

Somoloff

gommo

nois



Michael Somoroff

The Art of Substance

At the heart of Michael Somoroff's work is a profound sense of responsibility regarding the function of art. Art for him is an extension of philosophy—both spiritual and existential. Somoroff's instinctive grasp for "the essential" dominates the work. A Somoroff photograph has an immediacy, an impact and communicates a clear signal of what it is about. He has continually pushed the boundaries of photography beyond the limits of the medium—with determined enquiry. Basically, he is a conceptual artist, a versatile image maker who uses photography to contemplate the relationship between photography and Truth. For the past three decades Somoroff has created a body of work of exceptional character and authority.

The conjunction between art and commerce winds through Somoroff's career, challenging our visual definitions of these areas. Issues of art: the pursuit of a particular aesthetic standard, and advertising: the creation of desire, are topics usually antithetical. Concerned with both, Somoroff has molded his career along complex and occasionally mysterious lines.

Michael Somoroff grew up in the midst of the Philadelphia and New York Schools of photography, in the 1950s, steeped in the Brodovitch tradition. The name Somoroff is closely tied to a certain moment, the climax of analog image making, the heyday of editorial photography and advertising. Two generations, Ben, the father, one of the most eminent still life photographers of his time, and Michael, the son, heir of a great tradition. As a student of the legendary art director Alexey Brodovitch, Ben introduced Michael at an early age to Brodovitch's revolutionary philosophy, which influenced a generation of directors, photographers, artists, and designers to make unexpected images and push the boundaries of conventional ways of seeing. Michael Somoroff was deeply fascinated by this notion. It fueled his need to learn about the craft of photography. His persistence in learning his craft and his attention to understanding the full range of tones and textures possible in black-and-white photography led him to master rare and difficult techniques, which has allowed him a versatility and artistic reign over how to present the final object.

Brodovitch was also instrumental in bringing about modern aesthetics with his obsession with renewal, and fear of banality—a search for quality of innovation as well as care for details. Somoroff was witness to and became part of a privileged moment. His ground-breaking career as a photographer and director is rooted in these ideas as well as in the tradition of being a master craftsman and creative explorer.

After having assisted his father run a prosperous studio, Somoroff opened his own studio in the mid-seventies, in New York. While building up his editorial and commercial work during the day, he used his free time to pursue a body of personal work, *The Vegetable Series*. He was already a seasoned photographer by his early twenties when, in 1979, Richard Avedon helped facilitate his first show of this work at the International Center of Photography, New York. Cornell Capa, director of ICP exhibited the work and published an accompanying catalog. Somoroff often says that his work, “stands on the shoulders of my heroes.” Irving Penn was one of Somoroff’s great heroes along with Richard Avedon. He followed their work closely from an early age. *The Vegetable Series* was in deliberate response and opposition to Penn’s platinum-palladium cigarette butts and street detritus. Instead of seeking out discards, Somoroff focused on making color portraits of ordinary vegetables. With this series of thirty-six photographs he experimented with color and graphic elements, creating a sense of movement and emotion where the original form of the objects dissolve and create compositions of beauty and transparency. Here he demonstrates how one theme does not restrict a photographer. He sets the stage for his future explorations whereby each subject needs a different kind of solution.

Irving Penn, who attended Brodovitch’s photo labs in Philadelphia at the same time as Ben Somoroff, along with Louis Faurer, Ben Rose, Arnold Newman, and Sol Mednick, was a driving force behind Michael Somoroff’s decision to turn to portraiture. This group of Brodovitch disciples, who later became known as the Philadelphia School, informed every aspect of the young Somoroff’s work. He was introduced by his father to many of these iconic photographers and art directors, including Elliot Erwitt, Andreas Feininger, Ralph Gibson, Duane Michals, Arnold Newman, and Helmut Newton. In Europe he was introduced and befriended some of the greatest photographers of the twentieth century, Brassai, André Kertész, and Jacques-Henri Lartigue, among others, and had the privilege of photographing them. The master-apprentice tradition lived on, so that deep and lasting bonds were forged. They became great advocates of his work. The portraits that Michael Somoroff took were originally created as a kind of visual journal, a tribute to the modern masters by a young photographer. Remarkable is the care and precision with which he posed and arranged his subjects. In these elegant portraits, Somoroff seems to be searching for real truths of character. It is an invitation for us, the viewer, to look with rigorous attention. It is the way in which his models look at, and through us, that defines this work. The photographs were exhibited in Germany in the early eighties where *Stern* magazine commented: “Michael Somoroff is showing a who’s who of photography . . . Somoroff is genetically programmed for such work . . . They make Michael Somoroff into a photographer who should, with a self-portrait, join this series.” Intensely personal, the images were never intended for publication and were forgotten for many years. Somoroff has commented, “These photographers had set a high bar and continue to inspire me.” Nearly thirty-five years after the

first photo session, this historic body of work was published in *A Moment. Master Photographers: Portraits by Michael Somoroff* (Damiani, 2012). The images were made in a spirit of comradeship, collaboration, and experimentation between apprentice and master, and are remarkable for their emotional impact, composition, and creativity. An instinctive classicist with a magical gift for visual rhythm, Somoroff has been shooting portraits of the great creative talents of their time ever since.

Somoroff's still lifes continue his father's work, yet exemplify a unique photographic style. He weaves with grace and precision the thread of personal vision through controlled conceptual arrangements of objects and at times deconstructs simple actions, making the viewer stop, look, and experience the everyday in new ways. The formal perfection of these compositions, seemingly simple at first, are perplexing by an element of an unexplained source evoking action, which is otherwise absent from the picture. These are seamless jewels.

In the early nineteen-eighties Somoroff moved to Europe where he became a celebrated photographer in his own right. He contributed to such notable publications as *Life*, *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Stern*, *Time*, and *Der Spiegel*. His portraiture, nudes, and still lifes captured a wide audience through magazine editorials, and exhibitions of his work throughout the continent received critical acclaim. He later added film to his skills and became one of the most successful commercials directors in the world. He innovated techniques for creating images and conducted formal experiments in his work, blurring and transcending the frontier between commercial and fine art. Recognizing photography's ability to translate space/time into visual elements, Somoroff's exploration of light,

movement, and time, informed by computer technology and spiritual wisdom, has led him to create conceptual and multilayered bodies of work such as *Modo* and other *Photo-Plastiks*. In 2006 he was invited to create a large-scale outdoor installation, *Illumination I*, for the Rothko Chapel in Houston, the first artist invited to do so since Barnett Newman.

In 2007, Somoroff's intellectual restlessness and visual curiosity led him to look deeper into the monumental work of the legendary German photographer August Sander. He created a body of work *Absence of Subject*, which includes black-and-white photographs as well as videos. It is at once a celebration of Sander's work and a poignant tribute. Somoroff, having carefully reviewed Sander's *People of the 20th Century (Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts)*, selected forty images in which to weave his own tapestry. Through the unprecedented digital revolution and specialized software he erased the subject from each Sander portrait, retaining only the background. In each of these forty images, the backgrounds, once a secondary fragment, become the primary motivator. They are translated into new, fully conceived works that belong to the postmodern idiom. It is a complex elliptical ambitious work. As with *The Vegetable Series* and *A Moment. Master Photographers*, Somoroff honors a mentor, and provides us with a thoughtful and passionate meditation on memory, imagination, human resilience, creativity, and mortality. The originality in the body of work is based on a keen sense of observation and interpretation. Conceptually and humanistically oriented, each of Somoroff's images demonstrates the persuasive power and aesthetic of August Sander's oeuvre. It lets us revisit August Sander's important work, allowing us to understand the richness of Sander's intent and is a perfect example of a delicate balance

of alchemy and inquiry. The images embrace chance and acceptance. Somoroff establishes that postmodern art isn't dislocated, but has roots, tradition, and continuity.

Two Crowns of the Egg is an intense series of portraits and nudes of the artist's wife, a collaborative work of art about enduring love and the search for Truth. His most ambitious and audacious body of work to date, it is a rich postmodern love story. It provides a stark reflection of the condition of our time, combining old and new styles with an almost hedonistic intensity. Somoroff made portraits and nudes of his wife during their honeymoon and following a painful separation seventeen years later, in 2012, and much soul searching, the couple reconciled shortly thereafter with renewed passion. Somoroff finished this work with a new series of pictures taken over the course of four days in the spring of 2013. The entire body of work reveals the most intimate and different aspects of their love, the multiplicity of their postmodern love affair, and their individual psychologies, concentrating our attention on the process of unmasking and revealing. In the mixture of portraits and still lifes, black-and-white as well as color, a variety of films (some even out-of-date), and subtle changes of color in the black-and-white work, we are confronted with work that profoundly exhibits formal intelligence and resourcefulness. There is meaning here, whether about marriage or love or life or all of the above, but the precise nature of that meaning is never fully revealed. This work contains four dreamlike narratives built out of fragments and observations and through these elements weaves an intricate web. There is a primal energy in the passages, the tension of a modern woman. Is this the story of a me and a you and then a she and a him and finally a you? Somoroff deftly moves the narrative forward with elegant shifts of point of view. There

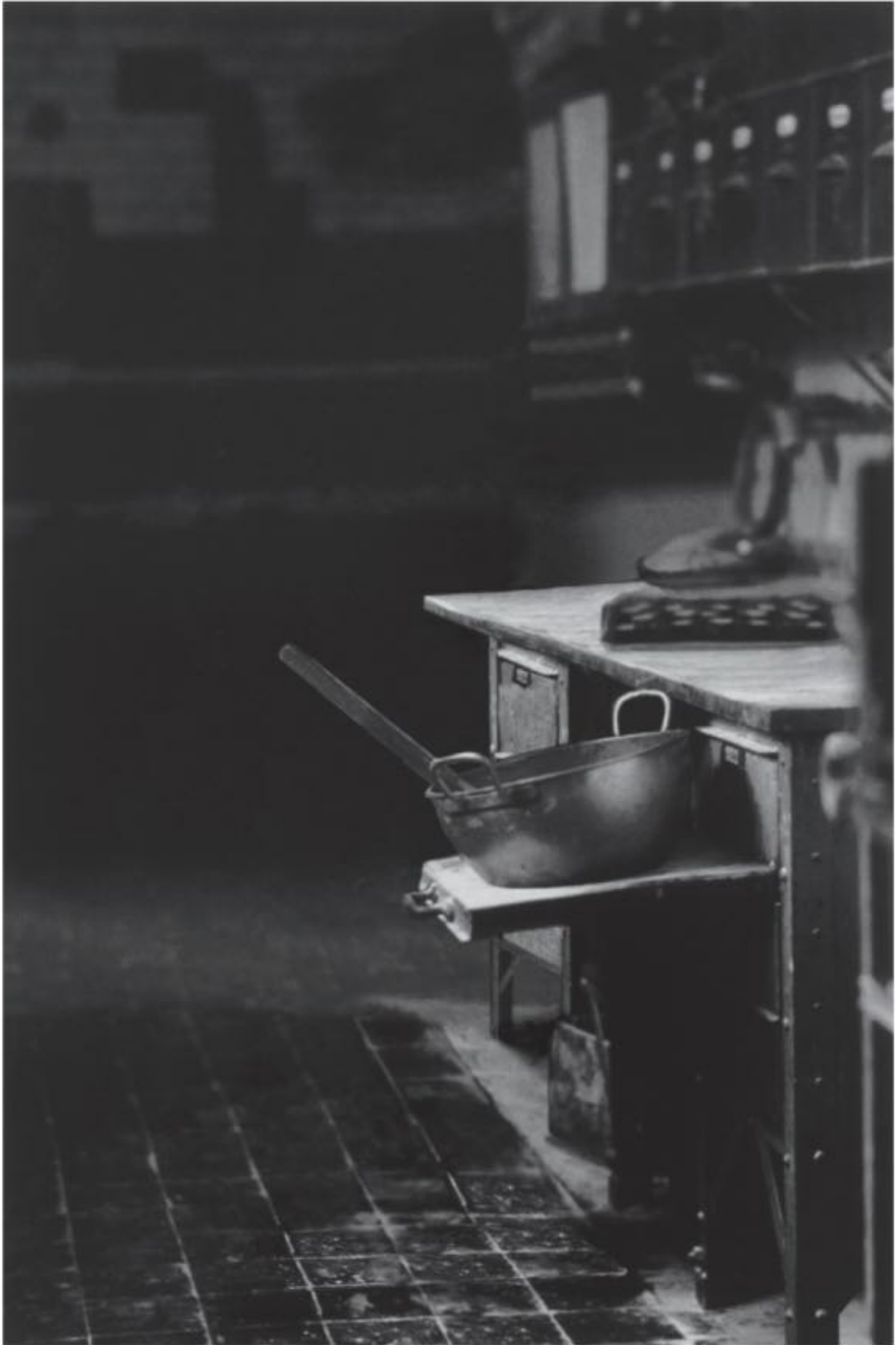
are moments of breathtaking tenderness and others of gut-wrenching depth. In the end it is a reflection on love, mortality, sexuality, desire, and spirituality that is transcendent and touches everyone's struggle for connection.

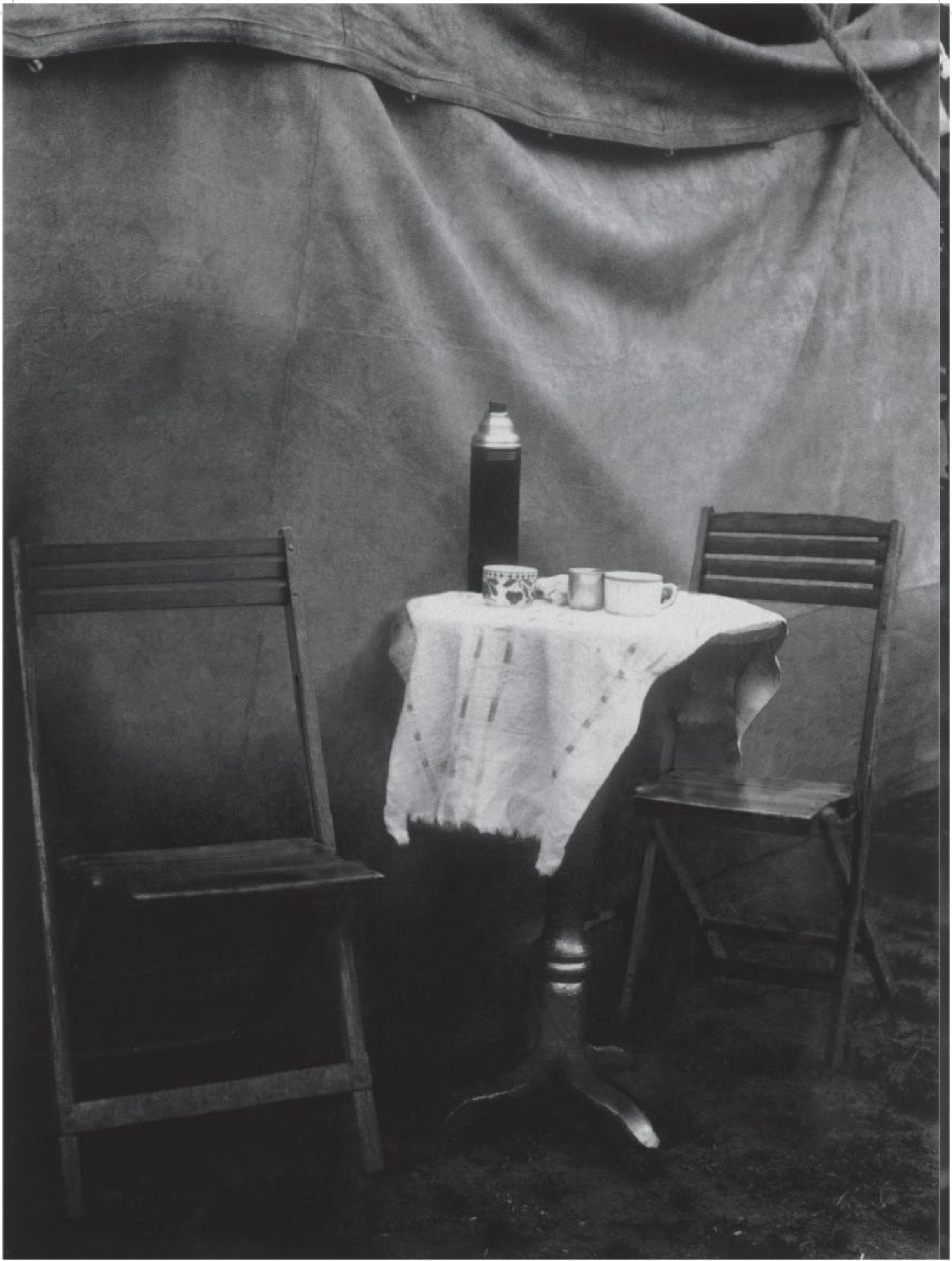
An article published in the *New York Times* in 2007 describes Somoroff's approach as, "Madison Avenue meets the Italian Renaissance: big budgets, large teams, high tech tools and an artist manager equally at ease with corporate sponsors and Chelsea gallerists." Somoroff's work, characterized by a high level of craft, a conceptual approach, and a powerful visual language, is to a great extent an expression of the Brodovitch model translated into postmodern culture. All of these arenas which Somoroff has created for us to ponder is a testament to his profound indifference to the parameters of conventional taste, which of course, was nurtured by Brodovitch, who knew no boundaries.

