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MAN
AND FASHION

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AND FASHION



1. Lee Miller, *Man Ray and a Model*, c.1935

FOREWORD

KAAT DEBO

From 22 April through 13 August 2023, MoMu – Fashion Museum Antwerp – presents the work of Man Ray through the prism of fashion. Man Ray's inventive procedures and surrealistic winks of the eye continue to inspire fashion photography and to bring fashion and art closer together. Today, fashion designers – and most notably Belgian designers, with their predilection for Surrealism – still find inspiration in his work.

MoMu has organized the exhibition in collaboration with the Réunion des musées nationaux – Grand Palais (RMN-GP) and the City of Marseille. The exhibition was initially presented, in a different form, at the Musée Cantini and Château Borély in Marseille (November 2019 – March 2020) and at the Musée du Luxembourg in Paris (September 2020 – January 2021). We extend our warmest thanks to Chris Dercon, chairman of RMN-GP (through December 2022), for initiating the collaboration and for his continuing engagement. We also thank his team, in particular Anne Fréling and Agnès Wolff, for their enthusiastic help in bringing the project to fruition. We also wish to thank Nicolas Misery, director of the Musées de Marseille, for his support. The exhibition would, moreover, not have been possible without the research carried out by guest curators Claude Miglietti, Catherine Örmen and Alain Sayag. Their initial selections of photographs and French couture have been augmented by MoMu curator Romy Cockx with fashion silhouettes from the interwar years from the MoMu collection as well as contemporary fashion. She has reworked the concept and explored the link with Belgian fashion. We also extend our thanks to Ania Martchenko, whose exhibition scenography underscores the Surrealist visual language of Man Ray, balancing between the familiar and the uncanny.

This exhibition has been made possible by the support of numerous lenders, including private collectors, fashion houses and museums. We heartily thank them all for their generosity and trust, and most especially, for the generous loan of nearly 80 photographs, Laurent Le Bon, president of the Centre national d'art et de la culture Georges Pompidou; Xavier Rey, director of the Centre Pompidou; Florian Ebner, conservator of the photography department; and Raphaële Bianchi, head of loans.

We are also pleased to be able to present this publication in association with the exhibition, with the help of Bruno Devos of Stockmans Art Books and graphic designer Jelle Jespers. Our hope is that it honours the legacy of Man Ray and helps making the cross-pollination between art and fashion an ongoing and enriching process.



2. Maison Martin Margiela,
Spring-Summer 1990



3. Man Ray,
Mrs. Toulgouat
in an Evening
Dress by
Schiaparelli,
1932



4. Man Ray, Peggy Guggenheim in a Poiret Dress, 1924

MAN RAY

ALAIN SAYAG

Man Ray took his first steps as a fashion photographer after his arrival in Paris in 1921. After his exhibit at the Librairie Six (a bookstore) in December 1921 proved a failure, he was forced to look for another way to make a living. Francis Picabia, as well as André Breton, encouraged him to photograph the works of his Surrealist friends. He was then ready to accept commissions and to pursue his work as a portraitist. He had been producing portraits since 1919 and had even won a prize, at the same time as Berenice Abbott, who would become his assistant in Paris. While engaged in the repetitive and very boring work of photographic reproduction, he regularly started keeping back a blank photographic plate so he could make a portrait at the end of each session. He set up a studio in a room at the Grand Hôtel des Écoles, using, according to Gertrude Stein, a small storeroom to develop his photographs.¹ It was then that he met, through Picabia's wife, Gabrielle Buffet, the fashion designer and collector Paul Poiret and offered to take his portrait, although circumstances prevented this.² With a second-hand camera and a few blank plates, he boldly tried to persuade his prestigious guest that his portrait work was quite 'original', but Poiret suggested that he should try his luck at fashion photography instead. Ray flatly replied that he was quite unfamiliar with the genre. At the time fashion photography was the preserve of a few specialists, who could hardly compete with illustrators, who were more sought-after as well as better-paid. The fashion designer, however, wanted 'original pictures [...] something different, not like the stuff turned out by the usual fashion photographers [...] giving more human qualities to the pictures.'³ Man Ray was neither technically nor intellectually capable of meeting the challenge at the time. His first images were appallingly banal, though, within a few years, he would become a creative innovator whose seductive images led to the liberation of the female body and placed photography at the heart of fashion's representational paradigm.

A BRIEF CAREER

6. Man Ray, Sonia Colmer in a Vionnet dress in Óscar Dominguez's Wheelbarrow, 1937



7. Man Ray, Early Evening Dress in Printed Black Crêpe by Elsa Schiaparelli, published in Harper's Bazaar, March 1936



13. Man Ray, Dress
by Elsa Schiaparelli,
c.1937

There are many other technical processes at work: the overlaying of frames or negatives, for example, or inversions including solarization, this last becoming one of Man Ray's favourite signature techniques. We know that Man Ray stated that this effect came about by chance. Lee Miller, who at the time was his assistant and partner, wrote, in an undated letter to her brother, probably in 1929, that they discovered the process when they were both working in the darkroom: 'Something crawled across my foot in

