently identified work, acquired by the National Museum in Switzerland, even bears the artist's full name: Ludovicus Gladialo. At the present time, the true identity and origin associated with this Latinized name remain elusive. Future archival research, however, is expected to garner new insights.

JZ



RP-P-2024-1187

LITERATURE:

Erik Bijzet, *Provenances: Erik Bijzet Sculpture and Works of Art 10 Years*, Edam 2025

Jan Peter Verhave, *Het scherp van de snede: Vier eeuwen papierknipkunst in Nederland*, Zwolle 2023, pp. 28-33

Joke and Jan Peter Verhave, 'De Nederlands-Italiaanse knipkunstenaar Joannes van Achelom omstreeks 1700', *Oud Holland* 128 (2015), pp. 147-62

Joke and Jan Peter Verhave, 'Een speurtocht naar knipkunst', *Knip-Pers* 4 (2015), pp. 9-11

PROVENANCE:

...; the dealer A. Aardewerk Antiquair Juwelier, Amsterdam from whom purchased by Jan Peter Verhave (1942) and Catharina Johanna Wilhelmina (Joke) Verhave, née Van Duijn (1945-2020), Malden, 2008; from whom to the museum, 2024, with the support of the F.G. Waller-Fonds

(inv. no. RP-P-2024-1187).

...; sale, Amsterdam (Christie's), 3 April 2003, no. 885, to a private collector, The Hague, 2003; from whom purchased by the dealer Erik Bijzet Sculpture and Works of Art, Edam, 2022; from whom to the museum, 2023

(inv. no. BK-2022-253).



BK-2022-253

5 GEORGE ROMNEY (Dalton-in-Furness 1734-1802 Kendal)

Mother and Child with Attendant, c. 1775-80

Brush with brown wash over pencil, 288 x 200 mm

George Romney is best known as one of the most accomplished portraitists active in Britain in the late eighteenth century. Alongside his successful professional practice, however, he maintained a lifelong commitment to drawing, producing thousands of sheets that range from portrait studies to narrative scenes. This newly acquired drawing, datable on stylistic grounds to the later seventeen seventies, is a fine example of Romney's independent graphic practice and enriches the Rijksmuseum's representation of British eighteenth-century draughtsmanship.

The present drawing depicts a seated woman holding an infant – presumably her own child – on her lap, attended by a standing figure behind them. Executed with swift yet assured strokes of brown wash over light underdrawing in pencil, the sheet conveys a tender exchange between the three figures. The mother subtly extends her neck forward, bringing her face close to the infant at eye level, as if to coo or soothe. As the child responds with a tilted head, it stretches its left arm toward the attendant, who bends forward with an implied gesture of support or engagement.

Romney conveys such intimacy through vigorous execution. Working almost entirely in a single tone, he relies on bold, fluid strokes that simultaneously articulate the figures and bind them into a compact and coherent group. The energetic handling is tempered only by a lightly inscribed, almost whimsical squiggle across the mother's upper arm – perhaps indicating a floured sleeve – which introduces a moment of graphic levity within an otherwise forceful and economical composition.

A closely related composition is preserved at the Yale Center for British Art (inv. no. B1979.12.374), where Romney explored the same grouping of a seated mother, infant and attendant. In the case of the Yale sheet, the graphite underdrawing appears more tentative and worked over, suggesting an earlier stage in the artist's search for the relationship among the three figures. Romney produced variations of a given compositional idea on a few occasions, refining poses and interactions across multiple sheets. The Rijksmuseum drawing is likely one such variation. Here Romney achieves a more satisfying

balance between the articulation of the figures – most notably in the child's outstretched arm – and the coherence of the group, resulting in a composition of greater immediacy and unity.

The drawing's ultimate purpose remains uncertain. While the artist produced several painted portraits featuring mothers and children in tender interaction, the inclusion of an attendant makes it difficult to associate the present composition with a specific commission. Romney long aspired to the status of a history painter, an ambition expressed largely through his drawings with mythological, religious and literary subject matters. The present composition thus admits a potential devotional reading as the *Virgin and Child with attendant*. In the absence of clear attributes or documentary evidence, however, it is more reasonable to regard the sheet as an independent invention.

Stylistically and technically, the drawing bears a close affinity to works produced in the later seventeen seventies, following Romney's return from Italy (1773-75). Sheets from this period are characterized by vigorous applications of wash, a broader definition of form and a preference for solid, compact arrangements. The Rijksmuseum's acquisition of this drawing adds a characteristic example of Romney's mature graphic manner to its collection, while strengthening its representation of British art of the eighteenth century.

CK

LITERATURE:

Unpublished

PROVENANCE:

...; Sir John Stirling Maxwell, 10th Baronet (1866-1956), Glasgow; by descent until sale, London (Christie's), 21 July 2015, no. 436, to a private collector; from whom, sale, London (Sotheby's), 2 July 2025, no. 172, to the museum, with the support of the bequest of S.L.R. Zimmerman-Taylor (inv. no. RP-T-2025-122).



6 ANONYMOUS

Condom with Erotic Scene (Voilà mon choix), c. 1830

Animal intestine with etching and ribbon, length 20 cm

In June 2025, the Rijksmuseum Print Room drew worldwide attention with the acquisition of an exceptionally rare and unusual object: a nineteenth-century condom. Purchased at the 2024 autumn sale of Veilinghuis Bubb Kuyper in Haarlem, the condom received extensive coverage across news outlets, radio, television, art forums and social media, with content creators on platforms like TikTok further amplifying its visibility. In the media, the object often served to highlight the history of the condom and humanity's quest in finding ways to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), many times conveyed with a humorous undertone. Yet there was also critique, with one Christian organisation, Civitas Christiana, labelling the museum's acquisition and presentation as blasphemous and inappropriate.