-- Diana Edkins











STILL

LIFE



Call & For

Kontakt





















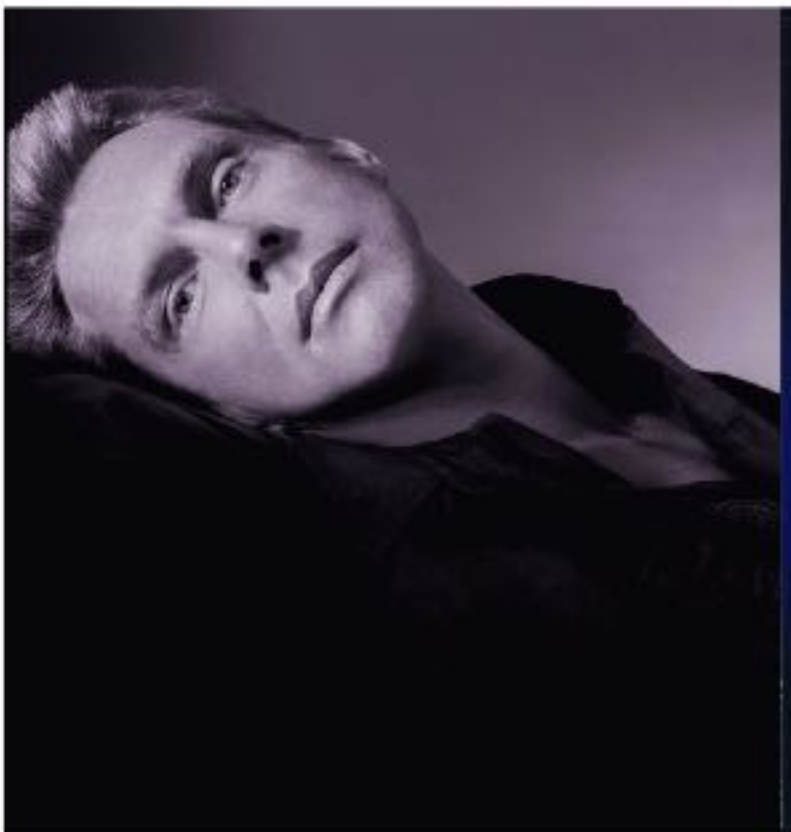












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JOOP!

DOUCHE CRISTAL

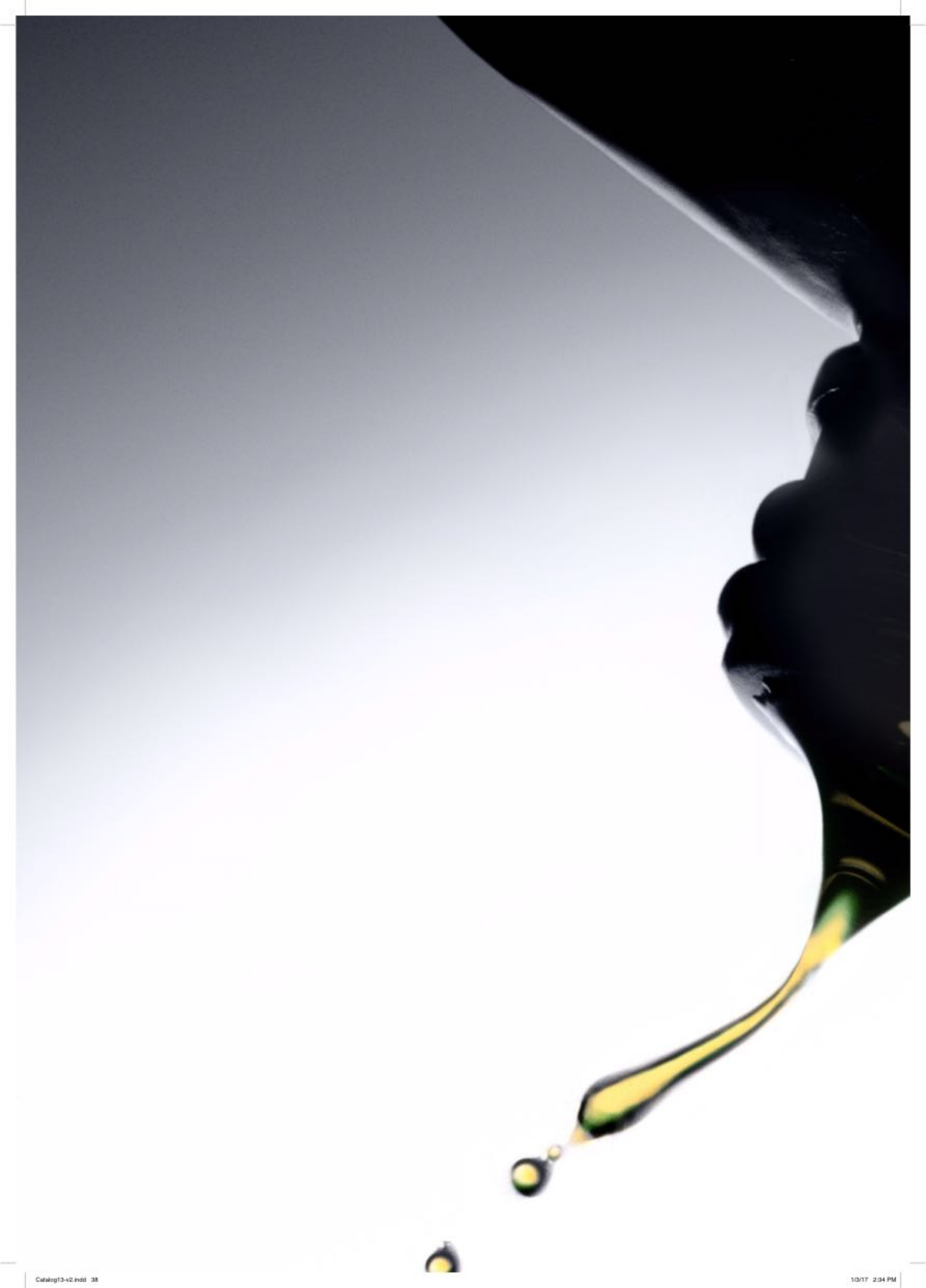


HOMME

JOOP!

JOOP!

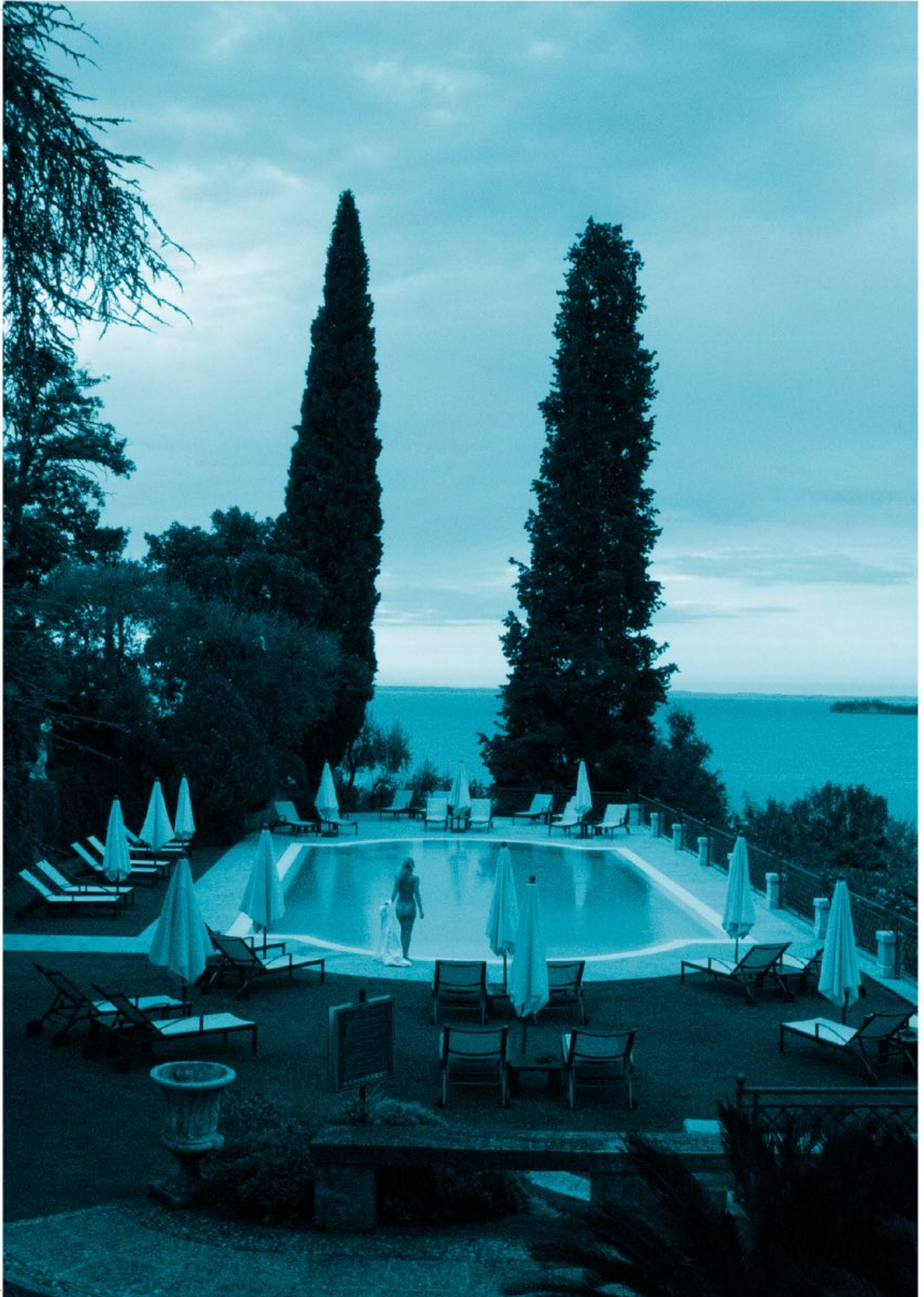














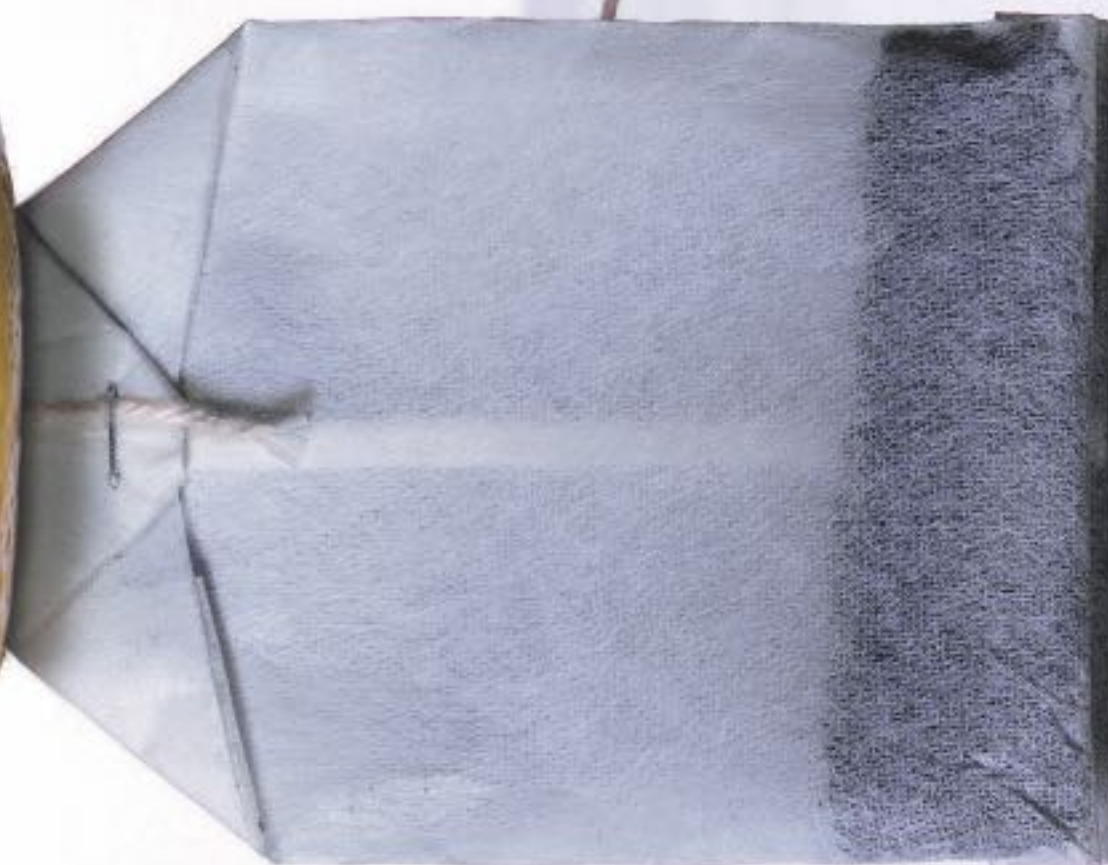
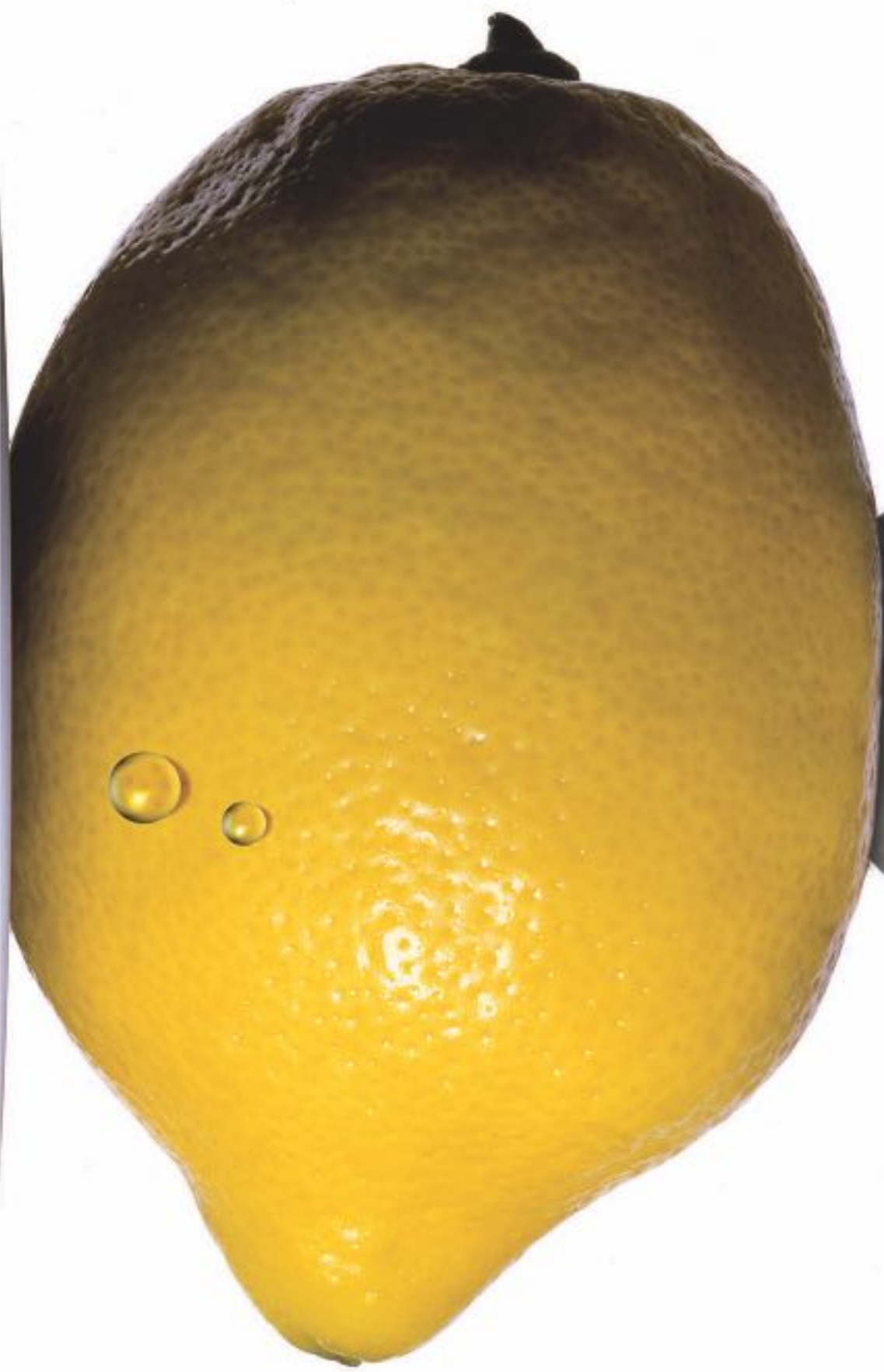










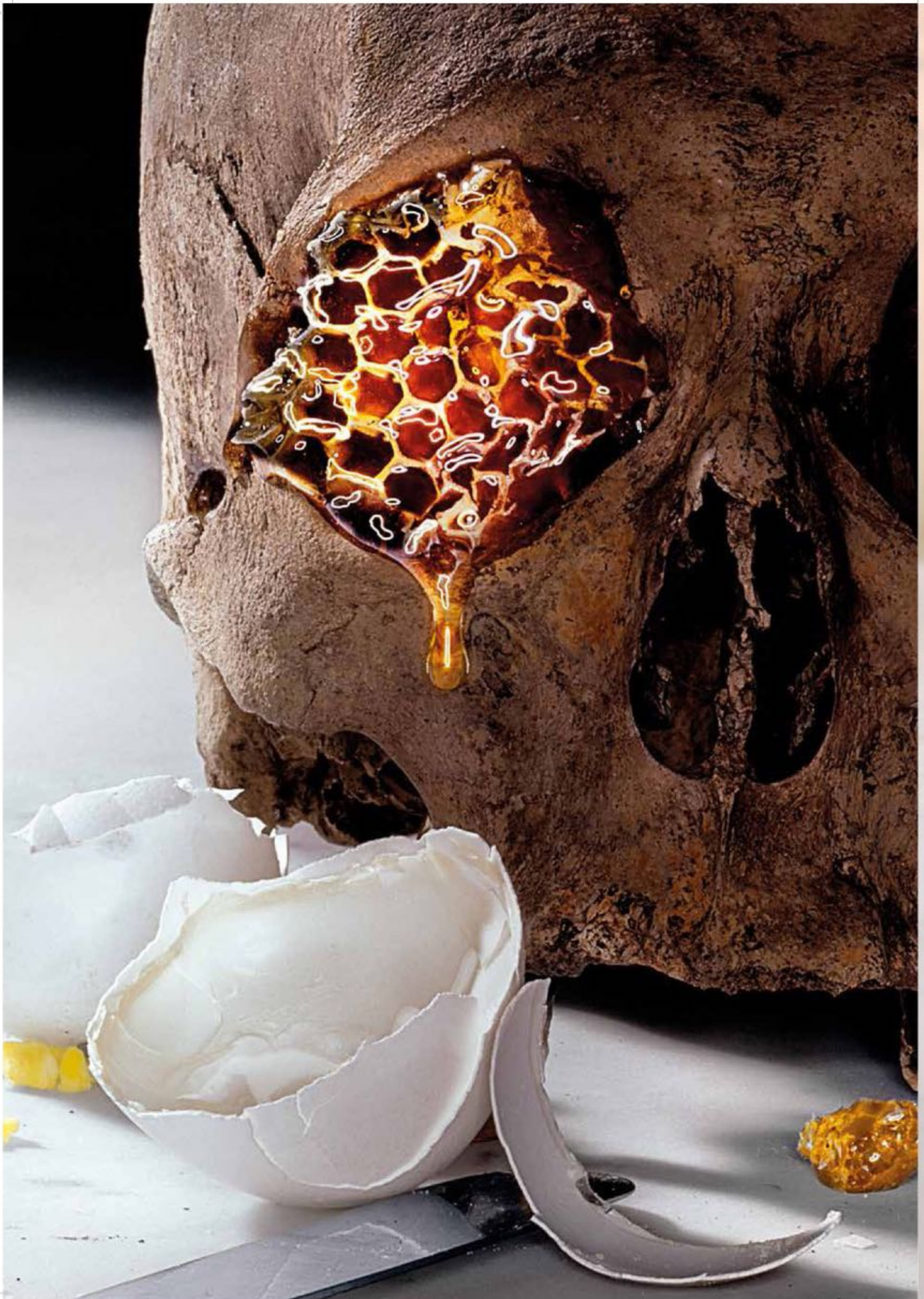






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don-jon (doo'jon, du)
straightedge of a road

