

Sissejuhatus Irving Pennile

*Hedi Rosma tutvustab Kumu ja Moderna Museeti koostöös
sündinud fotonäitust.*

Introducing Irving Penn

*Hedi Rosma introduces a photography exhibition organized by
Kumu Art Museum in cooperation with the Moderna Museet, Sweden.*



Irving Penn
Kalakaupmees, London
1950, negatiiv
Kõik õigused: Moderna Museet,
Condé Nast Publications

Irving Penn
Fishmonger, London
1950, negative
Courtesy of Moderna Museet,
Condé Nast Publications

Kui Irving Penn (1917–2009) 1995. aastal oma rootsi päritolu naise, modell Lisa Fonssagrives-Penni mälestuseks Moderna Museetile sada fotot annetask, sai sellest üks suuremaid Penni tööde kogusid väljaspool USA-d. Kumu ja Moderna Museeti koostöös sündinud näitusele "Irving Penn. Üks ja mitu maailma" on nende ning juba varasemalt muuseumi kollektsiooni kuulunud tööde hulgast valitud umbes üheksakümmend. Kuraator Andreas Nilssoni sõnul lähtuti valiku tegemisel soovist tutvustada Irving Penni loominguga laia ulatust ning näidata Penni stuudiot kõige erinevamate teemade kohtumispaigana. Ajaliselt hõlmab näitus rohkem kui viitekümmet aastat Penni ligi seitsmekümne-aastasest karjäärist. Kasvõi paari pildiga on esindatud kõik Penni olulisemad fotoseeriad ja teemad. Sõltuvalt sellest, millisel positsioonilt vaadata, teeb see näitusest omalaadse miniretrospektiivi või siis sissejuhatuse ühe 20. sajandi isikupärasema fotograafi loomingusse.

Unistades maalikunstniku elukutsest, sai Irving Penn oma hariduse Bauhausi-meelse vene immigrandi Aleksei Brodovitši juures, kelle õpilaste hulka, suuremal või vähemal määral, võib teiste hulgas lugeda ka Diane Arbusi, Richard Avedoni, Garry Winograndi, Lisette Modelit. Kõik need nimed meenuvad ka näitusesaalis Penni töid vaadates. Asi pole siiski ainult ajastus ja geograafias, vaid süvenemismõistes, meisterlikkuses ja konstruktiivses enesekriitikas, mis neid fotokunstnikke seob. Needsamad iseendale seatud ülikõrged nõudmised olid ka põhjuseks, miks maalikunstnikku Pennist ei saanudki ja värvist puhtaks pestud lõuendit kasutati Pennide kodus edaspidi laudlinana.

1943. aastal kutsuti Irving Penn tööle ajakirja Vogue kunstiosakonda. Tollase *art director*'i Alexander Libermanni kaaneideed ei äratanud fotograafide hulgas just erilist vaimustust, mistõttu palus ta Pennil endal neid teostama asuda. Kuuekümmend aasta pikkuseks kujunenud koostöö jooksul pildistas Penn umbes kakssada Vogue'i esikaant, lisaks reklaamfotosid, vaikelusid, portreid. Tõsi, Vogue oli siis teistsugune ajakiri, rahastades näiteks ka Penni kõige mahukamat fotoseeriat "Lihtsad ametid" (Small Trades) oskus- ja lihttöölistest ning avaldades tema arvukatel rännakutel tehtud seeriaid eksootiliste kultuuride esindajatest.

Moefotograafiasse tõi Penn kahtlemata uue lähenemise. Ta pildistas modelle harjumuspärasest keskkonnast eemal datuna ning eksperimenteeris vormi ja kompositsiooniga vabamalt kui paljud teised. 1950. aastate alguses taheti Penni töömahtu Vogue'is tunduvalt vähendada, kuna toimetajate arvates olid need ajakirja jaoks liiga vänged. Talle omase brutalse aususega on Penn tunnistanud,¹ et sai seejärel aru, mida temalt moefotograafina tegelikult oodati – puhtaid, armsaid pilte kenakestest naistest – ning püüdis sellest ajast peale piltide asemel teha "kaupa". Tundub mõnevõrra irooniline avaldus mehelt, kelle moefotod hiljem erinevate kunstimuuseumide kollektsioonidesse jõudsid. Pigem näitas Penn, et eeldus, nagu tähendaks "tarbekaup" juba eos kehvat kvaliteeti, on märk meie endi piiratud ja vähenõudlikkusest.