Condoms have been around for centuries. Early specimens, made from linen or animal membrane, offered only limited protection and failed to prevent STDs like syphilis from remaining widespread. Not until the invention of vulcanized rubber in 1839 did condoms become safer and more commonly used. A small number of these objects from centuries past survive today. Made from (most likely sheep's) intestine, the Rijksmuseum specimen dates from the eighteen thirties, for which it can be seen as a rare testament to a period when contraception and disease prevention were highly taboo topics. Although probably never used, the condom was fully functional: measuring twenty centimetres long, it has a white ribbon at the end of the shaft to hold it in place during use.

What makes this specific condom exceptional – and the reason for its addition to the collection of the Print Room – is the scene printed on the shaft. To prevent damaging the condom in the printing press, the print was made presumably with an etched copper plate larger than the condom itself. Only a few of the surviving condoms bear printed scenes, to be viewed as light-hearted souvenirs associated with the brothel milieu. Each of these rare objects displays a different iconography, ranging from depictions of soldiers and actresses in compromising poses to racy scenes of *ménages à trois*, or a sensual scene of a Pierrot-like figure from the *commedia dell'arte*.

The condom in the Print Room features an explicitly erotic scene of a nun sitting in a chair with her breasts and lower body bared, who spreads her legs and divulges her sex to three clergymen lined up before her, each of whom brandishes a clearly visible, erect penis. The scene is accompanied by the inscription: 'Voilà mon choix' (Here, my choice). Together these form a sensuous parody on religious celibacy, and on the Greek mythological story of the Judgement of Paris, recounting how Paris, the Trojan prince, is asked to decide which of the three goddesses in his presence – Hera, Athena, Aphrodite – he regards as most beautiful. This classical allusion suggests a culturally literate, well-educated target clientele. As such, the condom is a poignant illustration of how humour, pleasure and prevention were closely intertwined in the nineteenth century.

The scene on the condom is in fact based on a contemporary lithograph, in all likelihood by the French painter and printmaker Achille Devéria (1800-1857), known for erotic print series like *Musée des Familles* and *Les Petits Jeux Innocents* (c. 1840). Unlike the image on the condom, the original lithograph clearly situates the episode in a nun's cell, indicated by a door on the right closed with a key. In this version, the nun explicitly selects the clergyman on the far left, whose genitalia are demonstrably larger than those of his competitors. On the condom, however, the curvature of the surface renders her choice far less unequivocal, allowing any male user to identify with one of the clergymen.

Devéria's prints, though not designed with decorating condoms in mind, nevertheless met the demand of a comparable, underground market. Due to prevailing taboos, condoms – like erotic prints – were long sold under the counter in places like barbershops, brothels and taverns. Luxurious, custom-made specimens were discreetly sold in specialty shops. Although frowned upon by church authorities, this in no way prevented users from washing these sheaths after the deed and saving them for a future sexual encounter. The depiction of a sexually active clergy on a condom, representing various denominations, served to dismiss this moralistic church-based rejection as hypocrisy.



The Print Room condom – nearly lost after having sustained water damage while in the possession of a previous owner – is now carefully preserved. As an exceptional, historical object that brings together art and cultural history in an unusual way, it aligns with the Rijksmuseum's mission as a home for art and history. It also invites reflection on subjects like safe sex and self-protection, which, in many social contexts, unfortunately remain highly charged.

JZ

LITERATURE:

'Veelbesproken 200 jaar oude condoom van Rijksmuseum was bijna in de prullenbak beland: Hij was kleverig van binnen', interview with F. Bertholet door K. Keijer, *Het Parool*, 23 June 2025
Christopher Lennox-Boyd, 'An Instrument at Christie's', *Print Quarterly* 9 (1992), no. 4, p. 389

PROVENANCE:

...; Maxwell Business Communications Ltd, London; their sale, London (Christie's), 2 July 1992, no. 51, to Ferdinand Bertholet (1952), Amsterdam; his sale, Haarlem (Bubb Kuyper), 18 November 2024 *sqg*, no. 948, to the museum, with the support of the F.G. Waller-Fonds
(inv. no. RP-P-2025-13).

7 CONSTANCE FREDERICA GORDON-CUMMING (Altyre 1837-1924 Crieff)

Matele – South from Vicarton Gorge with Paddy Fields, 1873

Watercolour over pencil, 400 x 630 mm

Old Coffee Fields in the Matele Hills from Kabragalla Estate, Kalibooka District, 1874

Watercolour over pencil with touches of white heightening, 390 x 620 mm

The Scottish traveller and draughtswoman Constance Frederica Gordon-Cumming was an exceptionally intrepid artistic figure of the later nineteenth century. Through extensive travel, she produced a substantial body of watercolours, combining topographical precision with considerable technical accomplishment. The Rijksmuseum's acquisition of two panoramic views introduces this enterprising artist into the collection and strengthens its representation of nineteenth-century British watercolour.

