



Inge Grogard make-up for Maison Martin Margiela Autumn-Winter 1996-1997.

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Walter Van Beirendonck, Autumn-Winter 2023-2024.

KAAT DEBO

Director MoMu - Fashion Museum Antwerp

With the exhibition *Masquerade, Make-up & Ensor*, MoMu – Fashion Museum Antwerp is taking part in an ambitious city festival in the autumn of 2024. With ‘Ensor 2024’, no fewer than four museums are putting the work of avant-garde Belgian painter and printmaker James Ensor (1860-1949) centre stage: MoMu, the Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp (KMSKA), the Plantin-Moretus Museum, and FOMU – Photo Museum Antwerp. That Ensor’s oeuvre is being illuminated not only from a fine arts perspective, but also from that of applied arts such as fashion and photography, is in line with a transdisciplinary exhibition approach that MoMu has been exploring for some time.

In *Masquerade, Make-up & Ensor*, we examine how Ensor’s ideas on masquerade, (false) coquetry, seduction, deception, the artificial and the ephemeral can resonate with a contemporary audience more than a century after his time. Our exploration leads us to universal human themes, from the fear of visible ageing to the pursuit of unattainable beauty ideals. The ambiguous masked beings in Ensor’s work can be read as a sharp indictment of the hypocrisy of the bourgeoisie in his day. These beings expose insecurities as well as the opportunism and increasing consumerism of his contemporaries. Even today, make-up and cosmetics are carriers of very ambiguous narratives. They are masks behind which humans anxiously hide their transience and insecurity, but they are also an inexhaustible source of self-expression and artistic inventiveness.

The exhibition and accompanying publication celebrate the painters of fashion: the make-up and hair artists who leave an unmistakable mark on the image of fashion and the beauty ideals of their time, artists who often operate in the shadow of the designer or creative director of a fashion house. Light, colour, material and tactility are, as with Ensor, the ingredients for both artistic experimentation and social commentary.

**INTO THE THEATRE OF ARTIFICE:
JAMES ENSOR, MAKE-UP, MASKS AND MASQUERADE**

James Ensor's paintings invite us into a theatre of artifice where masquerade and performance hold sway. Masking, make-up and arrangements of masks and skulls, skeletons and puppets, and costumed figures promote the disruptive and transgressive subterfuge of artifice and the satirical exchange of the artist's performative masquerade.

From an early age Ensor was aware of the expressive potential of masquerade. He recalled in an 1898 letter his grandmother dressing him and a pet monkey in strange costumes and a time when she stood by his bed in peasant garb wearing a terrifying mask. His home environment, and especially the strange and fantastic assortment of seashells, masks, stuffed fish and ornamental vases in the Ensor family's souvenir shop in Ostend, stimulated his imagination, encouraging revelry and the creative potential of fantastic invention: 'There can be no doubt that these exceptional surroundings helped to develop my artistic faculties or that my grandmother was my great inspiration.'¹ The annual festivities of Carnival and Mardi Gras introduced Ensor to a broader, more public performance of masquerade, one that inverted social codes while celebrating travesty, deception and excessive bodies. Ensor also enjoyed the irreverent and bawdry narratives of burlesque theatre and the puppet performances of the Toone Theatre in Brussels, as well as the satirical and often sarcastic parodies performed at artist cabarets like the Chat Noir.

Ensor promoted his alliance with artifice and masquerade from the very beginning of his long artistic career. As a student at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Brussels, he cheekily added lively pink flesh tones to a white plaster bust of the Roman emperor Octavian, effectively giving it a makeover. Inverting the staid classical tradition of copying, Ensor's bold intervention advanced instead the performative nature of his subjective mark making and the disruptive potential of masking and make-up.

THE MADE-UP SELF AS TRAVESTY

Like his maquillage intervention in academic instruction, Ensor's self-portraits often turned to masking and make-up, disguise and travesty when representing himself to the public. In *Self-Portrait with Flowered Hat* (1883/1888, p.22), Ensor gives himself a makeover, reworking an earlier painting by adding enhancements to create a provocative and striking portrait of himself as a modern Belgian artist. Looking out from a mirror-like oval that suggests the portrait is both a reflection of reality and a contrived artifice, Ensor turns to engage the viewer's eye. Dressed in the dark suit of a bourgeois gentleman, his dress and pose recall Paulus Pontius's engraving after a 1623 self-portrait of the Flemish Baroque master Peter Paul Rubens.² Painterly embellishments, such as a stylishly upturned moustache and a rakish hat festooned with a feather and flowers, present a deliberate, even flamboyant self-display, one that simultaneously proclaims Ensor's Flemish artistic heritage and his creative affiliation with masquerade.

1

Letter from Ensor to Louis Delattre dated
4 August 1898 (Archives of Contemporary
Art in Belgium, 91660)

2

More than likely Ensor was familiar with Pontius's
engraving as it served as the frontispiece for Théophile
Silvestre's essay on Rubens in Charles Blanc, et.al.,
Histoire des peintures de toutes les écoles: L'Art Flamand
(Paris: Renouard, 1883-84), 10: pp. 1-32.