Don Juan (don wahn)
for 4 don (doo'wan). 1.
moss for his name
libertine or rake. 2.
ical in unfinished op

Don Juanism (doo'
drome, occurring in
with sexual gratifica
suddenly transient re
ships. Also called juan
45; Dow Juan + am

don-key (doo'key)
1. the domestic an
representation of the
Democratic party. 2.
A. a woodworking ap
frame and saw used in
-ing). B. Mark, a small
dovey hole. 1771-85
riddle form of human

don'key's tail (don'
don'key's year'. In
[1899-1900] prob. orig. donkey
for work, with year represent
was forgotten

don'key top'nal. See
used above a pull out for
a small spot

don'key work. Informal
drafter. Also donkeywork
ding'g. 1972-80

don-na (doo'nah) n. 1. femi
title of respect granted to the
2. an Italian lady. 1580-90
derivative

Don-na (doo'nah) n. a female
don-ward (doo'ward) adv. 1. to
Also, donward. 1715. See
to the state. 1791. See
trouble a cat

Donn-Byrne (doo'n-
Byrne) n. 1838-1908. U.S.
writer

Donne (doo'nah) n. a female
clergymen

don-ness (doo'ness) n. a state
of or susceptibility. 1870-80
from sp. of donness in gre
Don'ner Pass (doo'ner
Pass) n. 1849. See
Donner, J. J. (1809-1846)

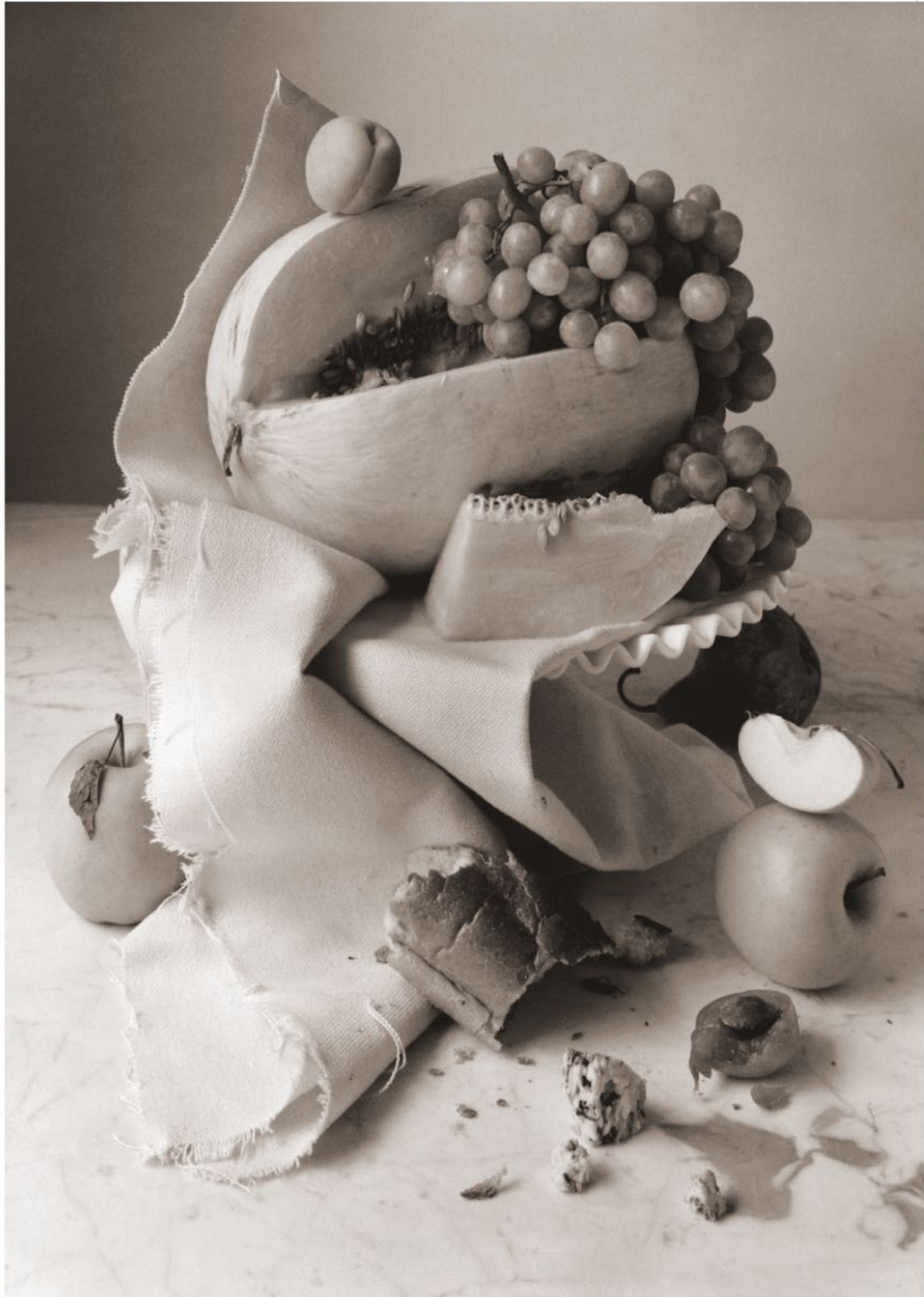
don-nish (doo'nish) adj. 1. relat
a creature that looks like
-ness) -derivative, with
ness, a

don-ny-book (doo'nee-
book) n. 1. a book
display with light or





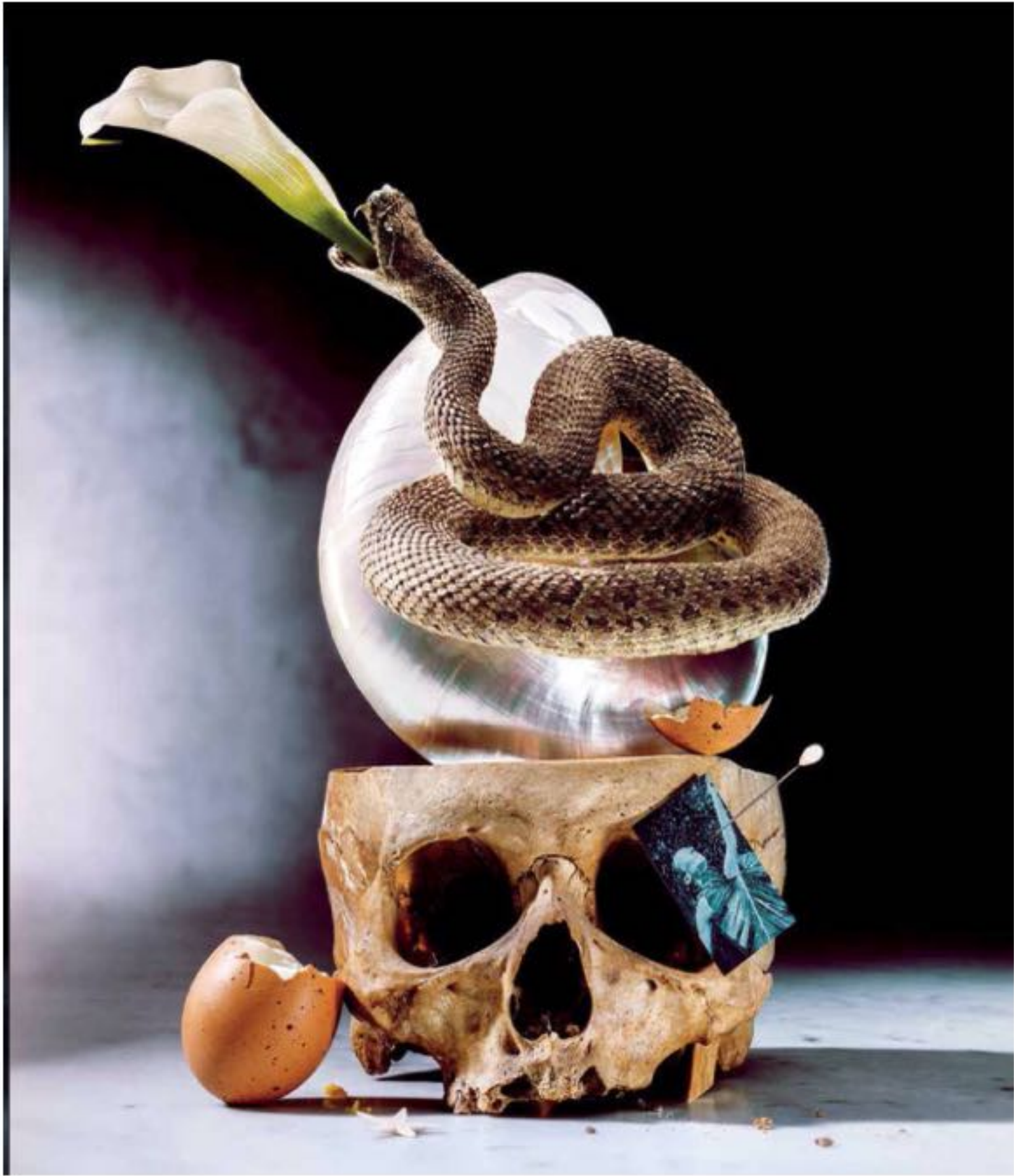












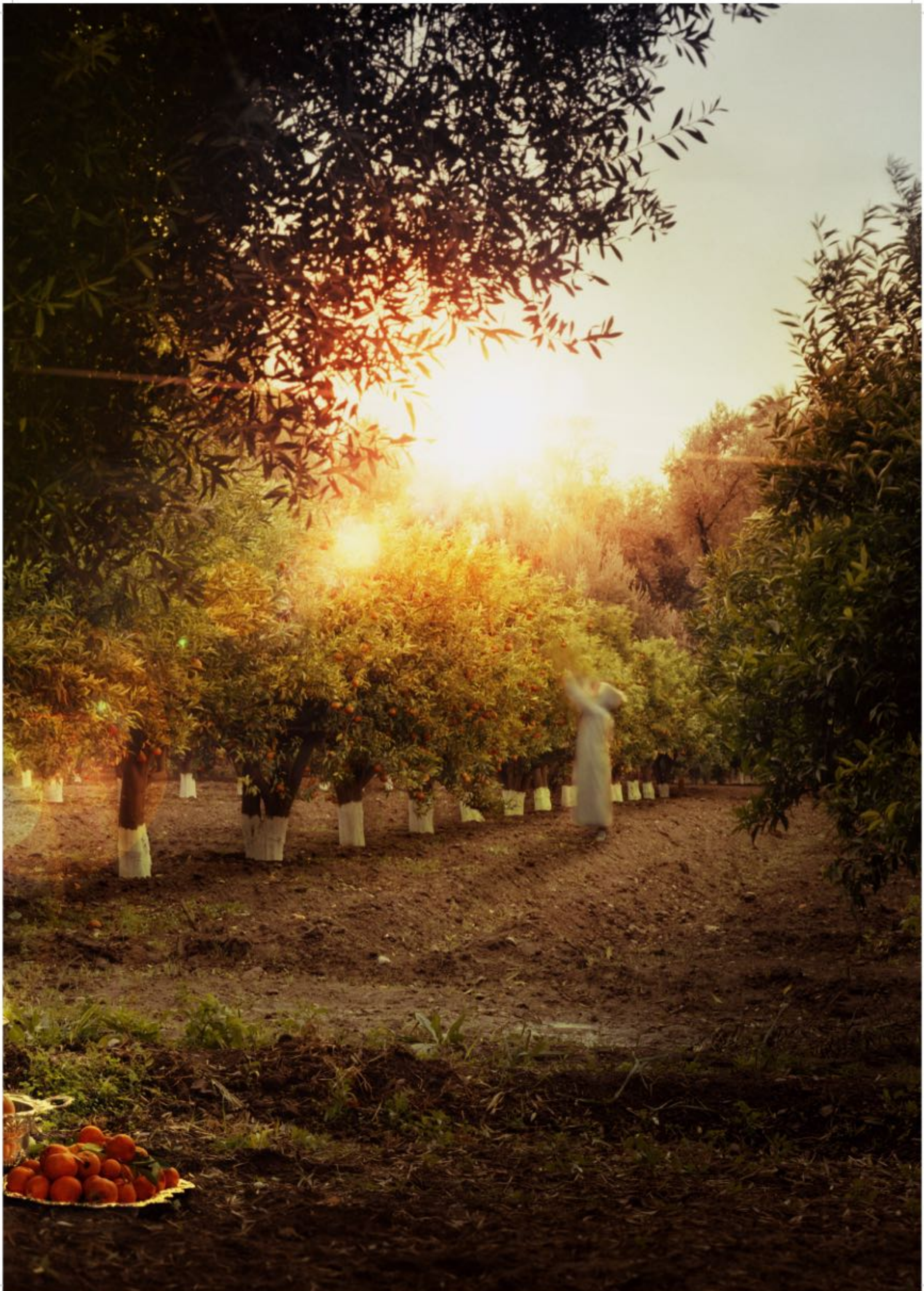


CANTO I

Per coverti meglio scoper dalla le sole
ossa la navezza del mio ingegno,
che faccia dietro a sé non si crudi,
sento di quel secondo ingegno
il fummo sparire
e l'occhio al ciel di