Gordon-Cumming initially learned to draw in an artistically inclined family. In the mid-eighteen sixties, she began to pursue her watercolour practice more seriously and soon embarked on a series of ambitious journeys that were highly unusual for a Victorian woman. Travelling to destinations that included India, Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka), Fiji, Hawaii, Japan and California, she produced numerous watercolours, often working in remote locations reached on horseback or on foot. Some sheets bear not only her own signature but also those of friends and travelling companions, underscoring the sociable context in which she produced her drawings.

The two newly acquired works date from Gordon-Cumming's sojourn in Ceylon from February 1873 to July 1874. Both depict the central highlands around Matele (then frequently spelled *Matele*) at the heart of the island's nineteenth-century coffee plantation districts. Working at a considerable altitude – in some places rising more than 1,000 metres above sea level – she captured expansive views across this rugged landscape.

The earlier of the two sheets, from 1873, adopts a dramatic, bird's-eye vantage point overlooking cultivated and uncultivated terrain framed by two steep, rocky outcrops. Quick, repetitive brushstrokes create a finely patterned surface across the paddy fields, set against the broader wash-based handling of the foreground. The outcrop at left is described with lighter applications of watercolour, leaving the graphite underdrawing visible. The outcrop at right is built up through richer layers of pigment and fluid, on-paper mixing to evoke dense vegetation. Beyond, successive mountain

ranges dissolve into a finely calibrated atmospheric haze, demonstrating Gordon-Cumming's assured command of the medium and her judicious use of the paper's reserves to create luminosity.

The latter sheet, from 1874, presents a sweeping mountainous panorama defined by slopes and ridges. In the foreground, a seated mother holding a child and standing figures – perhaps engaged in harvesting – inhabit the terrain, while additional figures appear along a road that recedes to the left below a prominent rock outcrop. The strong diagonal thrust of both foreground and middle ground is set against distant mountain ranges rendered in cool tonal gradations. The sheet records a landscape already transformed by plantation agriculture. As Gordon-Cumming observed in her memoir, titled *Two Happy Years in Ceylon* (1892): 'To all lovers of beautiful nature it must be sad to think of the hundreds of square miles of primeval forest which have thus been totally destroyed in clearing ground for the growth of coffee, cinchona, and tea, in all the mountain districts, the greater part of the belt of the Isle between the altitudes of 3000 to 5000 feet being now totally denuded.' Her reflections reveal an acute awareness of environmental change that was strikingly prescient for its time.

Together, these panoramic watercolours demonstrate Gordon-Cumming's dual identity as traveller and artist, uniting topographical description with a refined command of the medium. Their acquisition introduces a distinctive female artistic voice to the Rijksmuseum's collection, shaped by mobility, keen observation and a sustained engagement with the landscapes she recorded.

CK

LITERATURE:

Unpublished

PROVENANCE:

Family of the artist; from whom to Karen Taylor Fine Art, London; from whom to the museum, 2025, inv. no.

RP-T-2025-125 with the support of the Zimmerman-Taylor Fund; inv. no. RP-T-2025-124 with the support of the Women of the Rijksmuseum Fund.

8 KOBAYASHI KIYOCHIKA (Edo 1847-1915 Kyoto)

Scouts near Niuzhuang on a Snowy Night, 牛莊附近雪夜之斥候, 1895

Publisher: Matsunaga Sakujirô (松永作次郎) (dates unknown), Tokyo

Colour woodblock print, triptych approx. 370 x 745 mm

This woodblock prints shows three horsemen braving a snowstorm in the biting cold. The forceful icy wind, blowing from the left, is evident from the tree branches bending to the right and the horses' fluttering tails. A translucent layer of white applied over the dark background makes the windblown snow almost palpable.

Designed by the Japanese print artist Kobayashi Kiyochika, the present triptych is part of an exceptional donation made by Larisa Alwin. Over the past years, Alwin built an impressive collection of Japanese woodblock prints centred on and produced during the Sino- and Russo-Japanese Wars (1894-95 and 1904-05, respectively), with a focus on Kiyochika's work. In this print, he depicts a scout patrol in the vicinity of Niuzhuang, a town in Manchuria captured by the Japanese on 5 March 1895.

From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, the demand for woodblock prints in Japan sharply declined due to the introduction of new reproduction techniques like lithography and photography. The outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, however, led to a revival of the market for colour woodblock prints. A great demand arose for visual material conveying the war's progress. The new printing techniques were not yet sufficiently developed to facilitate the rapid, low-cost dissemination of colour images on a large scale, something that could be accomplished with the centuries-old technique of woodblock printing. In no time, so-called *sensô-e* (war prints) were available throughout Japan. These prints depicted the wars with China and Russia from a Japanese perspective, with the actual course of the war or individual land and naval battles not always accurately portrayed.

There are several explanations for these discrepancies with the actual course of events. Although journalists, photographers and artists were permitted on the front, they were not allowed near the actual battles and were therefore unable to provide eyewitness accounts. As a result, the print designs entailed a great deal of personal interpretation and imagination. Moreover, the Japanese government had imposed strict censorship on all news reporting, both in word and



image. Prints, and as well newspaper articles, were subject to the censors' approval. In this regard, *sensô-e* can be considered a form of propaganda. At the same time, print publishing was a commercial endeavour, with publishers' interest determined by a print's saleability in response to buyers' tastes. The woodblock prints proved extremely popular, not just for their colour but also because they could convey the heat of the battle, such as fighting at the front or large explosions at sea, something yet unachievable with photography due to factors such as the camera's long exposure times.