James Ensor, *Scandalized masks*, 1883.



James Ensor, *Skeletons Warming Themselves*, 1889.



Thomas de Kluiver and Harley Weir, *Shibuya*, in *All I Want to Be*, 2019.

Roche looks for David Bowie as Aladdin Sane. De Kluyver also acknowledges the power that colour bestows on the wearer, not a mask per se but something more transformative: ‘I don’t think it leaves the person hiding behind it; it’s more empowering, allowing you to jump in to who you really are.’¹⁰ Full face make-up has returned as a persistent image. In 2020 it was employed for an editorial alongside an interview by fashion critic Susannah Frankel with Rei Kawakubo, the strands of glitter on the face sourced from AliExpress.

Runway make-up offers de Kluyver the chance to move away from work that is detailed, towards a style that moves or shines in more ambient ways. His work with Simone Rocha over more than seven years has evolved into a collaborative approach, ‘where the make-up is an integral part of the collection, it’s almost like a fashion accessory’¹¹. De Kluyver had been using bows on the faces of young men for some time, as expressive of gender tension, before he thought it might work for Rocha. It was a year later that they decided they had the right collection to work on, and this brought further distillation to the look: instead of multiple ribbon bow ties, it was refined down to a single thin ribbon with a long tie under each eye. The image of the bow face went viral on social media, but what was important for Rocha and de Kluyver was that the static image was a poor substitute for the way the bows moved on the models’ faces when they walked, a detail that is hard to see even on show videos. And it is here, in the idea of make-up as an emotional detail that can only be read by those in the room, that makes it such a unique part of a fashion show, as expressive of how creatives work together collaboratively to secure a vision.

PAT MCGRATH/SUMPTUOUS DECORATION

Pat McGrath is a make-up artist and creative director of her own make-up brand, Pat McGrath Labs. She has worked as a make-up artist for fashion shows, as well as editorials and advertising for brands such as Prada, Miu Miu, Jil Sander and Giorgio Armani. McGrath is a long-term collaborator of fashion photographer Steven Meisel, she has been Beauty Editor at *Large* for *British Vogue* since 2017, and is the first make-up artist to be made a Dame Commander of the British Empire. Much of Dame Pat’s most celebrated work has been as part of a long-standing, ongoing collaboration with John Galliano, with his own brand, in his work for Christian Dior and currently for Maison Margiela. The make-up design for Maison Margiela Artisanal Spring-Summer 2024 is a unique example of McGrath’s work and its broader cultural impact. The reaction to the show, considered to be a return to form for Galliano, was greatly extended by curiosity on social media as to how the porcelain-like skin was achieved with make-up. This is also a good example of how social media plays an increasingly central role in the dissemination of make-up know-how between artists and makers, producers and consumers.

Staged under the ornate bridge Pont Alexandre III in Paris, the show recreated a louche bar—both inside and out—inspired by the demi-monde documented in Brassai’s illicit photographs of Paris by night, taken in the 1930s but not published until 1976 due to the revealing nature of the imagery. Brassai famously said that, ‘Night does not show things, it suggests them,’¹² and the lighting for the fashion show coaxed models out of the shadows revealing them through spotlights and dry ice before returning them to the enveloping darkness. It meant that the make-up could not be seen in plain sight, but only disclosed itself as a sheened surface from a strange night, like the glowing sweat of a sex worker or the varnished skin of a mannequin doll. Further lustres and transparencies could be traced in sheer layers of latex dress fabric with corsetry beneath, and glazed white leather neck collars appeared like porcelain. Fashion critic Cathy Horyn

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Brassai, *Paris de Nuit: an exhibition of original photographs by Brassai from the book by Paul Morand*, (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd, 1933), n.p.



Juergen Teller for Walter Van Beirendonck & Wild and Lethal Trash! (W.&L.T.), *Believe* Autumn-Winter 1998-1999.
Make-up Inge Grogard, prosthetic make-up Geoff Portass and hair by Jean-Claude Gallon.

Translation by the author.
See 'Trucco', *Vocabolario Treccani*,
<https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/trucco/>,
accessed 15 March 2024.

In Italian, for instance, the word for make-up, 'trucco', means 'the act of applying cosmetics to one's face to render it more pleasing', but it also means 'a magic trick', and in its most negative iteration 'a deceit, a fraud'.⁷ Thus, make-up can bring us closer to an elusive beauty ideal, or like the carnivalesque mask, it can allow for a space of experimentation and playfulness, as well as being a rejection of the classical canon and the imperative of trying to achieve a narrow normative beauty standard.