Madam,
nono appreso
al primo gio,
nono dilato,
l'una verso
e l'altro



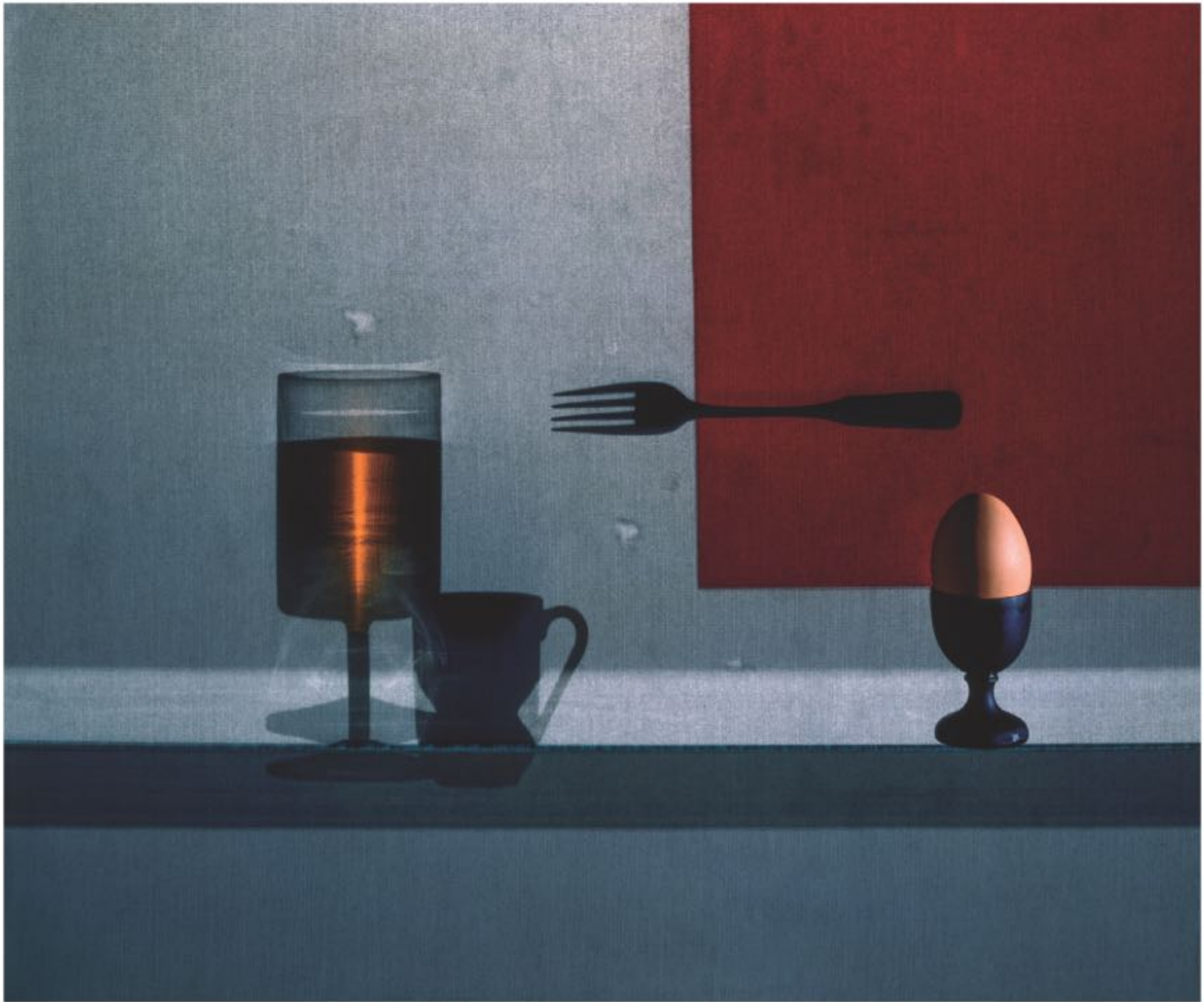




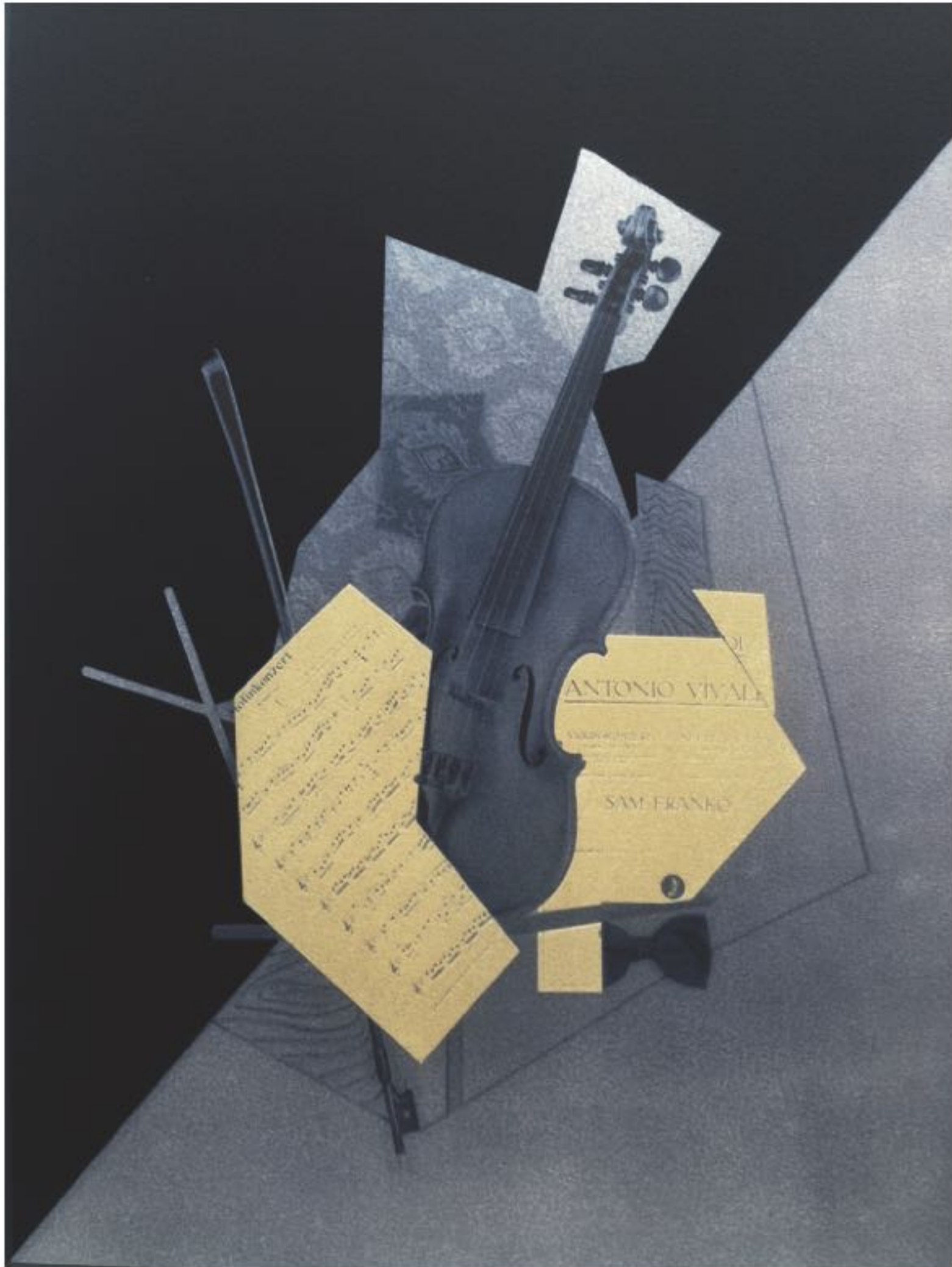


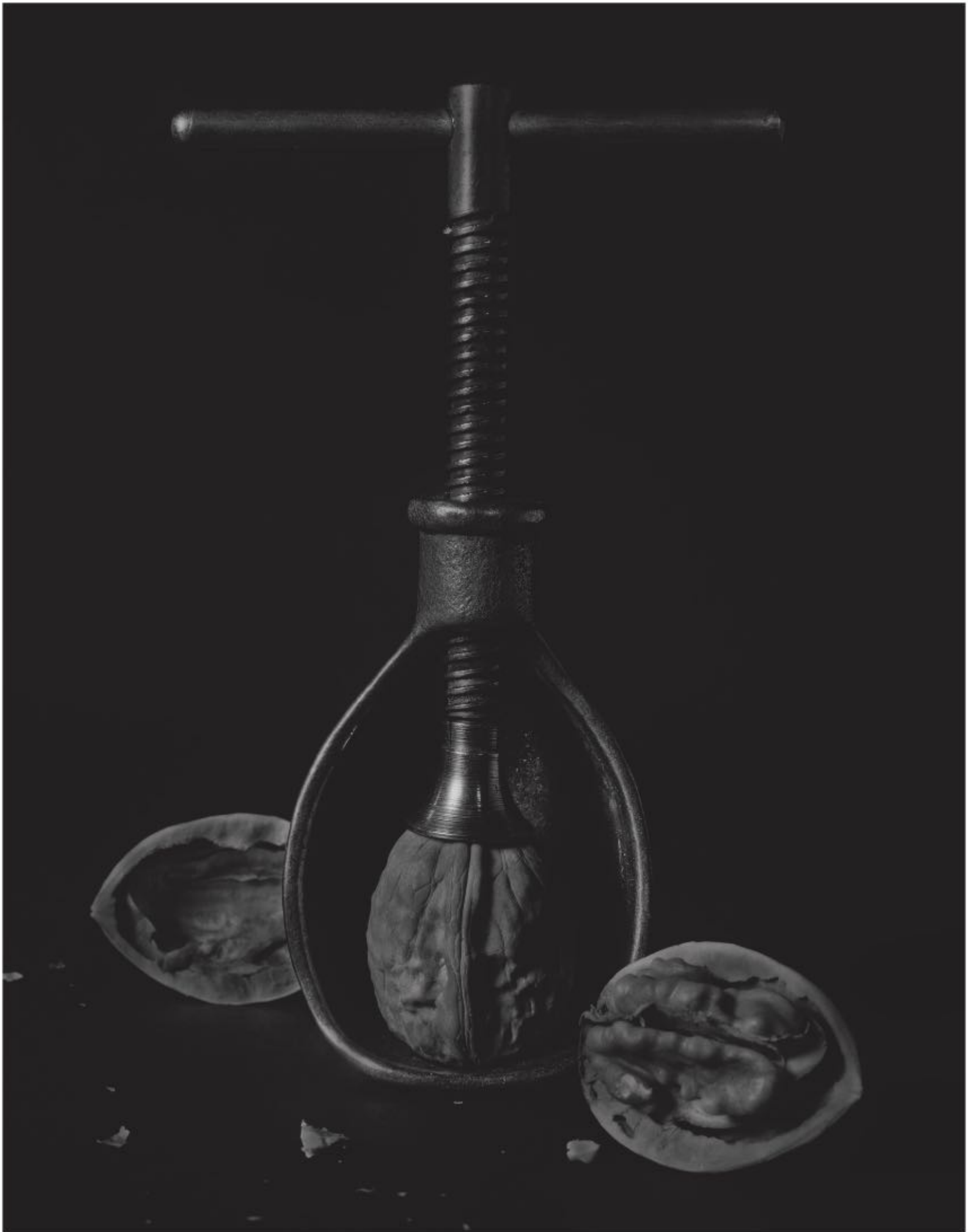




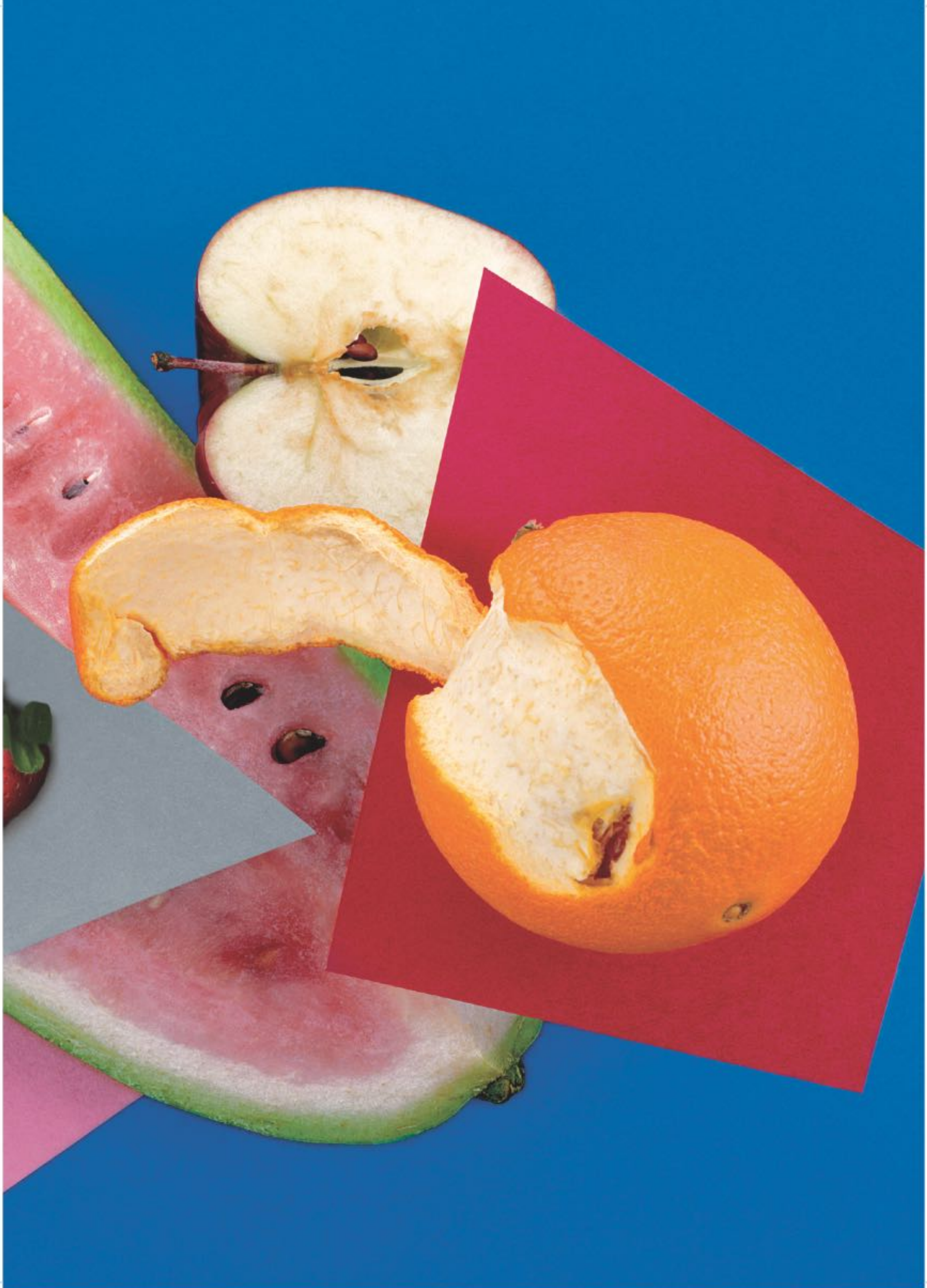












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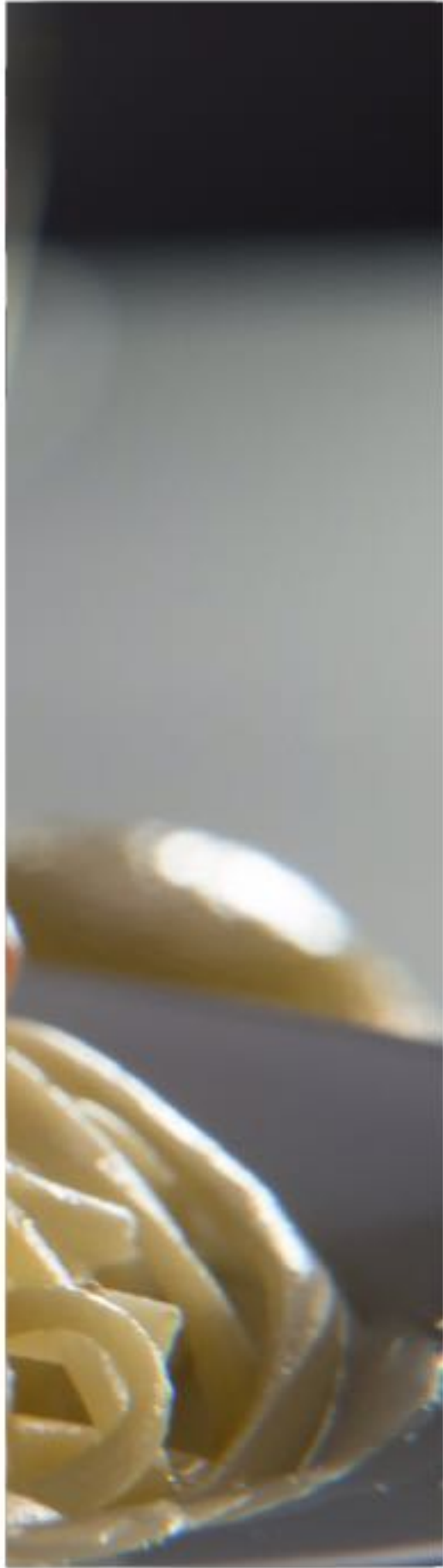


