In order to publish the prints as quickly as possible and at a minimum cost, they were



frequently printed more haphazardly and with inexpensive, harsh colours. Very few artists were working at the top end of the print market, but Kiyochika's prints are the absolute pinnacle, especially his triptychs, often displaying the artist's keen interest in photography. Examples in the present triptych are the absence of the black contour lines, characteristic of Japanese prints, as well as the use of light and shadow. Witness, for example, the light source from the left, seemingly shining towards the men and their horses, with the rider in the background seen as no more than a silhouette.

Besides triptychs, Kiyochika also designed single prints during this period, including the

so-called *Heroes* series and satirical prints. Alwin acquired virtually all of Kiyochika's *sensō-e*. Last year, she donated and bequeathed her extensive collection to the Rijksmuseum.

MJ

LITERATURE:

Larisa Alwin, 'Kiyochika's war triptychs, fact or fantasy?', *Andon* 109 (2020), p. 78-97

Larisa Alwin, 'One hundred laughs? Kiyochika's *Nihon banzai: hyakusen hyakushō*', *Andon* 106 (2018), pp. 63-79

PROVENANCE:

...; donated by Larisa Alwin to the museum, 2024
(inv. no. RP-P-2024-708-183).

9 MAX LIEBERMANN (Berlin 1847-1935)

Self-Portrait of Max Liebermann, Standing and Drawing, 1913

Drypoint, 177 x 118 mm

Inscriptions: lower right, pencil in Max Liebermann's handwriting: *1/2 Etat / MLiebermann*;
lower left, in pencil: *Sch 148 I b (v III c.)*

Max Liebermann was born in Berlin, the third child of the highly affluent textile manufacturer Louis Liebermann (1819-1894) and his wife, Philippine Liebermann-Haller (1820-1892), daughter of a well-known local jeweller's family. In 1863, Max began taking drawing lessons from the animal painter Carl Steffek (1818-1890). After briefly studying chemistry, in 1868 he was accepted into the then recently founded Grossherzoglich-Sächsische Kunstschule in Weimar. There he studied under the Flemish artists Ferdinand Pauwels (1830-1904) and Charles Verlat (1824-1890).

Liebermann would make his mark as a pioneer of German Impressionism. From 1873 onwards, he worked for a time in Paris and in Barbizon, where he came into contact with Camille Corot and other French artists. From 1874 to 1914, Liebermann spent his summers in the Netherlands, painting and etching in various Dutch towns and cities, including Scheveningen, Noordwijk, Laren and Amsterdam. He also met Dutch artists like Isaac Israëls and Anton Mauve. Throughout his life, Liebermann held various prominent positions. In 1897, he was appointed professor at the Königliche Akademie der Künste in Berlin. Two years later, he co-founded the avant-garde separatist movement Berliner Sezession, serving as its president until 1911. From 1920 to 1933, Liebermann was also president of the Preussische Akademie der Künste in the same city.

In addition to painting and drawing, in the late eighteen eighties Liebermann began spending much of his time making prints. In this endeavour, he employed a variety of graphic techniques: etching and drypoint (frequently a combination of both), and lithography. Liebermann's print production covered a variety of genres, including everyday scenes with people and animals, landscapes, portraits and self-portraits, but also a number of allegorical works and stories from the Bible. He rendered these images on the plate with such great swiftness, applying a sketch-like technique, that all have the appearance of snapshots made spontaneously on location.

The same characteristics can be seen in this self-portrait from 1913. It shows the artist at the age of sixty-six, standing before a mirror and assessing his own image. His pose is captured masterfully. He gazes directly at his reflection in the mirror, looking past his eyeglasses worn low on the nose, without elevating his head – the same glasses would serve him well only moments later, when scratching his own likeness into the copper plate. Such is the essence of the drypoint technique: the image is scratched directly into the copper using a sharp stylus. When the plate is printed, the resulting burr creates the typical velvety effect along the lines, clearly visible in the present impression. That Liebermann worked directly on the plate is confirmed by his subsequent modifications; these he prepared in this impression of the first state. Using charcoal and white chalk, he strengthened the areas of shadow around the eyes, while also adjusting the moustache, the hair above his right ear and the shape of his chin. In the second and third states, Liebermann incorporated these improvements in the plate.

Currently, at least twenty-seven printed self-portraits by Max Liebermann are known. The present work, however, is possibly his best. Original impressions of the third, completed state were included in the 1914 oeuvre catalogue by Gustav Schiefler. While that state is therefore not particularly rare, the first state is. Besides this unique proof, retouched by the artist, only two other impressions are known.

EH

LITERATURE:

Nicolaas Teeuwisse, *Ausgewählte Werke – Selected Works*, Tefaf 2024, no. 40
Gustav Schiefler, *Max Liebermann, sein graphisches Werk*, Berlin 1923, no. 148

PROVENANCE:

...; the dealer Nicolaas Nicolaas Teeuwisse, Berlin; from whom to the museum, 2024, with the support of the E.H. and L.L. Ariëns Kappers Fonds/Rijksmuseum Fonds (inv. no. RP-P-2024-185).



T. E. C. 1
1/2
M. K. H. T. H. H. H.

Sch 148 I 6 (v. 1/2)

IO MARGUERITE JEANNE CARPENTIER (Paris 1886-1965)

Gaston Dorfinant with his Wife, Céline Dorfinant-Pernot, Standing at his Lithographic Press, c. 1928

Lithograph, 380 x 564 mm

Signed, lower left: *MJCarpentier*. Inscriptions, lower left, in pencil: *Gaston Dorfinant imp. d art Paris*.