Among the designers and artists working in the fashion realm who have explored the subversive potential of make-up is the Belgian Inge Grogard, who, since the 1980s, has employed make-up to create unsettling faces. For Martin Margiela, Grogard used make-up as if it were slashes of paint, often producing a black effect around the eyes that seemed a direct challenge to the dictum that make-up is supposed to brighten your eyes and *mask* the appearance of dark circles. In her make-up, the models look defiant rather than pleasing to the eye, as if wearing war paint. Further experimenting with make-up and beauty ideals, Grogard at times traces lines on the models' faces reminiscent of the marks made on people prior to undergoing cosmetic surgery, thus providing a further refusal of accepted beauty ideals. In a particularly poetic photograph, Grogard traces silver thread across a middle-aged model's expression lines: the thread highlights the wrinkles – the woman's life experience – as opposed to hiding them. These wrinkles are traditionally minimised via make-up and/or injectables, rather than emphasised, as Grogard does. The Belgian make-up artist further subverts cosmetic surgery procedures in a diptych portraying a younger and an older woman whose eyelids and cheeks are lifted by transparent tape, a crude reference to facelifts as well as cosmetic tape. The visible tape distorts and stretches the models' faces and, even though harmless, it creates a disquieting effect as it appears to be painful. The tape reminds the viewer of the invasiveness, pain and potential danger of facelift procedures. Another implicit critique of the dictum of optimisation through make-up, cosmetic surgery and injectables can be found in Grogard's more recent collaborations with Balenciaga, and particularly for the Spring-Summer 2020 collections for which she created the impression of extreme fillers on the models' cheekbones and lips.

These subversions of the tropes of cosmetic surgery have also been explored by the Belgian designer Walter Van Beirendonck, who, as early as 1998, began experimenting with prosthetic make-up by applying customised latex prostheses – which he developed in collaboration with special effect make-up artist Geoff Portass – to models' faces. These facial bumps, mainly placed on the forehead, were inspired by the work of French artist Orlan, whose 'carnal art' involved employing actual plastic surgery against the grain. In surgical operations, which also double as performances, Orlan had implants placed on her forehead, which destabilise the classical beauty ideals and clearly bring to mind the growths of the grotesque canon. Stating her alliance to feminism, Orlan comments on how her work denounces the technologies of beauty: 'My activity consists in denouncing the social pressures exerted on the body. And particularly on the female body.' To which she adds, 'I wanted to be the opposite of the habitual expectation of what it is to be a woman, being beautiful according to masculine criteria. My objective was to turn aesthetic surgery away from its habits of improving people, making them look younger.'⁸ In Van Beirendonck's Autumn-Winter 1998-1999 collection, facial prostheses (in the form of make-up) were applied to a range of models of different ages and genders as well as to the designers themselves, thus giving the impression of a race of humans whose faces had morphed into new beauty standards.

As quoted in Pascale Renaux, 'artifice',
in Thimo de Duits and Walter Van Beirendonck
[or Walter van Beirendonck & Wild and
Letal Trash!?] (eds), *believe*, exh. cat.,
Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam,
1998 (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 1998), n.p.



Cindy Sherman, *Untitled #360*, 2000.



Juergen Teller for Walter Van Beirendonck & Wild and Lethal Trash! (W.&L.T.), *Believe* Autumn-Winter 1998-1999.
Make-up Inge Grognaard, prosthetic make-up Geoff Portass and hair by Jean-Claude Gallon.

Colouring, Janice Li

The year 2024 has been unanimously named across beauty media outlets as the year of the blush. To put it in an economic context, US blusher sales in the prestige market alone went up 60 per cent in 2023 to \$427 million; in comparison, mascara saw a mere 6 per cent increase. A quick online search reveals a long list of key trends relating to blush: glazed blush, tomato girl, strawberry girl, boyfriend blush, sunset blush and après-ski blush, with application techniques such as draping, sandwiching, lifting and even stroking. New standards around inclusivity set by trailblazers such as Fenty Beauty – a brand initially focused on foundation to match a more diverse range of skin tones – have rippled into product development in blusher as well. Brands launching new blush products have not only expanded their ranges, but also demonstrated how the same shade appears on a myriad of skin colours with unique undertones. Another great hit of this TikTok era is pH colour-changing blusher, monetising the concept of a universally flattering hue.

Archaeological evidence from ancient civilisations across the world

attests to the instinctual and enduring practice of humans of all genders wearing cheek rouge. From seventeenth-century BCE frescoes in Akrotiri on the Aegean island of Thera (today's Santorini) documenting men and women wearing red cheek pigment, to the eighth-century Chinese imperial consort Yang Guifei popularising heavy blush wearing, for millennia humans have crushed mulberries and cochineal, and grounded red ochre and cinnabar, to create a range of scarlet-hued pigments to adorn their cheeks.

While the fashion for blush applications, like all trends in history, has lived through long cycles of evolution, blushed cheeks have always been associated with wider socio-cultural, physiological and economic meanings, which sometimes leads to its popularity and sometimes to its decline. It can be read as a sign of youthfulness and a marker of good health; its most powerful connotation, however, is one associated with our complex internal emotional landscape, so much so that the naturalist Charles Darwin proclaimed blushing to be 'the most peculiar and the most human of all expressions'.¹

Naturally flushed cheeks are indicative of a flow of oxygenated





Make-up by Lucy Bridge, hair by Eugene Souleiman,
photography by Jean Marques, *Beauty Papers*, issue 11.