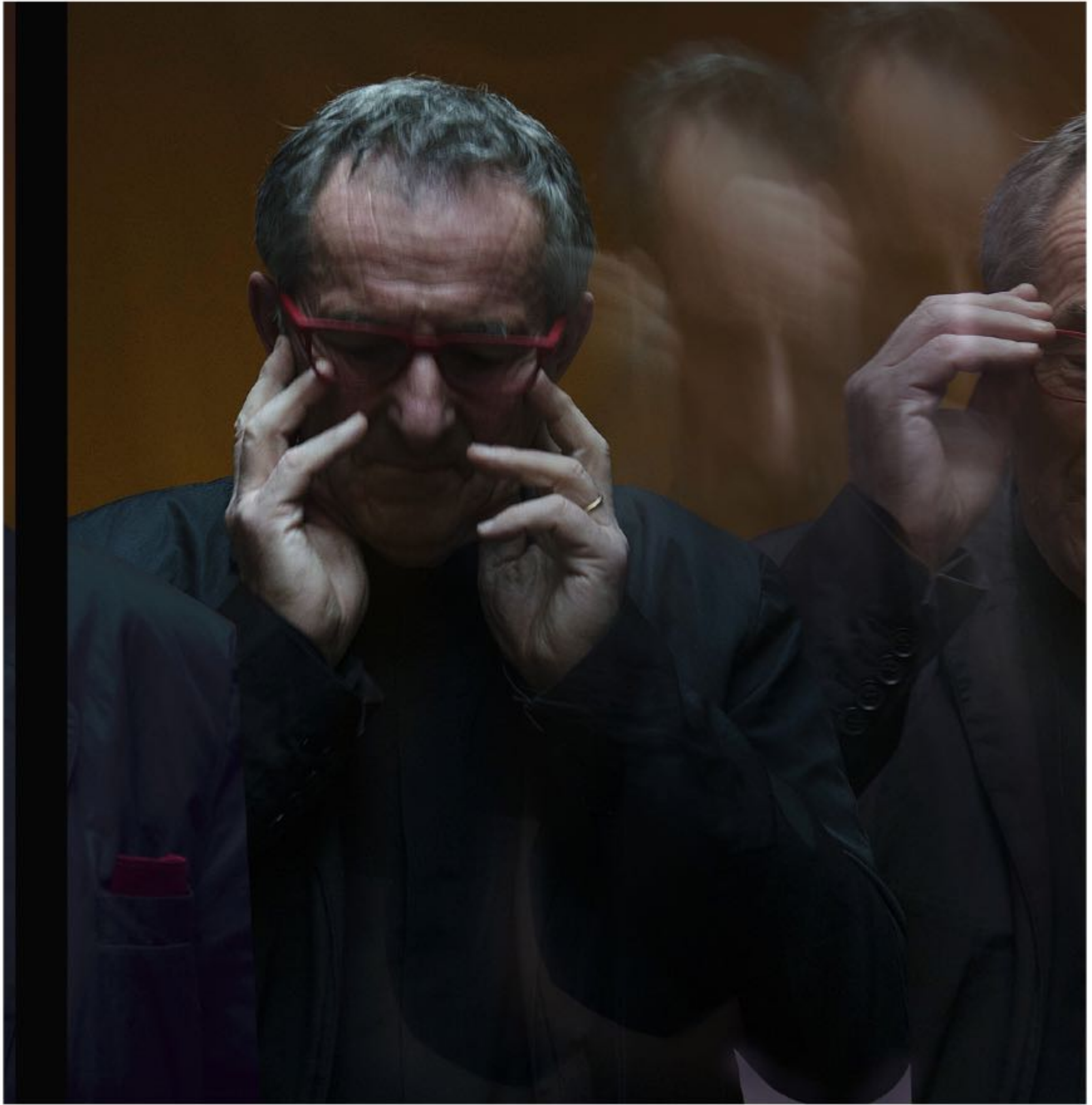


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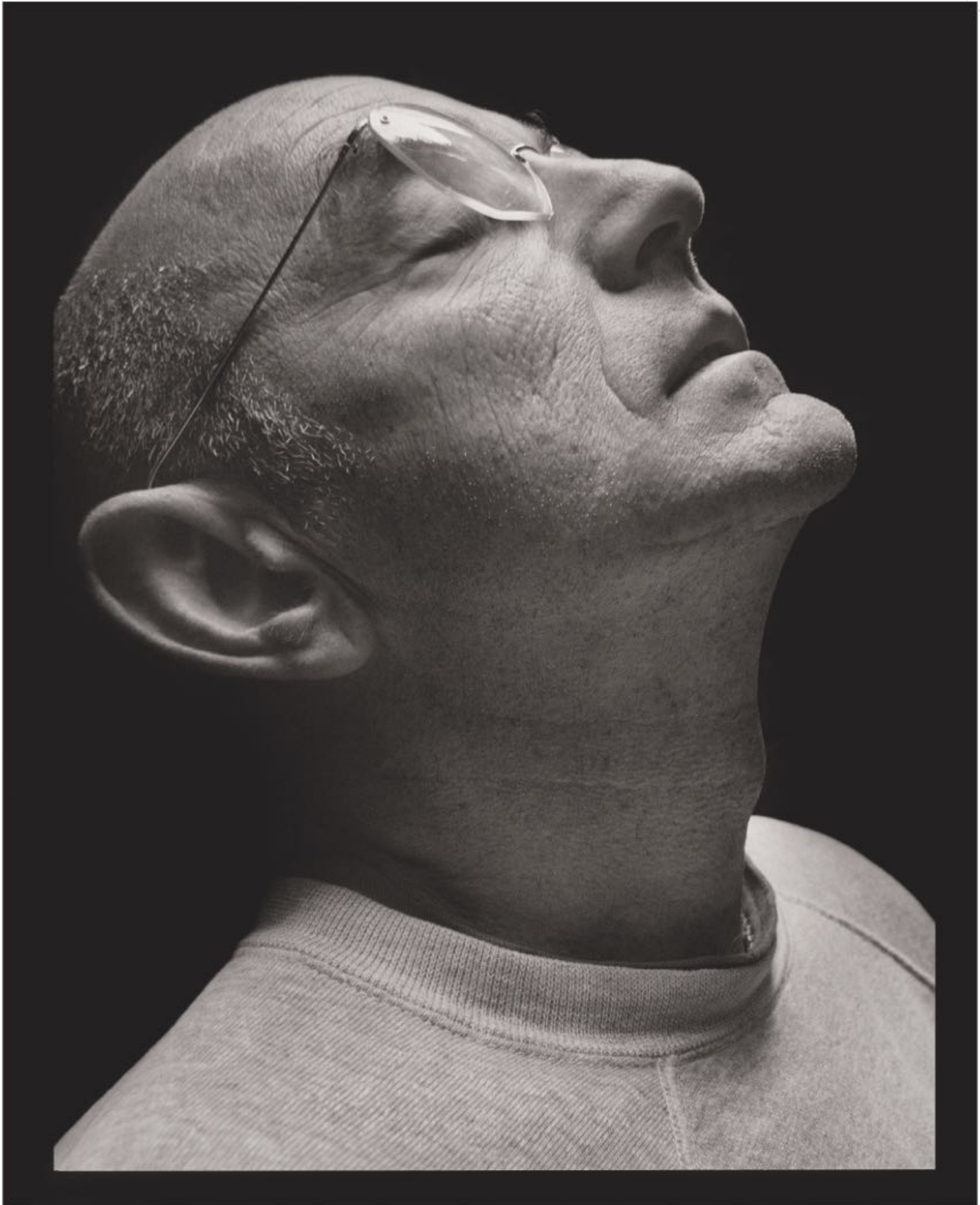




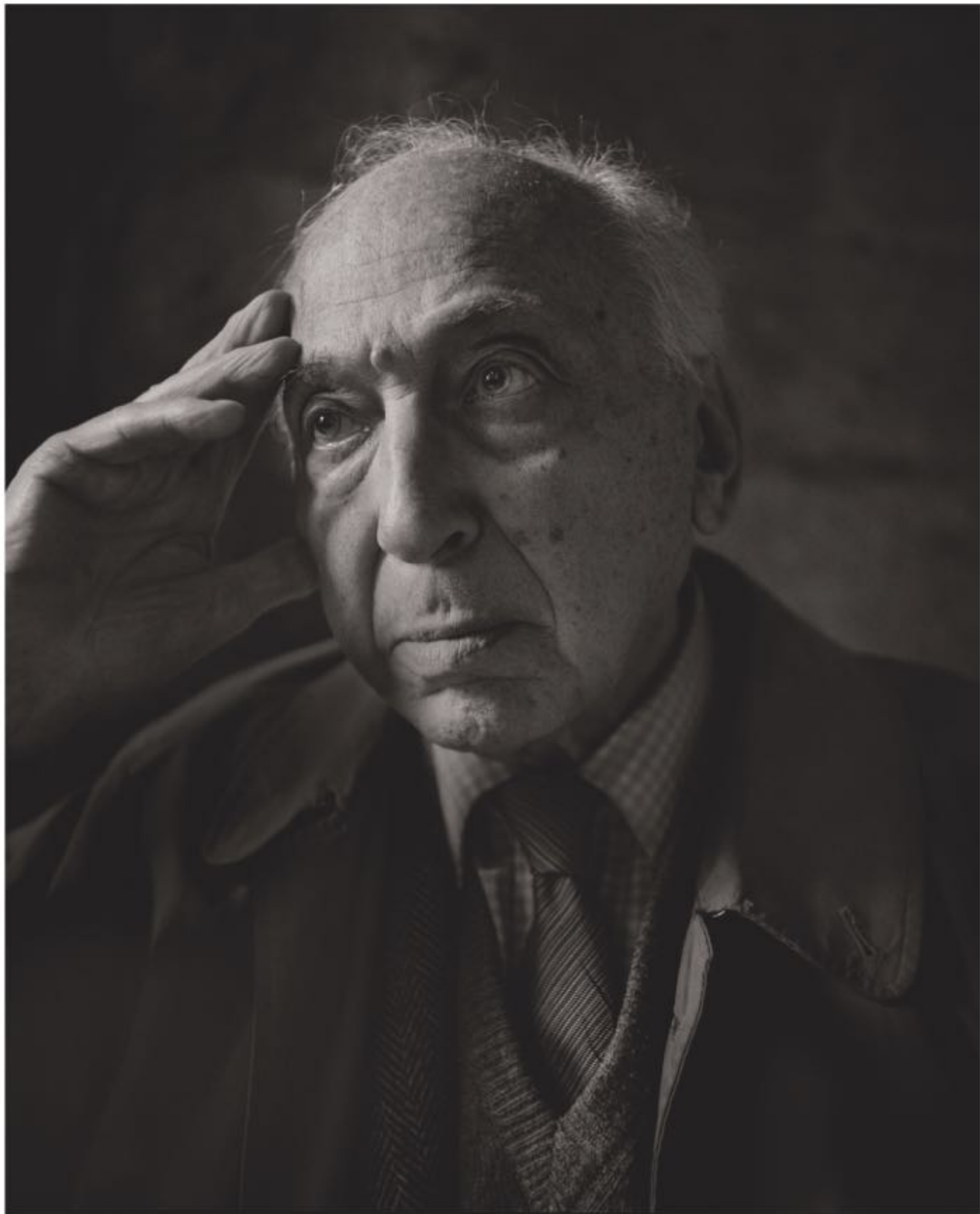
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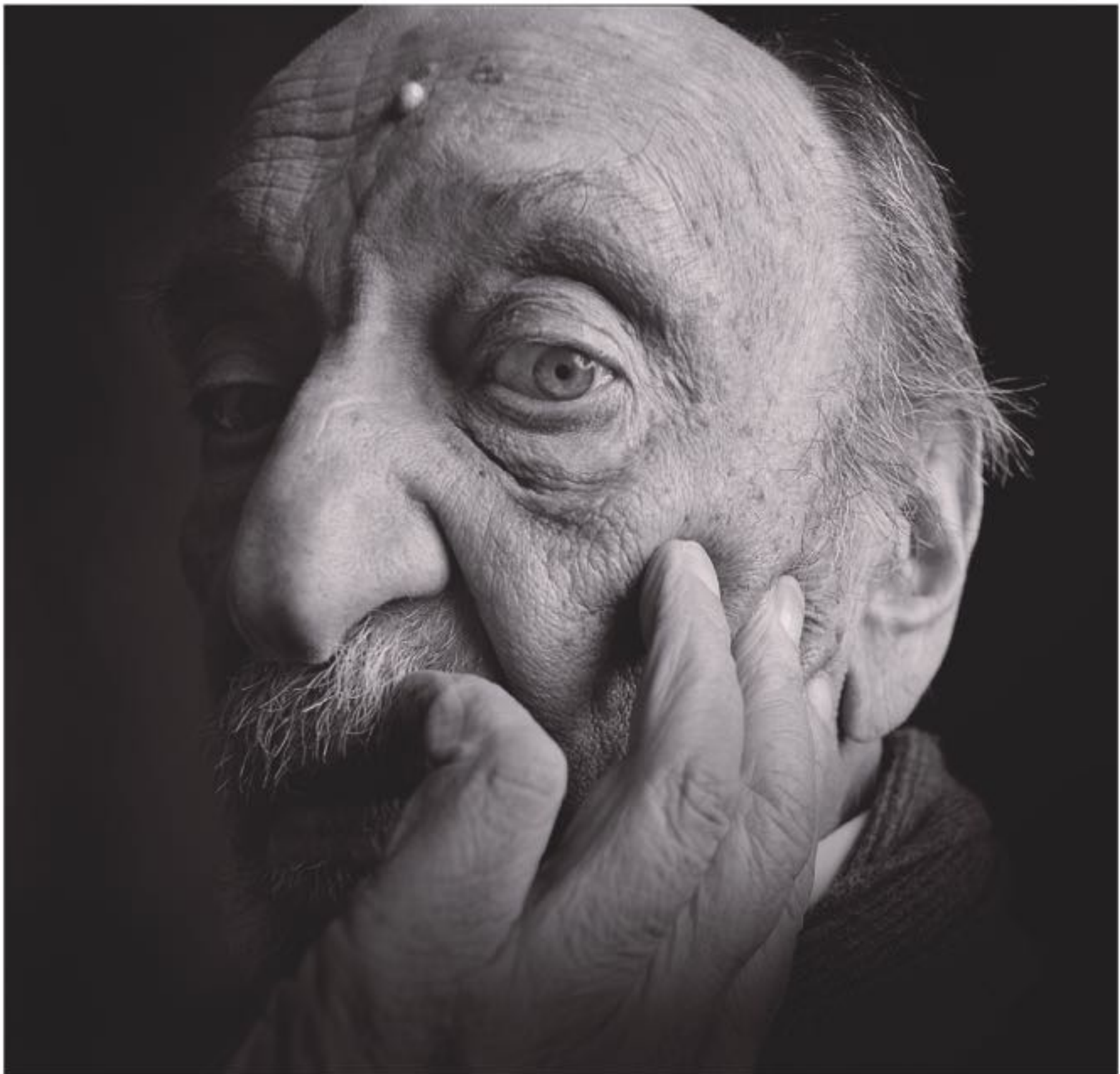


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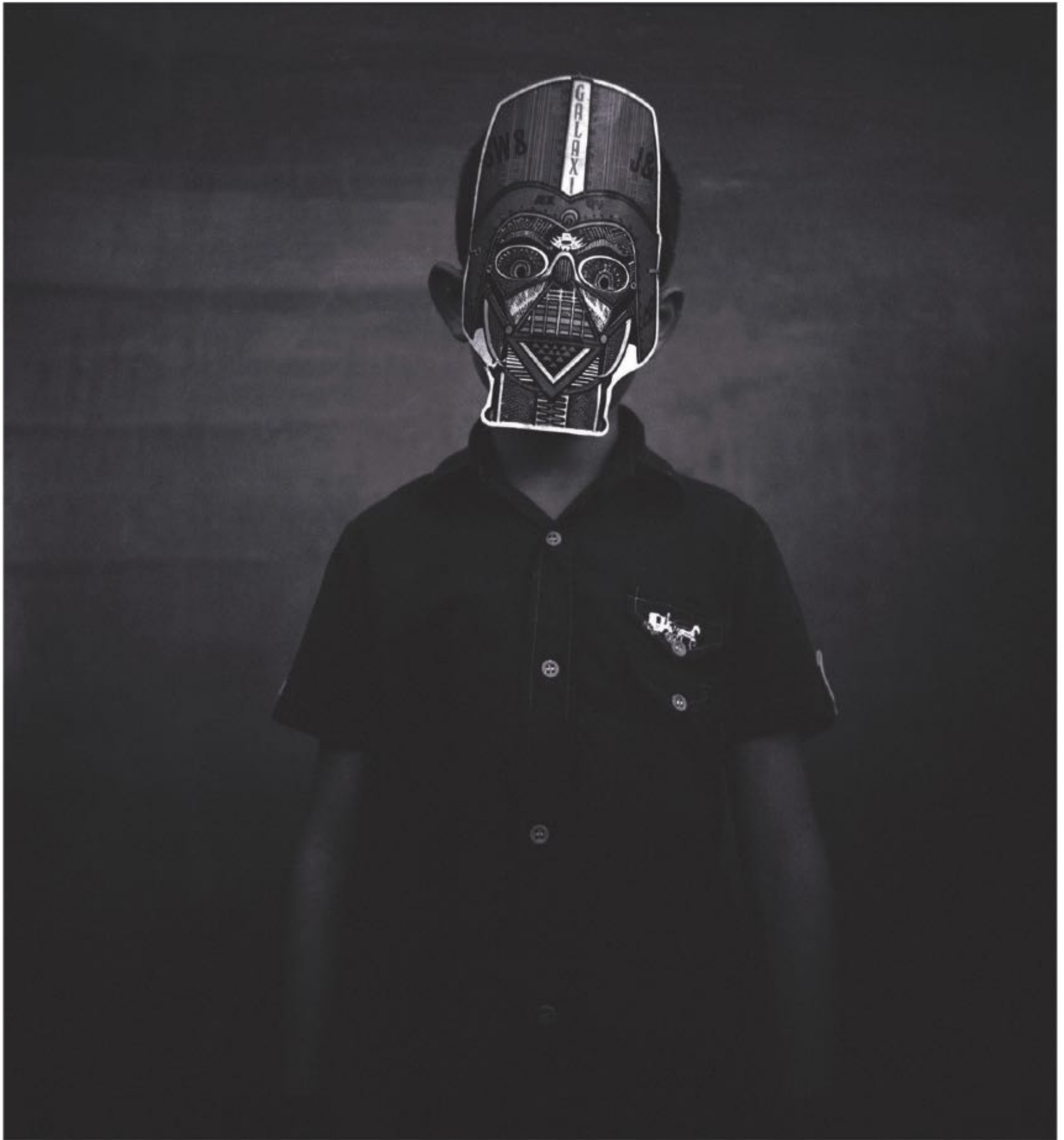
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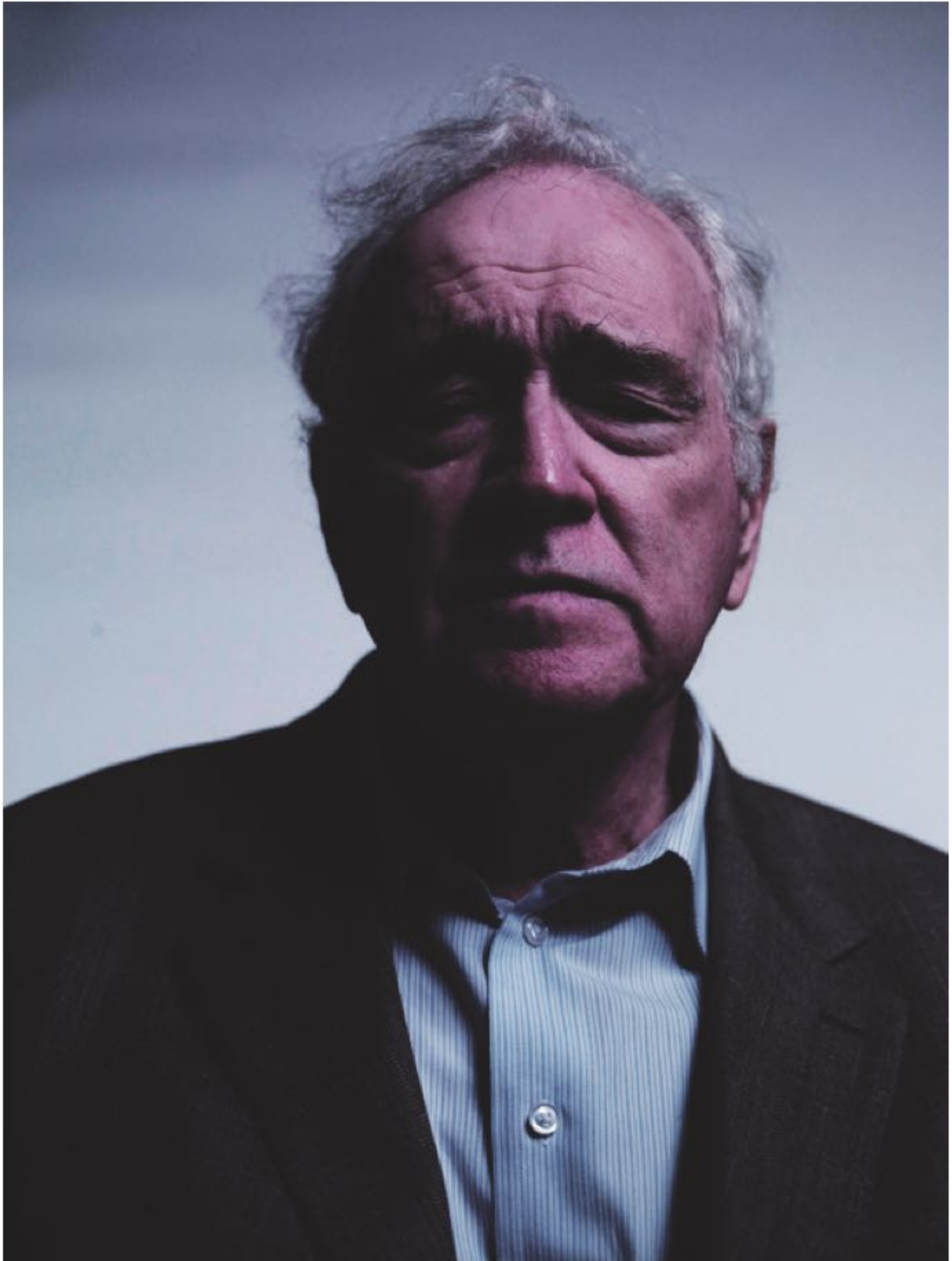