Lower right, in pencil: *A mademoiselle Anneke Vanderfeer | en souvenir de sa iere visite | Céline et Gaston Dorfinant ||*

The execution of this double portrait of the French lithographer Gaston Dorfinant (1880-1964) and his wife, Céline Dorfinant-Pernot (1882-1953), is much like that of a drawing. The printmaker focusses on wetting a lithographic stone lying on the press, as his spouse watches attentively over his shoulder, her left hand casually resting on one of the press's rotating arms. The characterization of the couple's faces, though swift, is highly precise. By contrast, the space around them is rendered in such rapid, sketch-like strokes that one can scarcely avoid the impression that the scene was captured in a sudden, spontaneous burst of inspiration.

According to the signature in the lower left corner, the composition was drawn on stone by the French artist Marguerite Jeanne Carpentier. In 1903, she was the youngest female student ever admitted to the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, shortly after the ban preventing women from attending there had been lifted. Six years later, in 1909, Carpentier completed her training with the painter and sculptor Jean Paul Laurens (1838-1921). For a time, she also worked in the studio of Auguste Rodin (1840-1917). In 1919, Carpentier established the first workshop specially devoted to female artists, where, over time, more than thirty students gathered around her. Although primarily active as a painter and sculptor, around 1928-30 Carpentier also dabbled in the graphic arts. Her lithographed cityscapes of Paris, issued in 1928, were printed by Gaston Dorfinant. This suggests that the present double portrait of Dorfinant and his wife Céline may have been created around the same time.

Gaston Dorfinant, born Joseph Gaston Dorfinant in Paris, was initiated into lithography by his father, Marie Joseph Henri Dorfinant (1854-after 1912). After continuing his training at the École des Beaux-Arts and the École des Arts Décoratifs, Gaston first pursued a career in the same line as his father: the printing of large-format posters and similar commercial lithographs. With the advent of modern, mechanized reproduction techniques, around 1920 he began

to specialize in the printing of artist's graphic works. In his workshop on the Rue Chanoinesse on the Île-de-la-Cité in Paris, Dorfinant produced prints for luminaries of the French art world like Luc-Albert Moreau, Lucien Pissarro and Marcel Vertès. He also worked with numerous foreign artists, both as clients and students, including Samuel Chamberlain and Mariette Lydis, and later, Joseph Hirsch and Jackson Pollock.

Dorfinant used Carpentier's double portrait of him and his wife as a kind of business card. In the lower left corner of the present sheet, written in pencil, he identified himself as the printer ('Gaston Dorfinant art printer Paris'), and across from this lower right, added a dedication 'To Miss Anneke Vanderfeer, as a memento of her first visit', also on his wife's behalf. Anneke van der Feer (1902-1956) was a Dutch painter, graphic artist and designer highly involved in social causes. Van der Feer's 1931 lithographic poster for filmmaker Joris Ivens's documentary *Philips Radio* was later proclaimed as the most beautiful Dutch film poster ever made (inv. no. RP-P-1932-203). Precisely when she visited Gaston Dorfinant's studio remains unclear. Certain is that she attended classes at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris in the late nineteen thirties, though this was unlikely her first time staying in the city. Also unfortunately unknown is whether Van der Feer ever returned to the Dorfinant studio.

EH

LITERATURE:

Marion Boyer, *Une école de femmes au xxe siècle*, Clairmont-Ferrand 1998

Samuel Chamberlain, 'Gaston Dorfinant: One of the Surviving Master Lithographers', *Pencil Points* 11 (1930), no. 6, pp. 409-20

PROVENANCE:

Anna (Anneke) van der Feer (1902-1956); ...; Erik H. Ariëns Kappers, Amsterdam; by whom donated the museum, 2025, as part of the project Women of the Rijksmuseum (inv. no. RP-P-2025-114).



- 11 MOÏ VER (born Moshe Vorobeichic, Zaskavichy (in present-day Belarus) 1904-1995 Safed, Israel)
Paris: 80 photographies de Moï Ver. Introduction de Fernand Léger, Paris (Éditions Jeanne Walter) 1931
 Photobook with collotypes, printed by Établissements Vigier et Brunissen, Paris
 Numbered edition; this is number 184

Paris: 80 photographies de Moï Ver is remarkable on many levels. It is arguably the most beautiful photobook produced in the nineteen thirties, and by any standard, the most radical. It's also one of the rarest. First published in 1931 by Jeanne Walter, *Paris* was reportedly released in an edition of 1,000 copies, of which very few are currently held in public collections or circulating on the art market. What made this book unique was not the subject – the French capital – but rather Moï Ver's approach to its design. Far from conventional, *Paris* was stunningly daring and different.

These days, it is no longer unusual for a photographer to have the first and full (or even exclusive) say regarding the ultimate appearance of a photobook containing her or his work. In many cases, it is the photographer who conceives and develops the subject at hand, and who also seeks out the publisher, printer, designer and writer most capable to realize that vision. In 1931, none of this was a given. Often, photographers were seen as little more than suppliers of images, from which publishers and editors then made a selection, cropping them as they saw fit, combining them with other photographs and also furnishing the captions. In many cases, photographs served merely to illustrate someone else's text. And to top things off, the photographer's name was many times printed in the smallest possible font size. Circa 1930, however, a shift occurred, particularly when book and magazine publishers began realizing they could reach a wider audience with publications filled with images versus those mainly or solely with text. This paved the way for photobooks that resonated the consistent personal vision and style of one photographer. Moï Ver's *Paris* is an early example of this new approach.