Tschabalala Self

‘As a child, both images that were meant to depict beauty and images meant to depict the opposite of beauty impacted me. They had an impact on how I saw and currently see myself, as well as the characters in my paintings. The images that I most associated with beauty were images depicting north-eastern, Black American women from the 1990s. I’m thinking about Nia Long, Lil’Kim (circa 1996), Aaliyah, Garcelle Beauvais and Robin Givens – that is what is in the forefront of my mind when I think of a “beautiful woman”. It’s probably because their peak fame aligned with my early memories of television and visual media. These early images shaped my first concepts of beauty. I remember aspiring towards these images for many years, likely because there was a familiarity and accessibility to them. They mirrored, to some degree, my own aesthetic and aesthetics of the women in my family and in my community. Because I grew up in a very pro-Black family, I wanted to find beauty that looked like mine to imitate. Beauty standards can be informed by your political mindset. A lot of the time, beauty ideals reflect the politics you want to align yourself with. Unfortunately, many people do not understand this relationship and underestimate the political aspect of beauty and preference.’

Tschabalala Self



Tschabalala Self, *Black Face Flush with Blonde Wig*, 2022.



Harley Weir



Harley Weir for *Beauty Papers*, 2022.
Make-up by Ana Takahashi and hair by Shiori Takahashi.



ATTENTION
Veuillez
RESPECTER
NE PAS LAISSER
DES

However creative, it could also be kind of draining. But at the same time, he was very open to suggestions from me. We did some memorable shows together and then I skipped a few collections because it was all becoming too hectic during fashion week... too many shows and often only three hours in-between. I did end up returning to McQueen to do his last shows. I had heard from stylist Tabitha Simmons who said: 'it would be really nice to have you back. He is working on a really good collection'. When I returned, Lee was like a new person and it was fantastic to work with him. Before the show, he would send a huge box of books with references so I could prepare, and then we would go to London to do a first test. It was an amazing process. Our last show together was the one with incredible prosthetics, *Plato's Atlantis*, for Spring-Summer 2010. I also did the presentation of the collection he had been working on before he passed away, which was very emotional for everyone involved. It felt like a funeral.

Elisa De Wyngaert

During the last two decades you have been developing new products: first between 2008 and 2013 as creative director of Chanel's make-up and beauty lines, and since 2014 as creative and image director of Christian Dior make-up. What is the most exciting part of this work?

PETER PHILIPS

That people buy them. That's amazing. I don't have a marketing degree, but I'm apparently a very good salesperson. The question with brands like Dior is how do we keep our house and our make-up brand relevant for the younger generation? You constantly have to reinvent yourself to attract a younger audience but at the same time you don't want to lose your existing loyal clients. Backstage is a dynamic environment, so I came up with the concept of a backstage line. I'm very proud to not just work on the product itself, but also on the total concept and story. All the things that I learnt in Brussels still come in handy. I mean, I've been reinventing and relaunching Rouge Dior every three years. We work with the labs very closely to update and fine-tune the formula over and over again. I want people to wear it and be seduced by it.

Elisa De Wyngaert

Young make-up artists, I think, have to promote themselves quite a lot online and show their work. Make-up artists are not as anonymous as they have been. They're active on social media, as are you today. What is your experience of this transition towards an increasing online presence?

PETER PHILIPS

You kind of grow into it. I remember the first shows in Paris before social media, when you suddenly had *Fashion TV* and there were a camera and microphone in your face. Nobody prepared us for that. I never had media training. So, you kind of said, 'Leave me alone... the show is in five minutes, and I've got ten more girls to do.' But then you saw yourself being grumpy on a TV in a hotel somewhere, on repeat, for four months. I quickly realised I needed to be more careful not to push the media away. Then the phones and selfies came along, and the backstage became almost as important as

the catwalk, just like the front row now is quite often more important than the catwalk. It's all part of image-making at the service of selling products.

Kaat Debo

Today, beauty is becoming increasingly focused on the fight against ageing. There are many tools to maintain the appearance of youthfulness. How do you deal with ageing?

PETER PHILIPS

In a way, everything that I do is based on fakeness. Foundation is the illusion of great skin. So it's fake. Mascara is the illusion of longer lashes. So it's fake. It is part of a routine, of a ritual. It's a very acceptable fake. New treatments like fillers and Botox are like everything else in the beginning: they seem extreme, but soon become mainstream. I remember, ten years ago, people turned their heads if they saw someone with pink hair. It was a fashion statement, such as Kate Moss with pink hair in Italian *Vogue*. Nobody else dared to wear it. Now, people go to job interviews with pink hair. That would not have been imaginable ten years ago. Tattoos went through the same transition period. They used to be very edgy or punk. Now, everywhere you go, anybody can have a tattoo. There's no problem with that because it's accepted. People need a bit of time to adapt their eyes and their perspective. Botox and facelifts are accepted now. I don't judge anybody. Sometimes I am just a bit worried about people's health. When you go too far with Ozempic, for example, to achieve a younger silhouette. You don't know what the consequences are going to be if you combine this with a lot of fillers. I'm not going to push my opinion onto anybody. I can advise them if they want advice. I can share my experience and my expertise. With my friends or people that I know and care for, when I see a bit too much Botox, I tell them 'be careful'. Or if they try fillers, I advise them to be careful because if you go on a diet, you lose your natural fat and the face underneath your fillers will still be ageing. And then before you know it, you start to show deformations that you cannot fix. This is the only advice I will give.