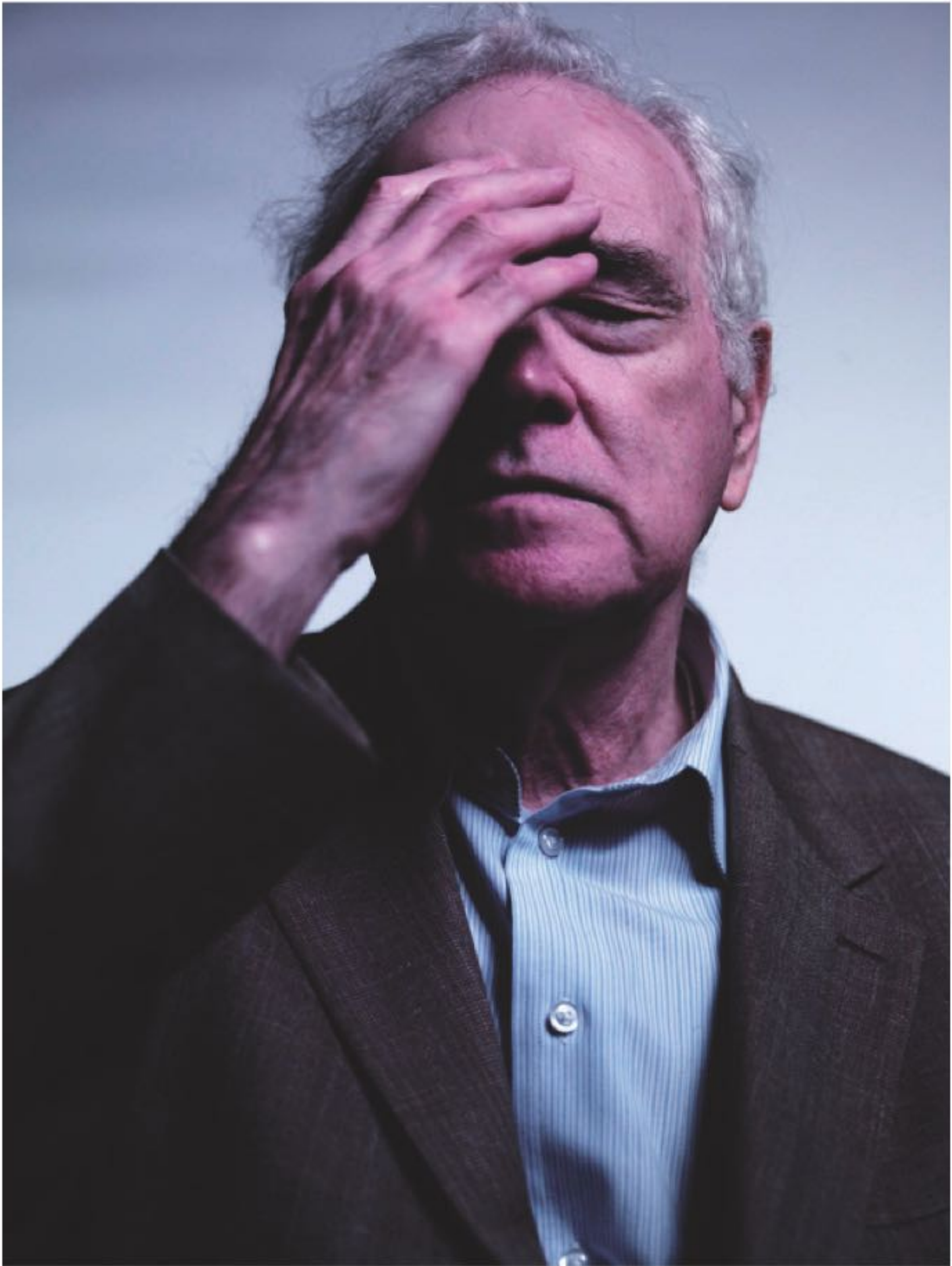


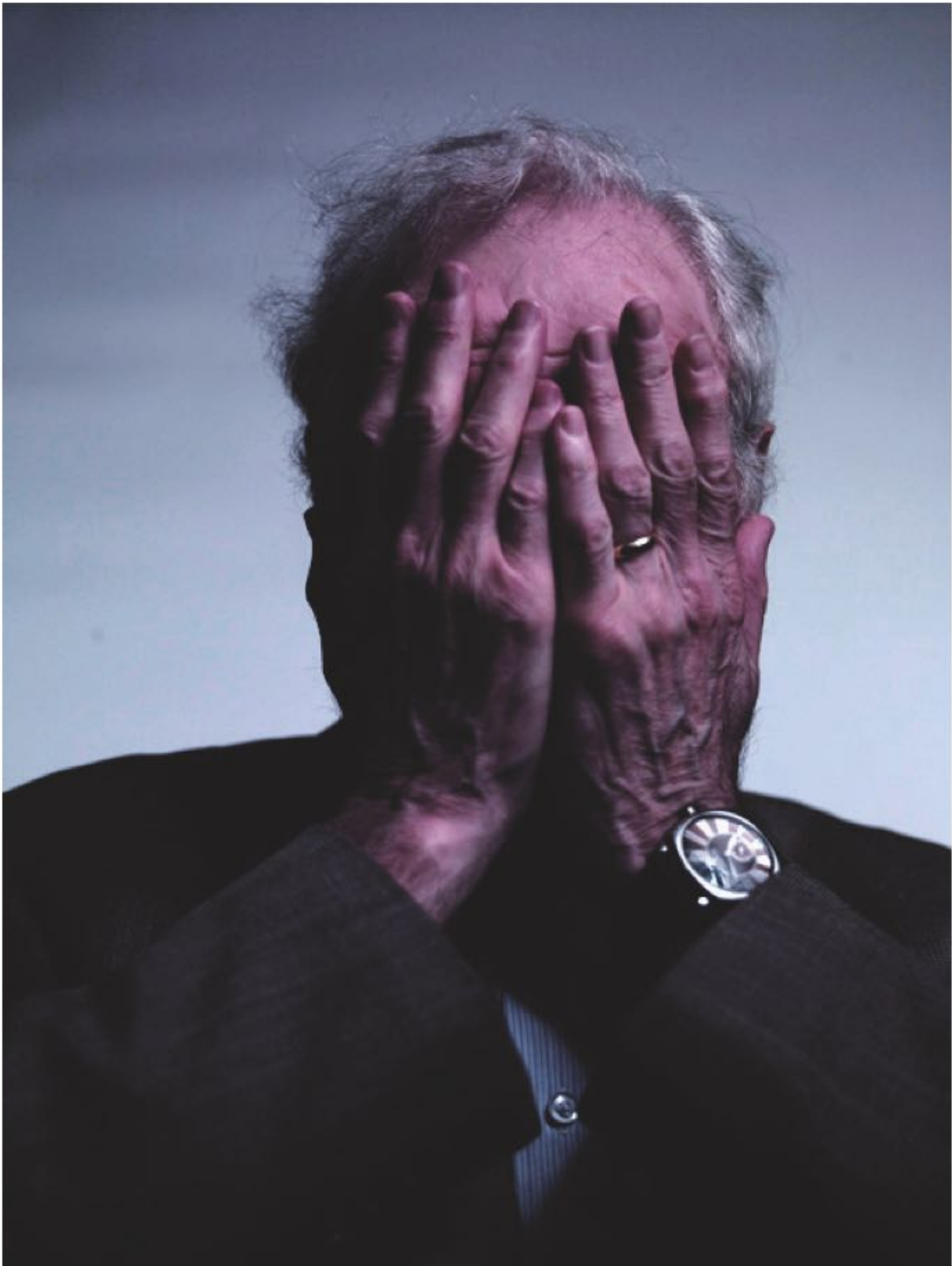


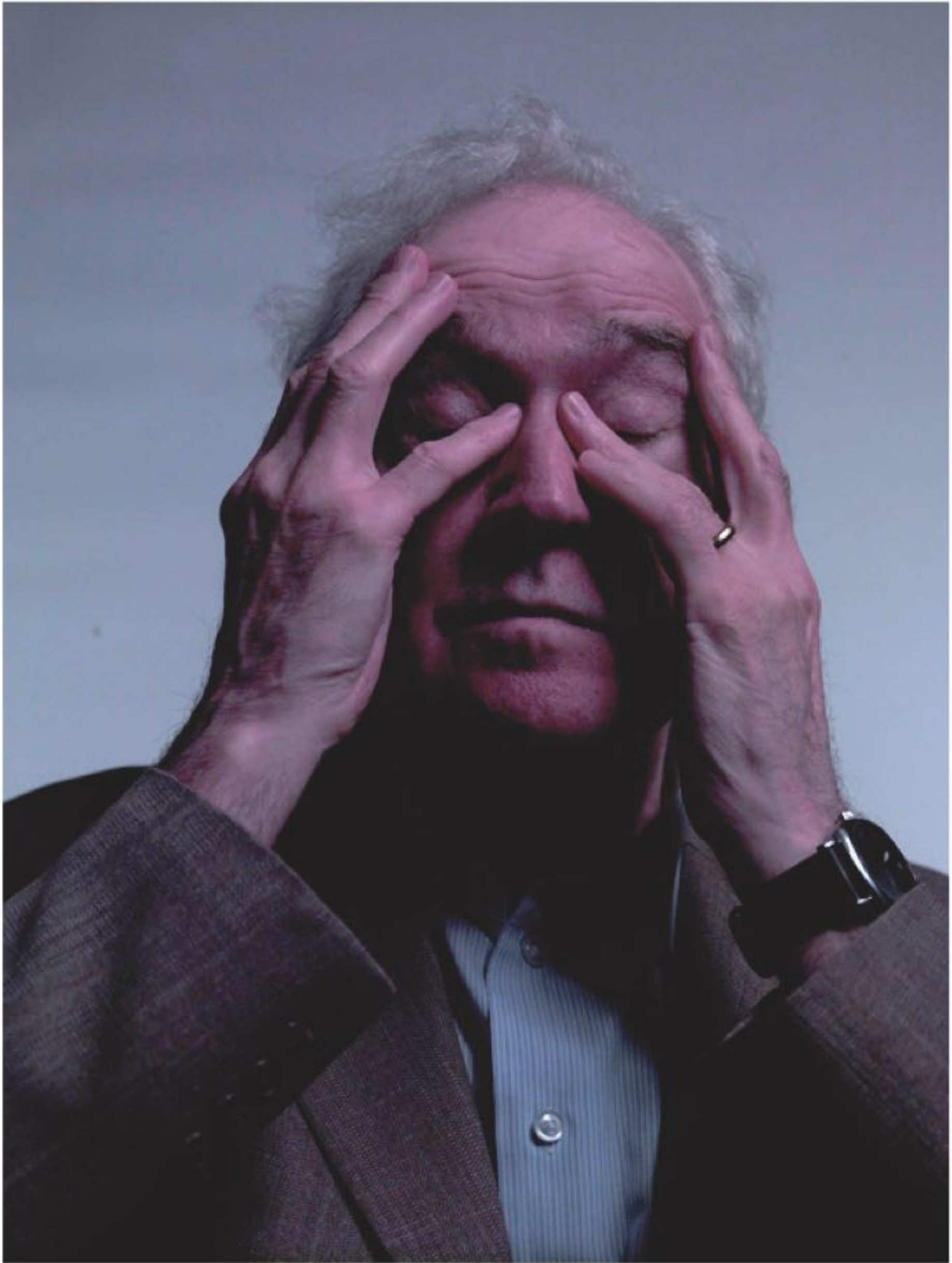








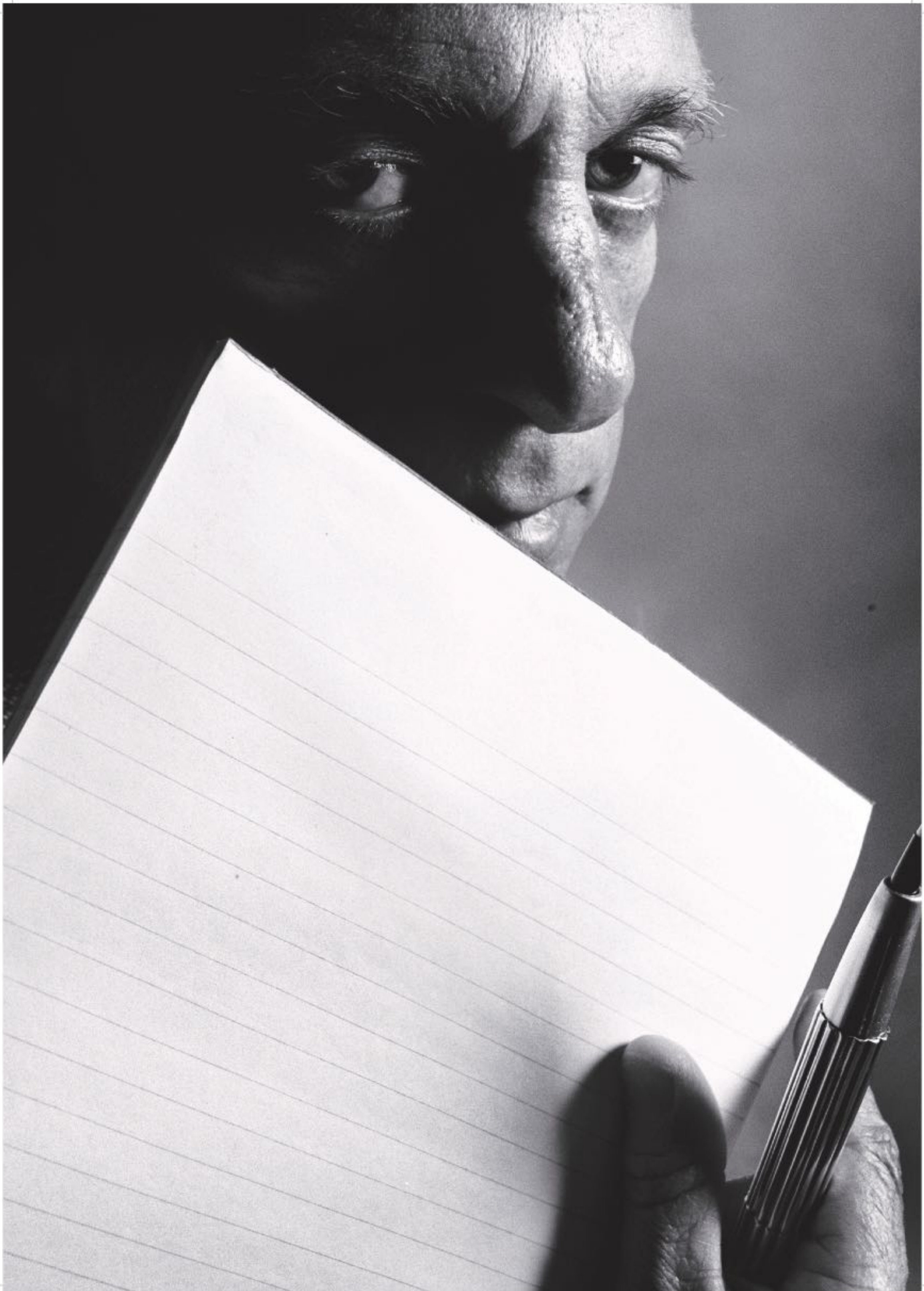


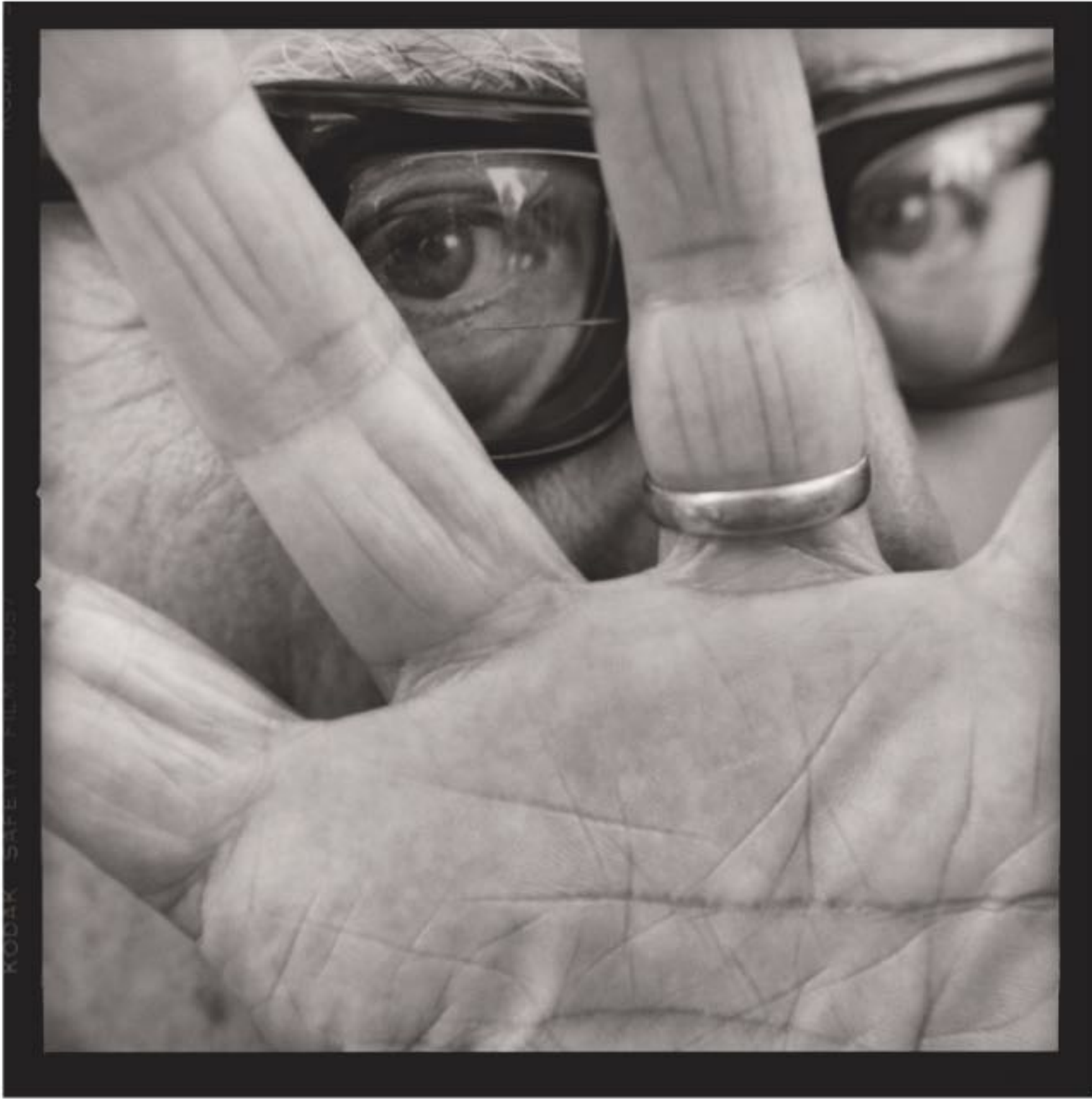