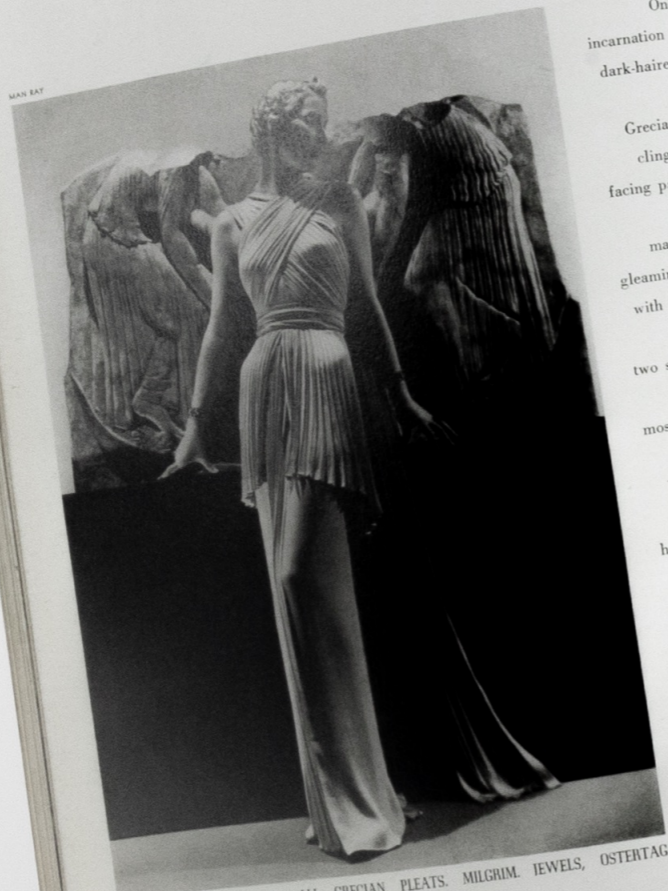
the darkroom and I let out a yell and turned on the light. I never did find out that it was, a mouse or what. Then, I quickly realized that the film was totally exposed ... Man [Ray] grabbed them, put them in hypo and looked at them later. He didn't even bother to bawl me out, since I was so sunk. When he looked at them, the unexposed parts of the negative, which had been the black background, had been exposed by this sharp light that had been turned on and they had developed and came right up to the edge of the white, nude body.⁸ This might simply have been a legend, as the trick had been known for a long time as the Sabatier effect. It was nevertheless Man Ray who systemized it into a stylistic element. He learned how to fully master it, providing photography with one of the characteristics of drawing: the black line which underscores shapes and gives an unreal and flattering effect prized by 'those who love gauze' [ill. 13].



14. Man Ray,
Meret Oppenheim with
Bathing Cap, c.1933

ONE NIGHT at THE AMBASSADEURS

MAN EAT



HEIM'S PALE BLUE CREPE, ALL GRECIAN PLEATS, MILGRIM, JEWELS, OSTERTAG.

54

There were five who made history that night at the opening of the Ambassadeurs restaurant in Paris. . . . Five who cast such a shadow that now their reflections are waiting on the roof of the Waldorf, dining at the Casino in Chicago, supping at the Arrowshead in Saratoga, contacting at the "Tree" in Hollywood.

One—the outstanding sensation, the incarnation of all that is modern—was a tall, dark-haired Roumanian with a lovely rounded figure, draped in the purest Grecian folds in the dull white clinging jersey dress that you see on the facing page. Her dark curls mounted to the top of her head to a spray of flowers made of bits of mirrors and gleaming metal. One wore a mauve tulle dress with two huge red poppies for a tophat, their long green stems crossed like two sticks. One wore a gray tulle dress with a bunch of moss roses on the bodice and another delicate bunch over one ear, tied there with black velvet ribbon. One wore a Chantilly white lace, skin-tight about the hips, flaring below with the pinkest pink rose on the belt and another in the hair.

One wore a mermaid's sheath of black silk jersey with a brassiere top of gold lamé. And in the scented and primed hoi polloi were bouffant tules in abundance, white, pale gray, purple, mauve . . . white floating draped chiffons and chiffon jerseys, glittering pailletted jackets, and flowers, flowers, flowers on every

A BEAUTIFUL ROUMANIAN, MADAME CONSTANTINESCO, WORE WHITE SILK JERSEY FROM ALIX AND AN ANTOINE COIFFURE. BERGDORF GOODMAN.

MAN EAT



30. Harper's Bazaar, 'One Night at the Ambassadeurs', July 1936



32. Man Ray, Pavillon de l'Élégance, Exposition internationale des Arts décoratifs et industriels modernes, 1925. Apollon dress by Jeanne Lanvin

WITH US STILL:

FASHION THAT

MAN RAY

Man Ray photographed hundreds of fashion silhouettes on assignment for *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*. Some of these dresses survived the 20th century and are now carefully preserved by the fashion houses that created them a century ago, or by the Musée des Arts décoratifs in Paris.

PHOTOGRAPHED

With thanks to research conducted by fashion historian Catherine Örmén.



49. Norine, Day dress, 1925-35



50. Day dress, 1925-28



67. Man Ray, Elsa Schiaparelli, c.1933



68. Man Ray, Gabrielle Chanel, 1935-36



77 Man Ray, La Marchesa Casati, 1922

76. Paolo Roversi, Tilda Swinton in Acne Paper, Winter 2009-10



87. Juergen Teller for Céline, Spring-Summer 2012



88. Man Ray, Lee Miller, 1930



136 Jonathan Anderson for LOEWE,
Autumn - Winter 2022 - 23



A few years after she graduated from the fashion department of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp, Lena Lumelsky created a completely black collection, inspired by film noir and black-and-white photography, in which contrast and contours determine the images. Motifs in the shape of hands grasp the waste, close a jacket or open a zipper on the back of a dress in a surrealistic ode to interbellum fashion [ill. 128].

137 Elsa Schiaparelli, Claw
glove in calf leather, 1936

85. Man Ray,
Kiki, 1924