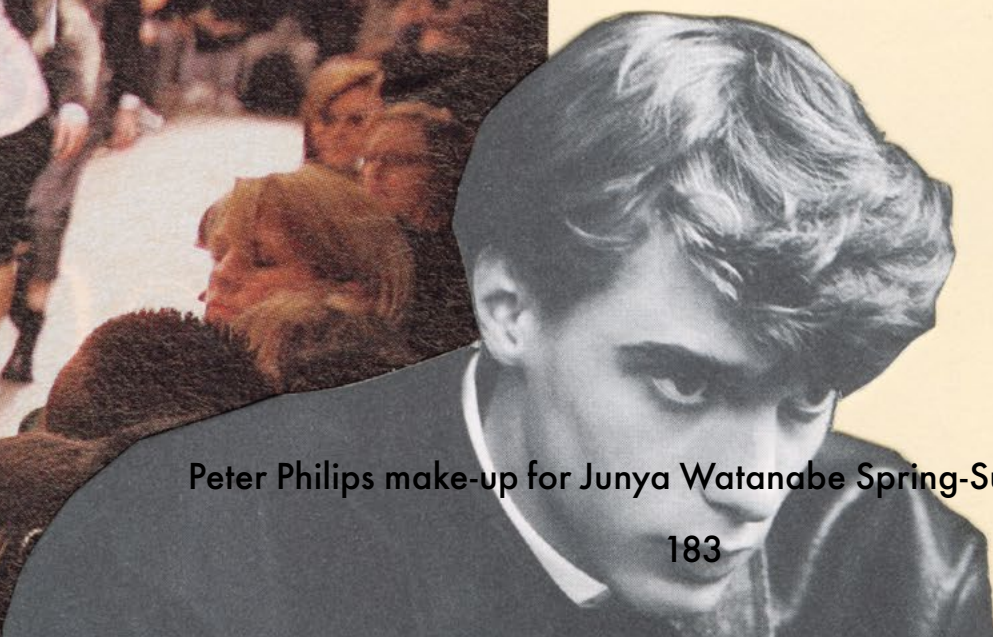
Kaat Debo

Do you follow the medical evolutions in this field as well?

PETER PHILIPS

I've done Botox myself. I'm very happy with that. After my first Botox I looked like the shiniest Easter egg. I could not move anything. Nobody knew if I was happy or mad or dead. It taught me that I needed to do the research and take small steps. Don't forget the face you had and where you came from. Since then, I've learnt how to balance it out. I've found that the key is to remain critical enough towards yourself, to keep an objective eye on the mirror and at a particular point to accept that there's nothing wrong with ageing. We're lucky if we hit a certain age. I know models that are of a certain age who have had work done and they look fantastic, and they feel fantastic. But I also know women and models that have had nothing done at all and they truly look as great as the others. It's just a different approach to beauty.

**Peter Philips make-up for Alexander McQueen
Spring-Summer 2010 *Plato's Atlantis* (Left)**



Peter Philips make-up for Junya Watanabe Spring-Summer 2006

**THERE
IS
BEAUTY
IN
DEFYING
THE
IDEAL**

Genieve Figgis in conversation with Elisa De Wyngaert



Genieve Figgis, *Family outdoors*, 2021

**Genieve Figgis was born in 1972 in Dublin, Ireland,
and currently lives and works in County Wicklow, Ireland.**

Elisa De Wyngaert

The starting point of the exhibition is the 'Theatre of Artifice'. We explore the link between make-up and masks through different themes and stories.

Interestingly, James Ensor's masks weren't there for his characters to hide behind. On the contrary, the masks revealed their true nature, their coquettishness, anger, jealousy, fear or cruelty. Does your characters' make-up reveal something about who they are or about their mental state?

GENIEVE FIGGIS

I find people fascinating and enjoy watching how they interact with their surrounding environment; the choices they make in these unusual environments we inhabit. I have always seen life as a kind of performance, especially women's role in society and what was expected of them. When I was a young girl, I observed what was expected of women and understood it to be a false narrative that was laid out before me. I know now that it was the influence of the Catholic church and the patriarchy. They were enforcing all the rules. In history, the female body was constrained in a tight corset, then it was high heels unsteady the movement and forcing her to walk slowly behind. Currently it is the media's programming of youthful minds, repeating the mantra of unworthiness. People wear make-up in compliance with current beauty standards. I search for freedom and fantasy as I create my work, which I hope will undermine this current narrative. Some people find this part of my work unnerving and I hope that my Irish sense of humour slightly levels it out.

Elisa De Wyngaert

There is a darker tone to Ensor's work. Your work feels different, more emphatic. How would you describe the relationship you have with the characters you paint?

GENIEVE FIGGIS

I really enjoy the work of James Ensor. There is a theatricality. Like him, I observe. I hope that I would look upon the characters empathetically. We are all the same. We all are performing together. Where there are people, there is drama. I watch from afar and with a sense of humour. I hope there can be kindness. The characters portrayed in my work are rendered freely in the paint, and the surface I enjoy working with allows a certain exaggeration and a freer interpretation. I set them free.