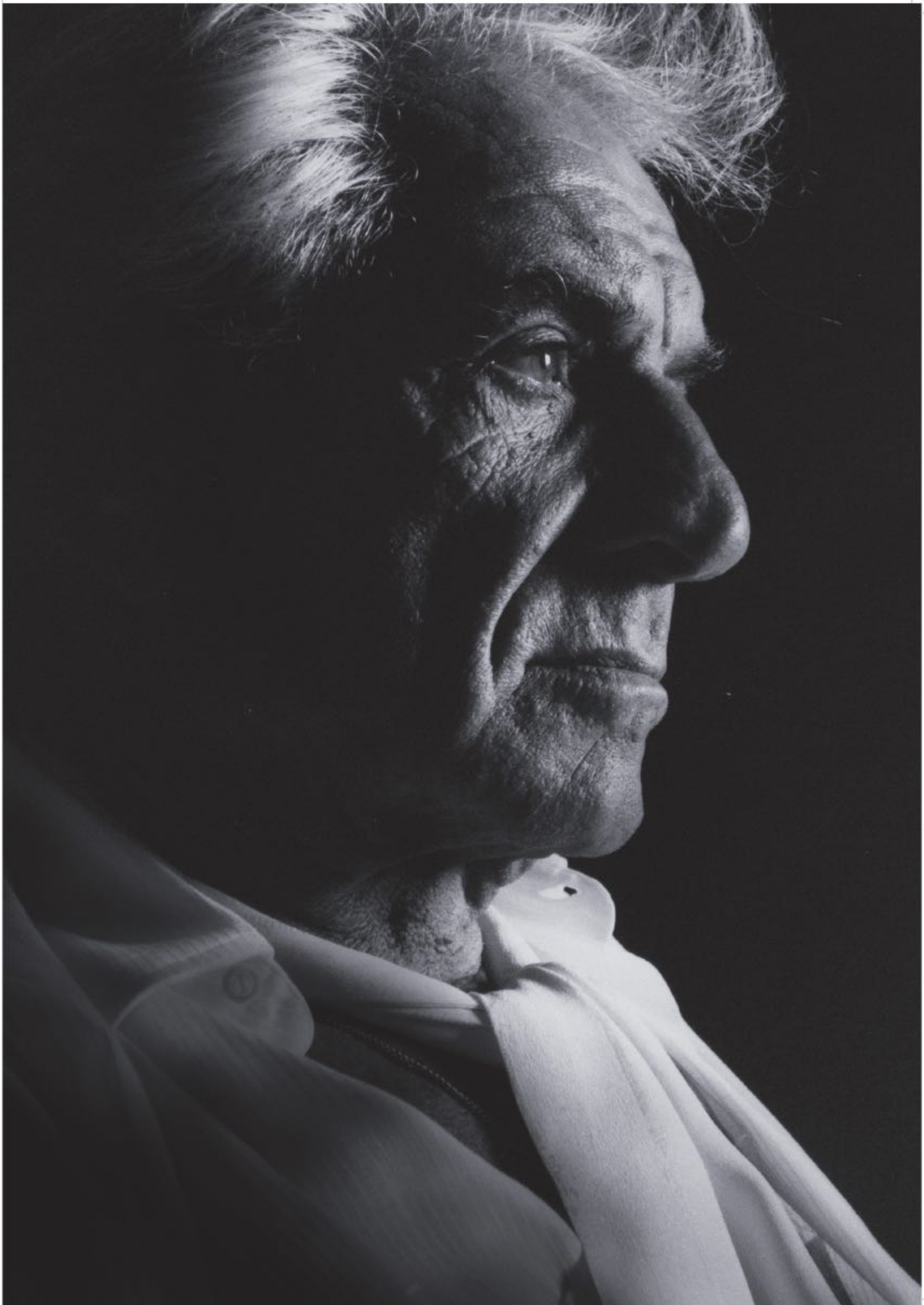


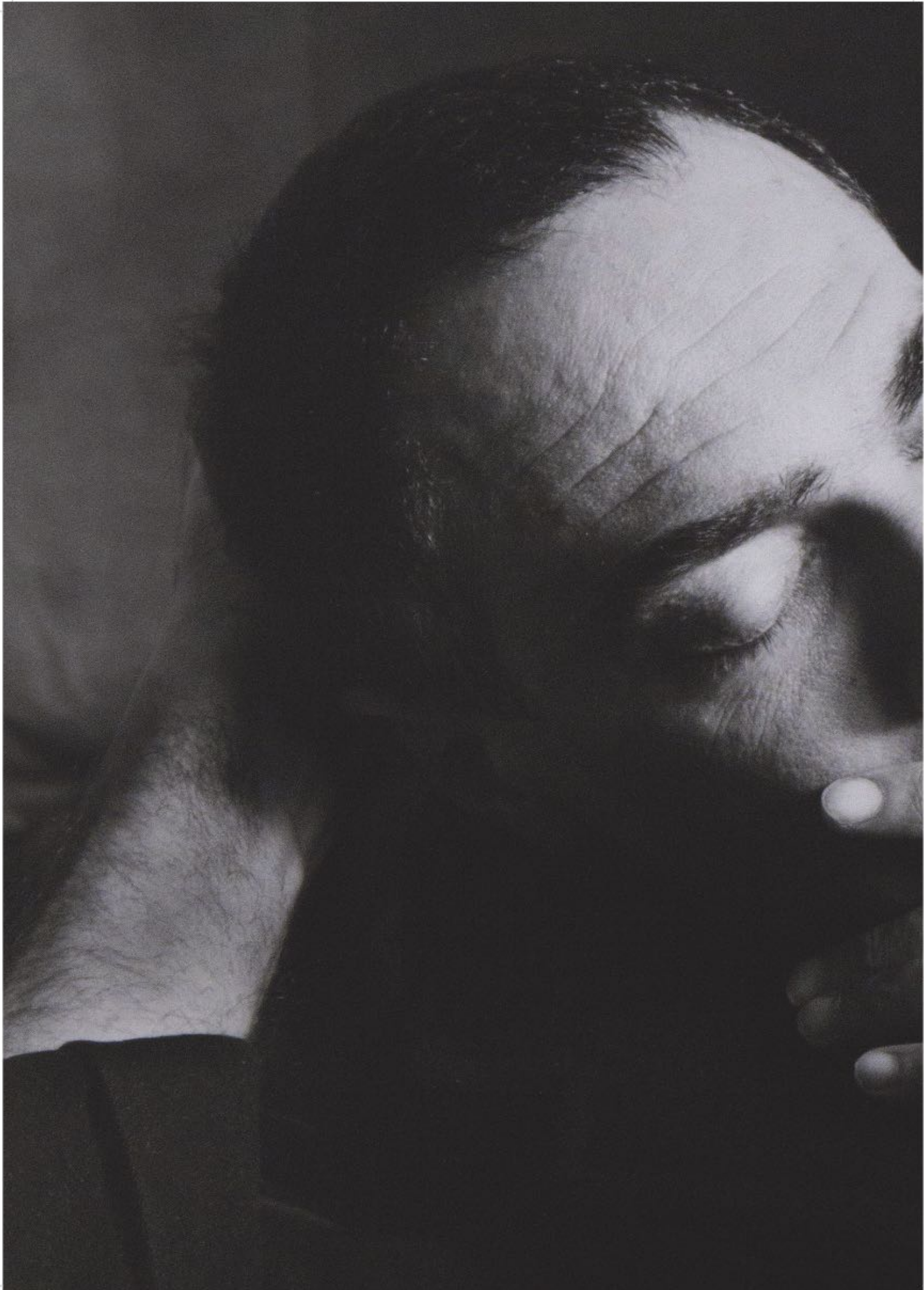


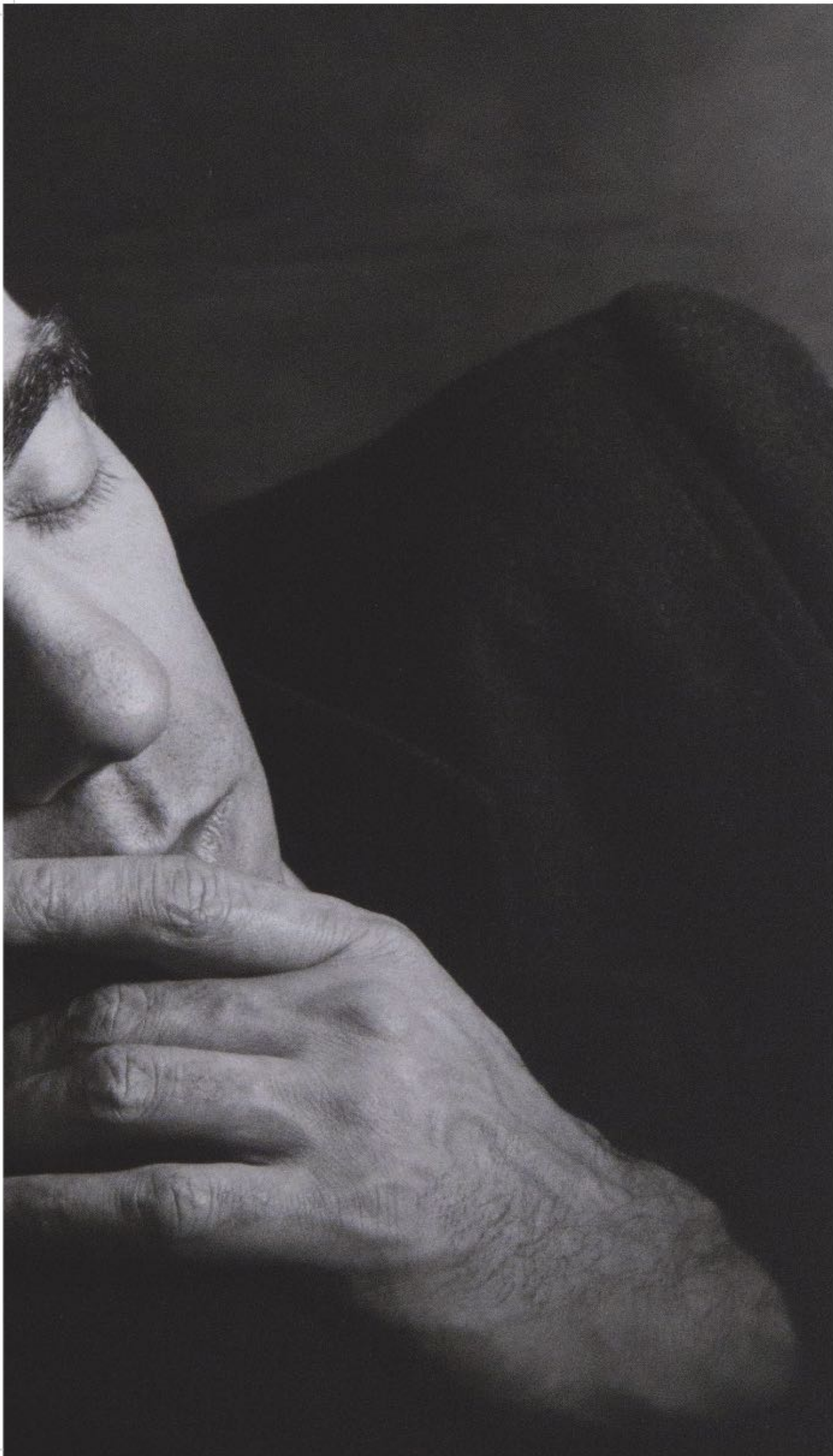




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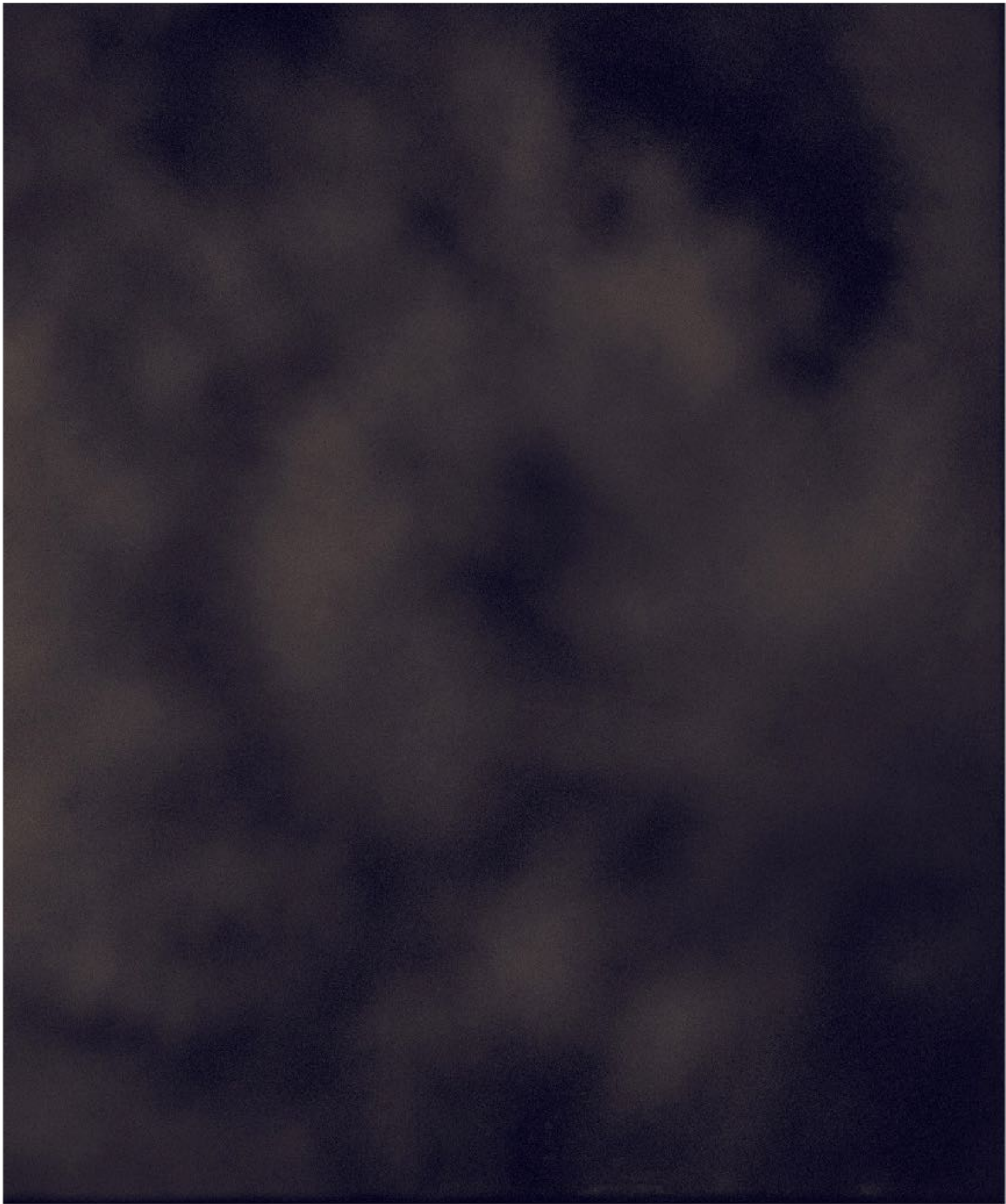