Portreede puhul on Irving Penni käekiri eksimatult äratuntav. Ta pildistas modelle oma stuudios, kas päris lihtsal monokroomsel taustal, mööblit ehitatud ja vaibaga kaetud alusel või aetas nad hoopis stuudiosse püstitatud toanurka. Just viimase puhul moodustus omalaadne intiimne ruum, kus, sõltuvalt natuurist, võis modell end erakordselt mugavalt või ka äärmiselt ebakindlalt tunda. Hiljem vahetas need võtted välja kohati ekstreemselt suur plaan, kus inimese olemus tuleb ilmsiks just fotograafi ja tema subjekti vahelise suhte kaudu, peegeldagu seda siis näoilme, pilk või silma ette tõstatatud käsi.

When Irving Penn (1917–2009) donated one hundred photographs to the Moderna Museet in 1995 in memory of his Swedish-born wife and model Lisa Fonssagrives-Penn, it became one of the largest collections of Penn's work outside the US. The exhibition "Irving Penn – Diverse Worlds" organized by Kumu in cooperation with the Moderna Museet includes about ninety photographs from those donated and those already part of the museum collection. According to the curator, Andreas Nilsson, the selection introduces the breadth of Irving Penn's work and shows Penn's studio as a meeting point of various themes. The exhibition covers more than fifty years of Penn's seventy-year career. All of Penn's most important photographic series and themes are represented here with at least a few photographs. Depending on how you look at it, the exhibition can be seen as a unique mini retrospective or an introduction to the work of one of the most original photographers of the 20th century.

Irving Penn, who dreamt of becoming a painter, studied under Alexey Brodovitch, a Bauhaus-minded Russian immigrant. Diane Arbus, Richard Avedon, Garry Winogrand and Lisette Model can all be considered to a lesser or greater extent his students. All these names spring to mind when looking at Penn's work in the exhibition hall. It is not only about the era or the location, but also the ability to focus, the mastery and constructive self-criticism that unites those photographers. The high demands they set themselves is the reason Penn never became a painter—washed clean of the paint, the canvas was used as a tablecloth in Penn's home.

In 1943, Irving Penn was invited to work for the art department at Vogue. The photographers there were not very enthusiastic about the cover ideas that art director Alexander Liberman had for the magazine, and that is why he asked Penn to produce them. During their collaboration, which lasted sixty years, Penn photographed two hundred Vogue covers plus advertisements, still lifes and portraits. True, Vogue was a different magazine back then; it financed Penn's largest photographic series, "Small Trades", depicting skilled and menial workers, and published his series on exotic cultures produced during his numerous travels.

Penn certainly had a new approach to fashion photography. He photographed models bereft of their usual environment and experimented with form and composition more freely than many others. In the early 1950s, they wanted to substantially reduce Penn's work load at Vogue because the editors thought his work was too extreme for the magazine. With a brutality that was characteristic of Penn he admitted that¹ he then understood what was expected of him as a fashion photographer – clean, sweet pictures of lovely women – and from then on he tried to produce commodity instead of photographs. This is a bit ironic coming from a man whose fashion photographs ended up in the collections of various art museums. Instead, Penn demonstrated that the presumption that commodity would automatically signify low quality is a sign of our own limitations and unpretentiousness.

Irving Penn's portraits have a signature style that cannot be mistaken for anyone else's. He took photographs of models in his studio on a simple monochrome background, on a base built from pieces of furniture or covered with carpet, or placed them in a corner built in the studio. The latter created a unique intimate space where, depending on the models, they could feel extremely comfortable or insecure. Later, extremely large close-ups replaced these sets and the nature of the person was therein realized through the relationship between the photographer and his subject, whether reflected in an expression,