Elisa De Wyngaert

Are you interested in people playing a role, keeping up appearances?

GENIEVE FIGGIS

I am interested in the idea of performing perfection. It is a fantasy that is constantly aimed for, but it can never be achieved. The breaking down of perfection can be beautiful. The women are more disobedient as they strive for beauty but fail, and the failure is brave and a more creative way of depicting a portrait. 'Normal' and 'traditional' are very tedious and I would like to show the joy in working against that idea.

Elisa De Wyngaert

Growing up, what did beauty mean to you?

GENIEVE FIGGIS

I guess I never really identified with supermodels or media-type beauties. The women I really admired and who were influential were my grandmother, great-aunts and aunties. They showed me leadership in how to exist in the world and how to be independent. They were beautiful to me. The magazine ladies were unattainable and from a young age I understood this. Since then, I have always gravitated toward the unconventional.

Elisa De Wyngaert

Your work magnifies the close relationship between make-up and paint. Rather than being blended to become one with the skin and canvas, your painterly strokes sit on the surface. Your lips are comprised of overt dabs; your blush playfully contends with traditional requirements of subtlety. It seems that you are breaking down beauty standards by exaggerating the use of make-up beyond its traditional purpose.

How do you see this?

GENIEVE FIGGIS

My goal is usually to obtain a more progressive way of perceiving beauty. Idyllic Thomas Gainsborough portraits show ladies of perfection, and yet you can find beauty in the portraits of Otto Dix, and Lucas Cranach too. There is a fascination with the grotesque. Perfection is the new phantastic. I am not laughing at anyone or judging, but the charade of life has gotten out of hand. We need to sit back and take a look at what's important. Just like the artist Pieter Breughel the Elder who made an observation of our contemporary way of life without directly painting from life. I am not over-rationalising the portrait as I paint; it is always open for those twists and turns. There is a fluidity and innocence as I make it up as I go along, allowing myself and the characters to be free. There is a danger of failure always and somehow it kind of comes together. I am looking at my own reflection and laughing. I have a dark sense of humour and it is not directly responding to anyone personally. Women can be seen as both grotesque and beautiful. There is beauty in the abject and in defying the ideal.

Elisa De Wyngaert

Your characters remind me of doing your make-up in a dimly lit room and stepping out into the world, unknowingly looking somehow out of place. Does the idea of shame play a role in your work?

GENIEVE FIGGIS

There is no shame in trying to obtain these goals and beauty ideals. I have an understanding as a 50-year-old woman myself. We all want to blend in and seem normal. What I see today is going beyond that. There is a violence against women's bodies as they are under the media's scrutiny in obtaining a false idea of perfection. What is wrong with being imperfect?

Elisa De Wyngaert

You like to use watered-down acrylic paint and I've read how you enjoy the way it becomes a difficult and messy process with no guarantee of success. Is there a performative element to this process?

Inge Grognaard (left) posing as a make-up artist for Martin Margiela's graduate collection photoshoot in 1980. Make-up by model Ghislaine Nuytten



Kaat Debo
**Where does your interest in make-up
 and fashion come from?**

INGE GROGNARD

Even as a child, my mother says I was really into clothes. Twice a year we got new outfits and my mother would say, 'You always manage to pick out the most expensive ones.' I wasn't easy; I had a thing for clothes and for the beauty of appearance. I was 12 when I met Josiane, Martin Margiela's cousin. We went to the same school for girls where uniforms were compulsory. Through her, I was introduced to Martin. When we were 16, the three of us went to Paris, mainly for the flea markets. We saved drastically on food and spent our entire budget on second-hand clothes. In the evening we paraded down the Champs-Élysées in them, wearing sunglasses and loose-fitting coats. We had pancakes, drank cheap red wine and went home with a suitcase full of nice things.

Kaat Debo
**Why did you ultimately choose to train
 in make-up and not fashion?**

INGE GROGNARD

I felt that my drawing skills fell just a little bit short. I was hard on myself and always felt I had to be able to really excel at something, to turn it into my craft. My love for clothing did lead me to something closely related: make-up. And I wanted to leave home. Together with Josiane, I enrolled in a beauty school that offered theoretical courses and also basic make-up training. The advantage was that we had few classes. Martin went to study fashion and we were always there when there were shows at the Fashion Department of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp.

Elisa De Wyngaert
**You could say that today you practice the
 opposite of what is taught in traditional beauty schools.
 What did you get out of your training?**

INGE GROGNARD

Mainly a wonderful sense of freedom. During those three years, we went to the cinema every week and bought second-hand clothes that we adjusted to our liking. It was during that time that I met Walter Van Beirendonck, who was also good friends with Martin. When there were themed parties, they would come to our place in Berchem with props, such as a bag full of feathers. We were happy to help them dress up and transform themselves.

Elisa De Wyngaert
Can you tell us about the first shoot you were involved in?