By far the majority of photobooks on Paris at this time were primarily made for tourists or those simply seeking a memento of their visit to the city. This typically resulted in rather tame photographs, invariably of the city's iconic highlights, and conventional book designs. Moï Ver took a very different approach. The only known architectural monument appearing on the pages of *Paris* is the Eiffel Tower. Yet Moï

Ver's image of the tower is not only photographed from an extremely low versus a 'normal' (eye-level) vantage point but moreover printed in a double exposure, 'sandwiched' with a second photograph showing a steep, vertical view to the ground below, shot from the top of the tower. The image is certain to have left some initially wondering what they were looking at before it finally dawned on them. The other plates in the book were equally as inaccessible. Approximately three-quarters of the photographs are double exposure, composed of two or more shots. When just a single photo is printed, the subject is often difficult to discern, with images shot in such close proximity and/or cropped so tightly that they become fragmented details. In Moï Ver's *Paris*, the photographs tumble over one another, with the eyes of the ever-bewildered viewer darting back and forth from one page to the next, to fully grasp what is actually happening in the photographs. In short, *Paris* is a successful attempt to express and convey the dynamism and vibrancy of a bustling metropolis.

Moï Ver's renown in the history of photography can chiefly be attributed to *Paris: 80 photographies de Moï Ver*. After relocating from Paris to Palestine in 1934, he devoted his time primarily to painting. Only decades later, when photobooks came to be seen as collector's items, was he re-discovered and given a permanent place in the canon of twentieth-century photography.

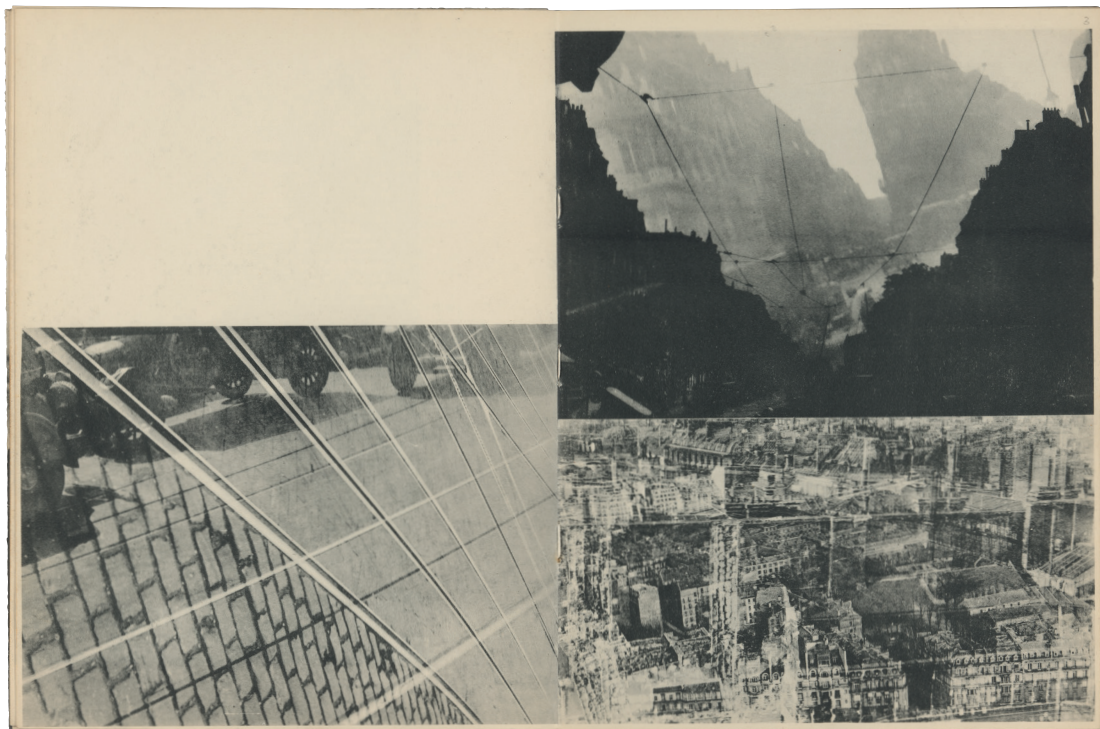
HR

LITERATURE:

- Martin Parr and Gerry Badger, *The Photobook: A History. Volume 1*, London 2004, pp. 128-29
 Karolina Zieblinska-Lewandowska (ed.), *Moï Ver*, Paris 2023, pp. 82-83
 Kim Sichel, *Making Strange: The Modernist Photobook in France*, New Haven/London 2020, pp. 40-44

PROVENANCE:

- ...; private collection, Paris; from whom to the dealer Dirk Bakker Books, Amsterdam, 2025; from whom to the museum, 2025, with the support of Baker McKenzie
 (inv. no. RP-F-2025-112).