Portreterides hulgaliselt 20. sajandi kuulsusi, teadis Penn väga hästi, mis hinda nad oma kuulsuse eest maksid. Kuigi ta ise avalikkuse tähelepanu igati vältis, avastas Penn end peagi samalt positsioonilt. Koos tuntuks muutus ka subjektide suhe temasse, raskendades otseselt fotograafi tööd. Penn on väitnud,² et kuulsa fotokunstniku kaamera ees püüavad modellid võrgutavamad olla, lootes oma sarmiga fotograafi veenda end veetlevamana kujutama. Eriti kehtis see Penni puhul, kellest oli teada, et "veetlust" ja "ilu" ta portree juures oluliseks ei pidanud. Tema jaoks oli portreefotograafia põhiküsimuseks jõuda fassaadist kaugemale. Penn ise on seda võrrelnud kirurgiaga³ ja fotoaparaati skalpelliga. Arvestades, et tema helehallide seinte ja pesemata akendega tühja ateljeed Manhattani kutsuti haiglaks, on need kujundid täiesti omal kohal.

Ühe huvitavama grupi Penni loomingust ja Kumu näitusest moodustavad reisidel Marokosse, Uus-Guineasse ja Dahomeesse kaasaskantavas telkateljees tehtud portreed kohalikest elanikest. Nende tööde puhul tõmmatakse sageli paralleele Penni moefotodega, käsitledes neid kui esteetilisi konstruktsioone. Nüüd, kus paljud neist põlisasukatest on oma traditsioonid minetanud, ei saa kindlasti alahinnata ka Penni tööde ajaloolis-etnograafilist väärtust.

Penni vaikelud, aktid ja lähivõtted tänavalt leitud esemetest annavad aimu tema modellide kaadrivälisest elust. Kuid mitte hinnanguid andes, vaid ikka ja jälle kinnitades, et iga asi siin maailmas on väärt, et teda mõistmisega vaadata.

Ühest küljest võib Irving Penni näitust võtta kui 20. sajandi ameeriklase portreed – Vogue'is ilmunud pildid annavad päris hästi aimu sellest, mis lugejat painas ja erutas. Teisalt aga pakuvad Penni tööd mõtteainet uue sajandi alguses, mil aeg ja kvaliteet on muutunud luksuseks.

Hedi Rosma on KUNST.EE eesti keele toimetaja.

¹ Vicki Goldberg, *Irving Penn is Difficult. "Can't You Tell?"* – *The New York Times* 24. XI 1991.

² Ibid.

³ *Irving Penn. – Photography Annual 1966.*

gaze or a hand concealing the subject's eyes.

By portraying many of the celebrities of the 20th century, Penn knew very well the price they had to pay for their fame. Although he avoided publicity in every way he could, Penn soon discovered himself in the same position. Fame changed the relationship between him and his subjects and made his work as a photographer more difficult. Penn has said that² models tried to be more seductive before the lens of a famous photographer, and using their charm they hope to convince the photographer to depict them as even more attractive. This was especially true with Penn, as everybody knew that Penn did not consider "attraction" and "beauty" to be relevant in portraits. Portrait photography for him meant reaching beyond the facade. Penn has compared portrait photography to surgery³ and the camera to a scalpel. These comparisons are well suited when we think that his studio in Manhattan with its light grey walls and dirty windows was referred to as "the hospital".

One of the most interesting groups of photographs from Penn's camera in the Kumu exhibition are the portraits of local people photographed in portable tent studios during his travels in Morocco, New-Guinea and Dahomey. These works have often been seen to parallel Penn's fashion photography, which are viewed as aesthetic constructions. Now, when many of those indigenous people have lost their traditions, we cannot underestimate the historic ethnographic value of Penn's work.

Penn's still lifes, nudes and close-ups of items found on the streets paint a picture of the lives of his models behind the camera. Not by judging but confirming once again that everything in this world is worth looking at with understanding.

On one hand, Irving Penn's exhibition could be seen as a portrait of a 20th century American – the pictures published in *Vogue* offer a pretty good idea of what haunted and excited the reader. On the other hand, Penn's work provides food for thought at the beginning of the new century when time and quality have become luxuries.

Hedi Rosma is the Estonian editor for KUNST.EE.

¹ Vicki Goldberg, *Irving Penn is Difficult. "Can't You Tell?"* – *The New York Times* 24. XI 1991.

² Ibid.

³ *Irving Penn. – Photography Annual 1966.*