INGE GROGNARD

The first time I was involved in a photo shoot was for Martin's graduation collection. The photos were taken at the hair salon where I worked for a year. I didn't have enough experience to do Ghislaine Nuytten's make-up, which she did beautifully herself. I was present as a prop rather. I have fond memories of that day.

Elisa De Wyngaert
**There were designers you looked up to at the time, such
 as Claude Montana, Thierry Mugler and Jean Paul Gaultier,
 but were there any role models for you in the world of make-up?**

INGE GROGNARD

I didn't really have a role model. I do remember how special it was for me to discover Linda Mason's work. She was the first one to write something on a face; a revelation. Martin had

shown me her work. Serge Lutens was also a great inspiration during his time, working for Dior and then Shiseido. He had a very personal signature and did everything himself: hair, make-up, set, photography... incredible.

Kaat Debo
**What about later in your career? Have there been people
 in the make-up world that you have found inspiring?**

INGE GROGNARD

I find inspiration in films, theatre, music and things that stand out rather than in other make-up artists.

Kaat Debo
**What was your first professional experience after
 working as a student in the hair salon?**

INGE GROGNARD

After that year in the hair salon, I went back to school, in Antwerp, to train to be a secondary school teacher for science. I was good at science, but soon realised I could no longer follow a traditional curriculum. I switched to secondary school teacher training in Ghent. By then, I had already married Ronald [Stoops], in 1981. From 1981 to 1983, I commuted to Ghent every day and finished the course. It took some getting used to, because the other students were much younger than me and sometimes commented on my style or appearance. Before launching myself as a freelance, I went back to work in the hair salon. By that time, the owners had opened a salon for men and they wanted me to run it. I agreed, but on condition that I could combine my work with shoots. By now, I was collaborating with magazines such as *Mode. Dit is Belgisch, Bam, Flair, Knack*... I was still doing both hair and make-up. There was a lot of freedom and room for experimentation, and that was my training ground. I was able to train in those years, through trial and error.

Kaat Debo
What products did you use back then?

INGE GROGNARD

I bought most of them myself. Sponsorship didn't exist at the time, or at least I didn't know how it worked. I often went to theatre shops because they had brighter colours, and I mixed products to get the colours I wanted.

Elisa De Wyngaert
**You first job abroad was for Martin Margiela's first show in Paris.
 How did you experience that show backstage?**

INGE GROGNARD

It was pretty chaotic because there was very little light backstage. I was supposed to model in the show too. My silhouette was hanging on a coat stand, ready for me, but in the end I didn't have time. The make-up consisted of panda eyes, longer bangs for some models, a red mouth. I did have some assistants to help me, but they didn't have much experience backstage either.

Elisa De Wyngaert
**When they hear your name, most people immediately
 think of your collaboration with Martin Margiela, but you have
 actually worked for many Belgian designers.**

INGE GROGNARD

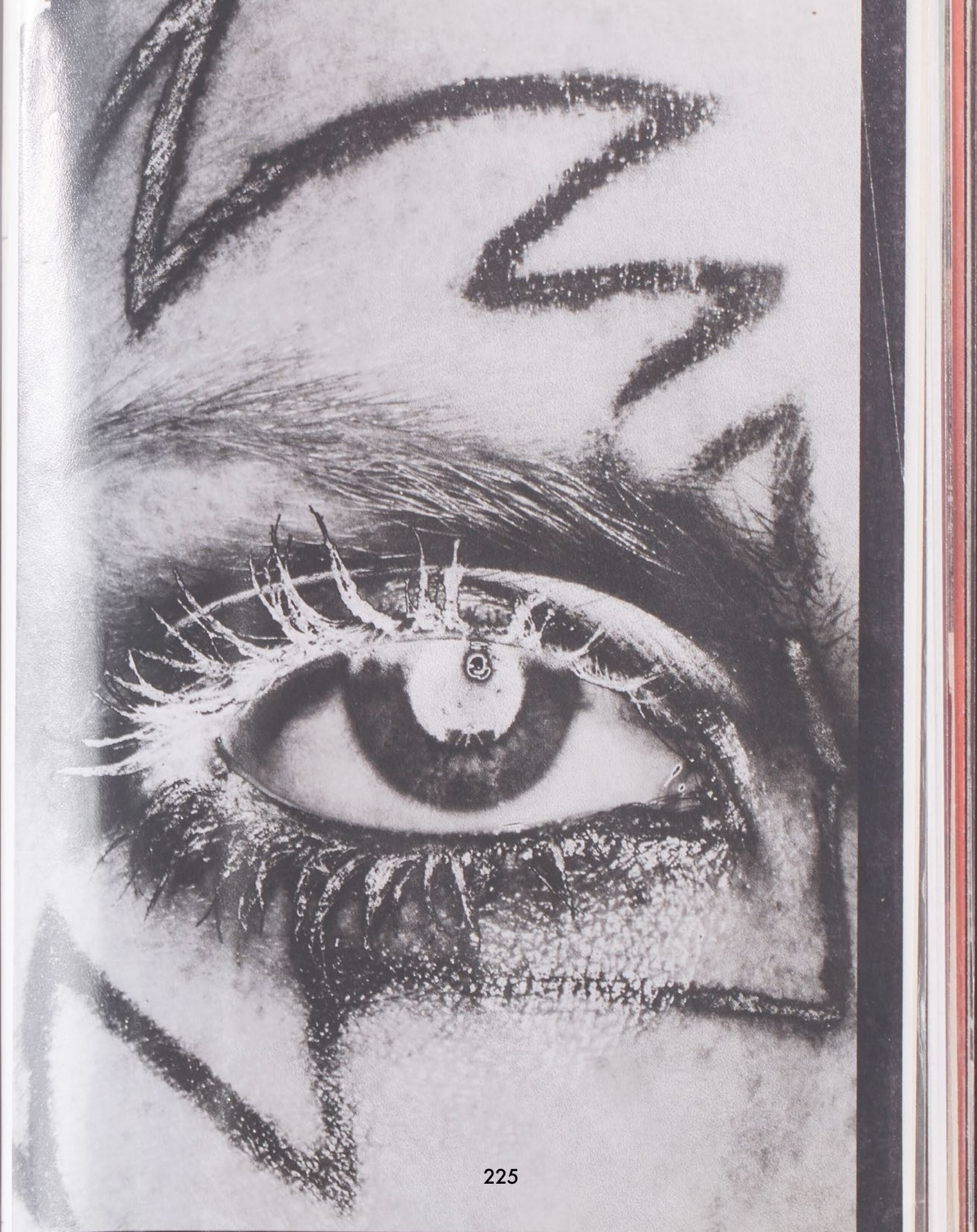
For almost all of them, and always with great dedication. I learnt a lot from them and it was a real pleasure to immerse myself in their worlds. It started with the Antwerp Six. Then came the second generation, with Raf Simons, Veronique Branquinho, Jurgi Persoons, Haider Ackermann, A.F.Vandevorst and Wim Neels. Today, there are also younger alumni from the