12 LILLIAN BASSMAN (New York 1917-2012)

Summer Supplements: Daytime Editions (variant), 1959

Gelatin silver print, 330 x 238 mm

Signed on verso

Published in *Harper's Bazaar*, June 1959, pp. 88-89

PAUL HIMMEL (New Haven CT 1914-2009 New York)

Blue Light Abstraction, 1966

Cibachrome print on cardboard, 254 x 343 mm

Signed on verso

The American power couple Lillian Bassman and Paul Himmel were far ahead of their time. Their photographic experiments with movement, blur, abstraction, and extreme contrast were unusual in the fashion world, where both had been active since the nineteen forties. Their work for the iconic glossy *Harper's Bazaar* left a mark on innovations in fashion photography worldwide. As the art director of *Junior Bazaar* (the youth edition of *Harper's Bazaar*), Bassman was also a female leader in the largely male-dominated fashion industry.

In 1951, Lillian and Paul jointly opened what was to become the successful Bassman-Himmel Studio, located at 220 East 40th Street in New York. They catered to a growing demand for advertising and fashion photographs generated by the post-war surge in consumerism and technological developments in print media. Even so, their venture in the field of photography was erratic, to say the least. When they married, in 1938, Paul was working as a high school science teacher, while Lillian was just starting out as an artist's model. Their lives took a turn when Lillian met Alexey Brodovitch, an art director at *Harper's Bazaar*. She showed him the fashion illustrations she had been creating freelance while taking night classes at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn. Brodovitch encouraged her to enrol in his course at the New School in Manhattan and become a graphic designer. In 1941, Bassman was hired as Brodovitch's first salaried assistant and promoted as art director for *Junior Bazaar* five years later. There she commissioned influential photographers like Richard Avedon, with whom she was also close friends.

As a central figure in the fashion world, Lillian's position opened many doors, both for herself and her husband. In 1946, Paul enrolled in Brodovitch's photography class, the same year that Lillian published her first photograph in *Harper's Bazaar*. Both learned on the job, but also from each other. At a time when it was customary for fashion photographs to showcase a product realistic-

ally – slick, razor sharp and descriptive – the moodiness, bold contrasts and sometimes outright blurriness Bassman and Himmel introduced in their work was highly innovative.

By the late nineteen sixties, both Lillian and Himmel had abandoned photography. Lillian was being replaced by younger colleagues. Disillusioned by a lack of assignments, in 1966 Himmel made one last effort to revitalize his waning practice by creating a series of solarized colour photographs, of which the present photo, titled *Blue Light Abstraction*, is an example. By moving his camera while photographing differently coloured light sources, he produced images with blurry patterns. He then printed each colour image on chromogenic paper by means of a process called 'pseudo solarization': after normal exposure, a print was briefly and evenly exposed a second time while being developed. This darkened the light areas, and in the case of this specific print (because a coloured light source was used), turned them blue.

At the age of fifty-five, Himmel retrained to become a psychotherapist, around which time he discarded most of his work. For this reason, his photographs surface only rarely. Himmel eventually gave up photography altogether, unlike Bassman, who in the early nineteen nineties chose to reinvent herself as a photographer. Her last assignment, completed in 2004 at the age of eighty-seven, was for German *Vogue*.

HH

LITERATURE:

Ingo Taubhorn and Brigitte Woischnik (eds.), *Lillian Bassman and Paul Himmel*, exh. cat. Hamburg (Haus der Photographie, Deichtorhallen) 2009

PROVENANCE:

The artists; donated by their children Eric and Liza Himmel, New York, to the museum, 2025

(inv. nos. RP-F-2025-108-2 and -5).



RP-F-2025-108-2



RP-F-2025-108-5

13 IRVING PENN (Plainfield NJ 1917-2009 New York)
Cigarette no. 52, 1972, printed February/March 1975
 Platinum-palladium print on aluminium, 594 x 483 mm

Irving Penn sourced cigarette butts, lost gloves, used paper cups and other refuse from the streets of New York City. Back in his studio, he photographed these discarded items as if they were precious objects, meticulously arranged against a white backdrop and carefully lit to emphasize their texture and form. Using an 8 x 10 inch camera, he was able to sustain a high level of detail even after enlargement. He printed his trash larger than life, employing the platinum-palladium process. The process is slow, costly and labour-intensive – qualities that were antithetical to the mass-production of his more well-known fashion photographs in print media.

By the time Penn started photographing his cigarette butts, in 1972, he was a celebrated fashion photographer. He began his vocation in 1934 at the Philadelphia Museum School of Industrial Art, where he studied design with Alexey Brodovitch, art director at the influential fashion magazine *Harper's Bazaar*. Hired by Brodovitch as an assistant, Penn spent his first paycheck on a Rolleiflex camera and started taking photographs. In 1943, he became the assistant to Alexander Liberman, art director at *Vogue*, for whom he produced his first fashion photographs.

After decades of photographing for exclusive brands and producing portraits of celebrities and other prominent figures, Penn radically changed course. He purposely turned to marginal, overlooked subjects of no intrinsic worth, which he photographed with the same care as perfumes and cosmetics in his work as a commercial photographer. Penn once described his change of heart to a group of students: 'Since I have been a commercial photographer almost all of my professional life, I have come now to yearn for a personal photography that does not try to manipulate anyone.'

As his career progressed, Penn became increasingly disillusioned with the extravagance of American consumer culture. He was also dissatisfied with the deteriorating quality of the magazines that brought his work to the public. Come the nineteen sixties, Penn regarded print media as having reached 'something of a dead end for all of us'. Instead of a 'halfway house on the way to the page', he began to see the photo-

graphic print as a final product in and of itself. Inspired by the platinum prints exhibited in the new photo galleries of the then recently expanded Museum of Modern Art, in 1964 Penn began experimenting with this technique himself.