MISERY. 1980. 95x158 in. 241x401 cm.



DEAD MASKS. 1980. 71x119 in. 181x301 cm.



**OLD LADY WITH MASKS,
JAMES ENSOR**

In *Old Lady with Masks* (1889, p. 240), James Ensor portrays an elderly woman. She wears a garland of flowers on her head and stares before her unperturbed, as if she were looking at herself in a mirror. Mocking masks and grinning figures crowd around her face; a skull appears at the top right. The close-up perspective and the accumulation of motifs heighten the dramatic tension, while the powerful brushwork and contrasted colour palette – bright red, blue and green – underline the sense of menace inherent to the scene. Whether the elderly lady is being taunted or whether she herself is part of the masked scene is not unambiguous. However, she shows a certain resemblance to the figures surrounding her, in both her slightly ironic expression and her gaudy make-up.

‘Mon occupation préférée:
Illustrer les autres, les enlaidir, les enrichir.’

James Ensor, 1921¹

Ensor was originally commissioned to paint a portrait. After the client rejected the end result, Ensor transformed the work in 1889 into a crowded masquerade, a *Théâtre des masques ou bouquet d’artifice* (Theatre of masks or Bouquet d’Artifice), as the artist would entitle the reworked painting². Whoever is hiding behind the old lady – possibly Dutch poet Neel ‘Keetje Tippel’ Doff (1858–1942)³ – loses some of their importance given this expressive, layered title. Such reworkings were in any case not exceptional in Ensor’s practice. In 1888–89, he regularly added fantastical creatures to realistic-looking paintings produced earlier. In doing so, the artist altered the substance and gave the imagination the upper hand. The best-known example is his *Self-Portrait with Flower Hat* (1883–88, p. 22), in which he reworked not only the painting but also himself.

Old Lady with Masks can in the first place be related to numerous representations Ensor realised during the second half of the 1880s of women from his immediate environment in Ostend, an environment perceived as oppressive: his resident grandmother and aunt, his mother, his younger sister Mitche and her daughter Mariette. Since the death in 1887 of Ensor’s father – an event that was a great shock to the artist – he had been surrounded at home by those women only. Although he rarely allowed them to pose, he did spy on them while they were working or while they were resting or sleeping in their chairs. He portrayed them from a distance, as it were, and rather unflatteringly, often surrounded here too by monstrous and satirical creatures (p. 240), as if he wanted to secretly underline the sullen, dismissive attitude of his housemates. James Ensor also felt less and less accepted in his own artistic milieu

1

‘My favourite occupation: Rendering others illustrious, making them ugly, embellishing them.’ James Ensor, ‘Interview’ (1921), in *Écrits de James Ensor de 1921 à 1926, avec un autographe d’Ensor et un dessin inédit original* (Ostend and Bruges: Éditions de ‘La Flandre littéraire’, 1926), p. 5.

2

Les Vingt. Catalogue de la huitième exposition annuelle (Brussels, February 1891), cat. No. 6 (James Ensor).

3

Xavier Tricot, *Leven en werk. Oeuvrecatalogus van de schilderijen* (Brussels and Brasschaat: Mercatorfonds and Pandora Publishers, 2009), p. 302.