Penn spent three years mastering the platinum printing process. Using a camel-hair brush to hand-coat watercolour sheets and experimenting with varying chemical doses, he was able to achieve the desired effect: a long tonal range and velvety blacks absorbed into the paper fibre, giving the print texture and optical tactility. To achieve the level of depth possible with platinum printing, Penn applied several coatings and exposures on a single sheet of paper. In the case of the present photo, the system of precise punches, indicating the proper positioning of the negative, can still be discerned at the top of the aluminium mount.

HH

LITERATURE:

Maria Morris Hambourg and Jeff L. Rosenheim, *Irving Penn: Centennial*, exh. cat. New York (The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Paris (Grand Palais)/São Paulo (Instituto Moreira Salles) 2017

Sarah Greenough, *Irving Penn, Platinum Prints*, exh. cat. Washington DC (National Gallery of Art) 2005

Irving Penn, *Still Life*, with an introd. by John Szarkowski, London 2000

Merry A. Foresta and William F. Stapp, *Irving Penn Master Images: The Collections of the National Museum of American Art and the National Portrait Gallery*, exh. cat. Washington DC 1990

Irving Penn, *Irving Penn: Photographs in Platinum Metals, Images 1947-1975*, exh. cat. New York (Marlborough Gallery) 1977

PROVENANCE:

...; the dealer Gitterman Gallery, New York; from whom to the museum, 2025, with the support of Baker McKenzie (inv. no. RP-F-2025-24).



14 MAX NATKIEL (Zandvoort 1942)

'September 1982', from the series *Paradiso Stills*
Gelatin silver print, 128 x 118 mm

It is actually by chance that Max Natkiel became the premier chronicler of the punk, ska, skin and other underground scenes that congregated in the Paradiso, Amsterdam's music temple on the Weteringschans, during the early nineteen eighties. For quite some time, Natkiel had already been attending concerts himself on a regular basis (two or three nights a week), and as he once explained during a podcast, without much to do. At some point, he brought along his camera and just started photographing people, often much younger than his own age. It was not in the main hall itself that he found his subjects; instead, he waited to photograph them circulating about the hallways, lingering in and around the restrooms or hanging out in other areas of the building. In many of the portraits, the bare white tiles of the restroom walls provide the backdrop: as he put it, eventually 'everyone has to piss'. Natkiel wished to show people's appearance shortly after exiting the main music hall, to 'capture' the result of the wild bouts of dancing, jumping, shouting, chattering, drinking and smoking of the crowd during a performance.

It is no small miracle that so many of Natkiel's portraits turned out successful: the visitors and the photographer himself were usually tipsy, drunk or high. Even when inebriated, Natkiel forced himself to concentrate while taking his portrait shots. At first, he had to overcome the distrust felt by some of the people he sought to photograph. But once he started handing out small-format prints of the images he shot the time before, almost everyone wanted to pose for Natkiel's camera. His models realized the photographer himself was a regular in the Paradiso and not making any money off his photographs, for example, by selling them to a magazine.

Between 1980 and 1985, Natkiel produced several thousand portraits applying this approach. In 1986, approximately two hundred of these photographs were published in a book titled *Paradiso Stills*, today a collector's item. Natkiel claims he undertook this endeavour without any preconceived plan. Regardless, the result is a compelling portrait of the times, largely composed of images showing young people happily taking part in the punk, ska, skin and other underground scenes all coming together in the Paradiso.

By no means were these the only groups attending the countless concerts and events held in the venue during this period. Natkiel simply had a predilection for the nonconformist, anarchistic, eccentric figures on society's fringe.

Natkiel's photographs have a timeless quality. This can be attributed to the fact that artistic direction was minimal – given the circumstances, perhaps with negligible effect had he chosen otherwise – and because he portrayed his 'models' free of embellishment. Certainly, these images are anything but the product of a consciously practised, flashy approach or vision, i.e. trendy photographs that in no time look outdated. With Natkiel, the directness that arises from the stark surroundings (enhanced by the harsh flash) never distracts from the primary subject: the concertgoers themselves. Their presence is more than adequately manifest in their clothing and posture – with grimaces and funny faces, often with a raised middle finger directed at the camera and an occasional bare bottom. Natkiel's photographs are raw, unrefined and unpolished depictions of various subcultures. Although he lacked a clear plan about what he had in mind or wished to achieve, he knew he was a witness to something that would eventually pass. After 1985, Natkiel's visits to Paradiso became less frequent; the audience changed, became more 'respectable', leaving him with a feeling that he no longer had any reason to be there.

In 2025, the Rijksmuseum acquired a group of twenty-two photographs from Natkiel's series *Paradiso Stills*. Among these are enlargements in various sizes, several prints possibly used for the 1986 book, and finally, a number of the small-format prints he presented as 'free giveaways' to the people he portrayed next time he saw them in the Paradiso.

HR

LITERATURE:

Max Natkiel, *Studio Paradiso*, Amsterdam 2013

PROVENANCE:

...; the dealer Rob Malasch, Amsterdam, 2025; from whom to the museum, 2025, with the support of an anonymous donor (inv. nos. RP-F-2025-60-1 to -22).