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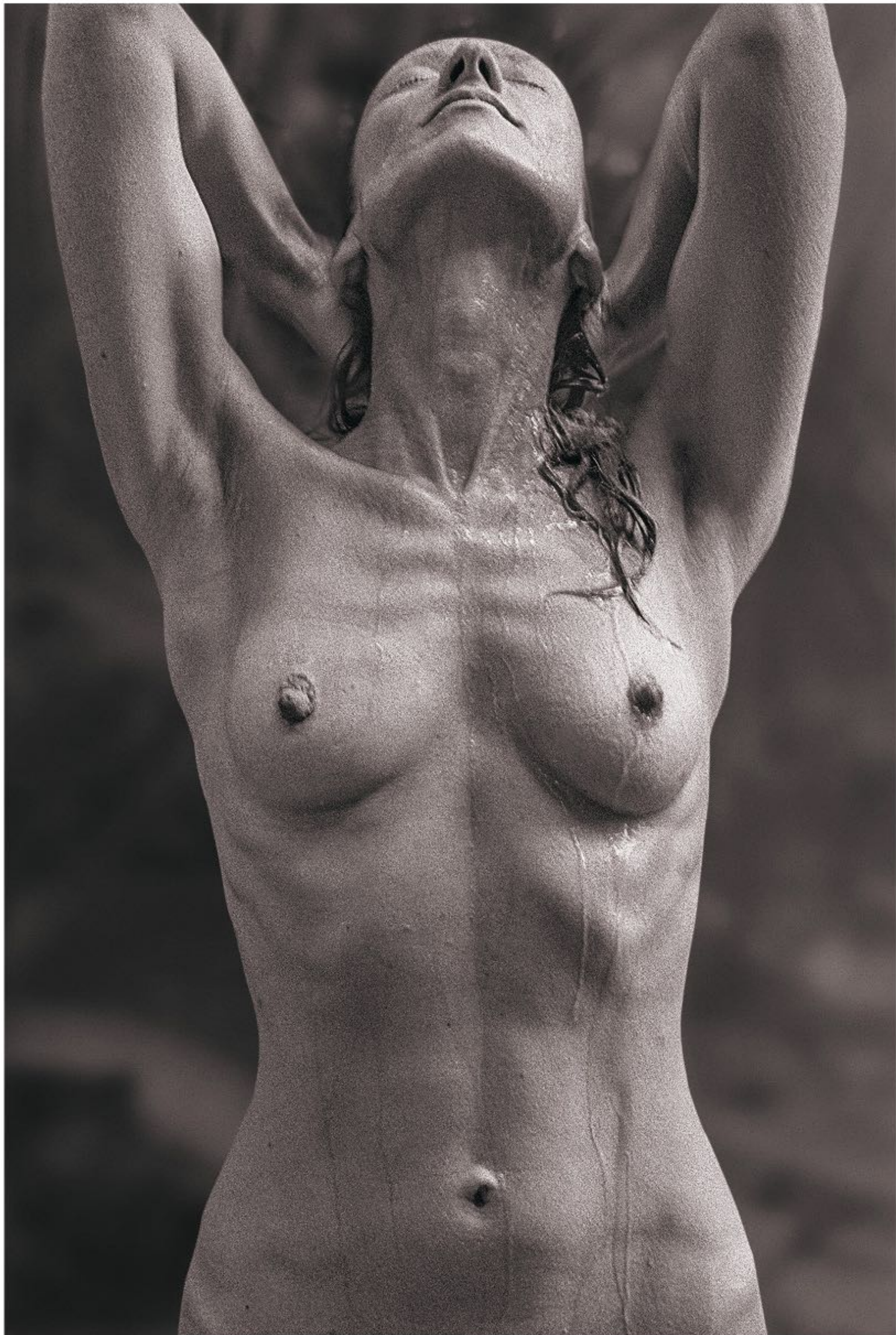


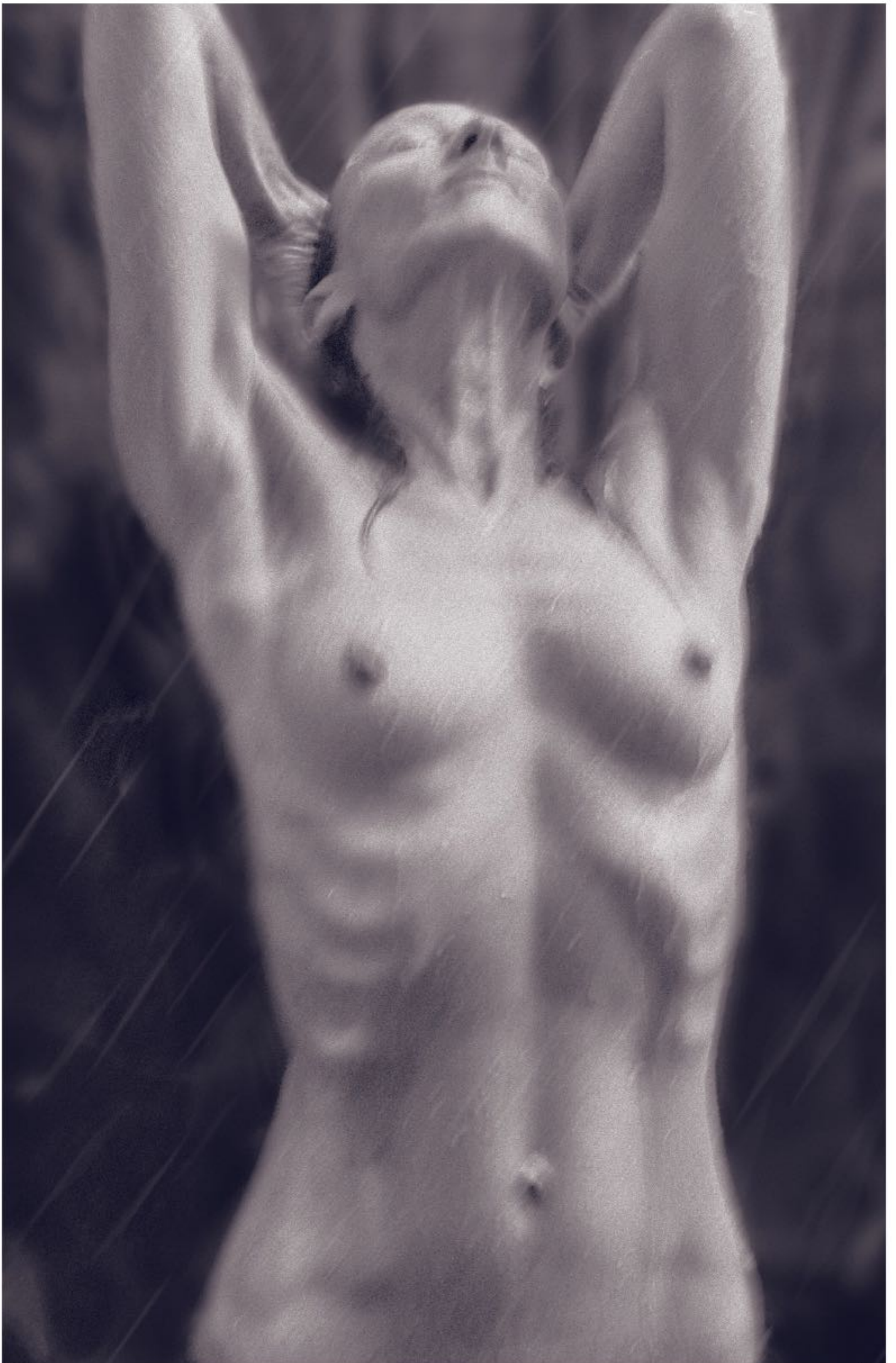








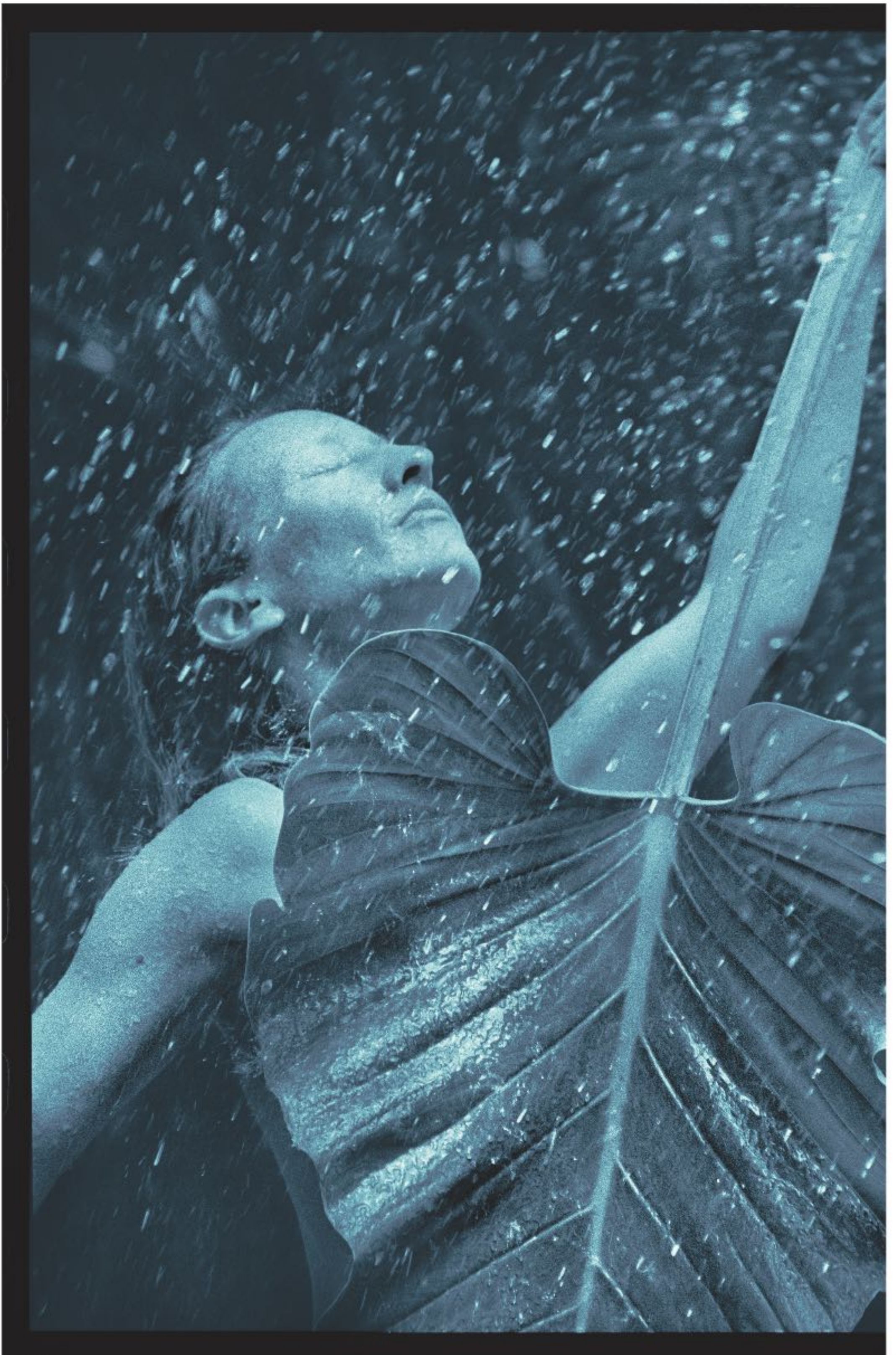




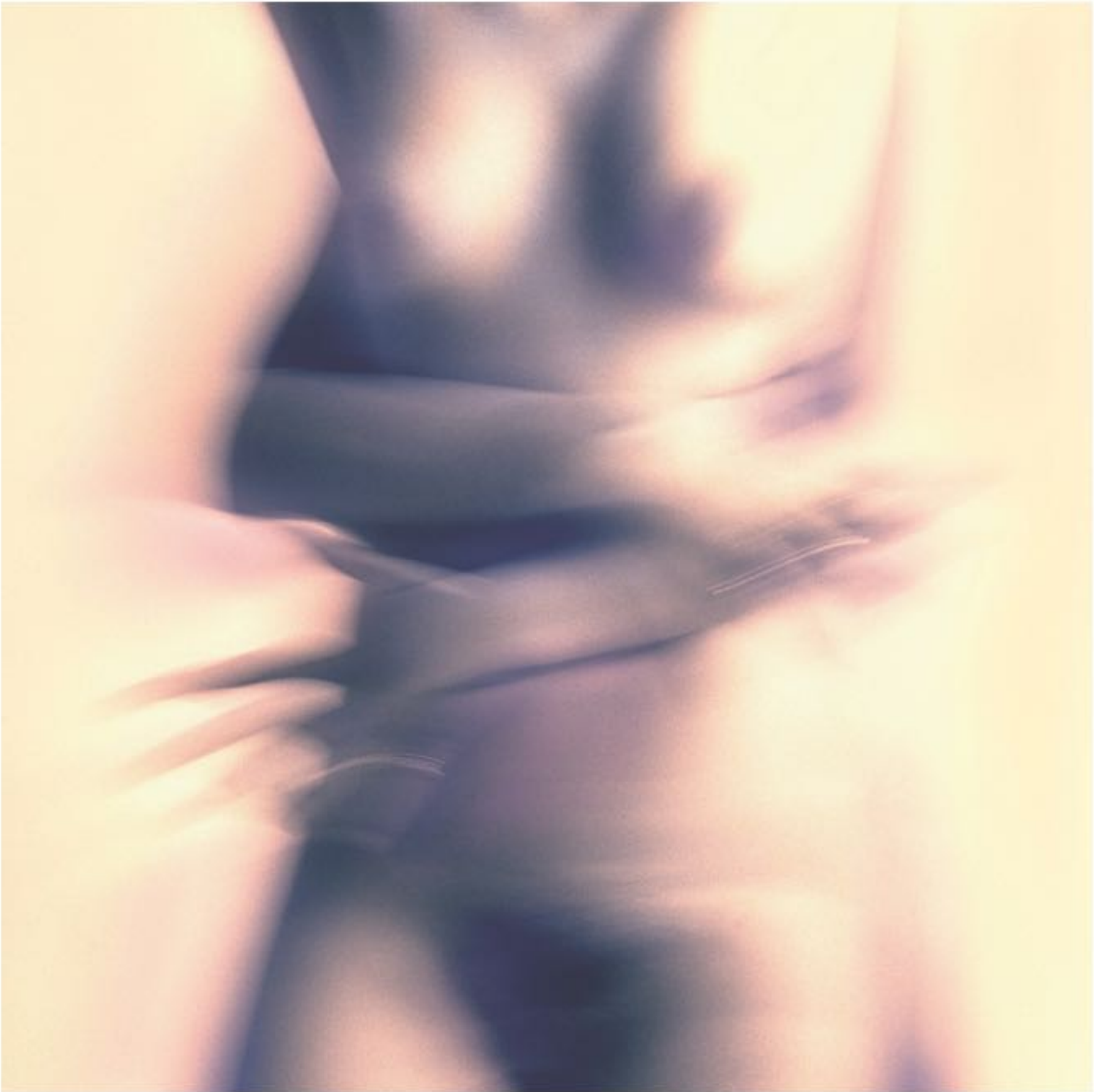




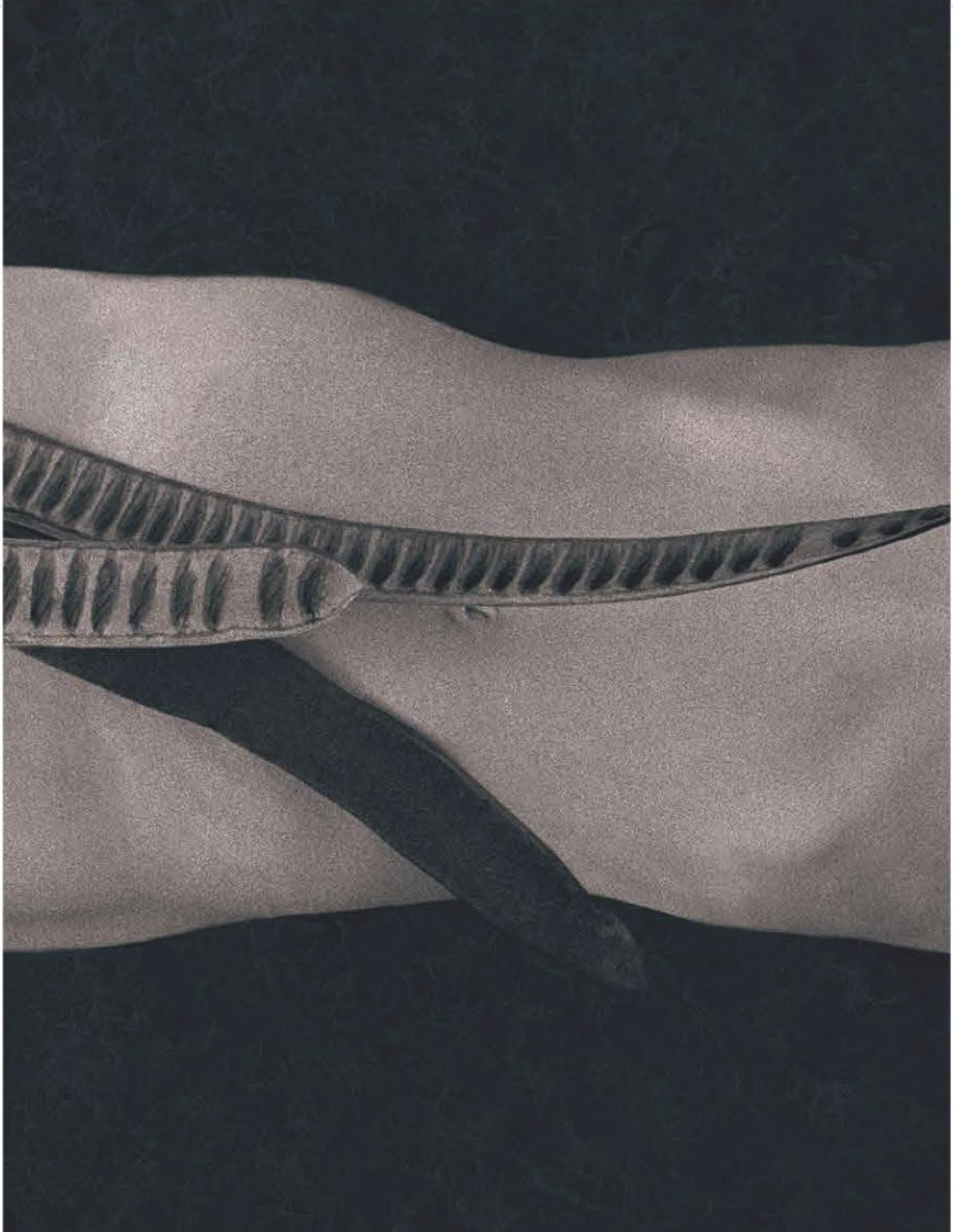












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Vanitas Revisited, 2013
Dye transfer print, 21^{1/2} x 18^{1/2} inches



Pastrycook, 1928
© Die Photographische Sammlung/SK-Stiftung Kultur – August Sander Archiv, Köln – VG-Bild Kunst, Bonn, 2011



Pastrycook, 2007
Gelatin silver print, 8^{3/16} x 5^{1/2} inches



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Dye transfer print, 21^{1/2} x 18^{1/2} inches



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Circus Workers, 2007
Platinum palladium print, 20 x 14^{1/4} inches



Farmer's Child, 2007
Gelatin silver print, 8^{1/8} x 6^{1/2} inches



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Platinum palladium print, 20 x 14^{1/4} inches



Farmer's Child, 2007
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Circus Workers, 2007
Platinum palladium print, 20 x 14^{1/4} inches

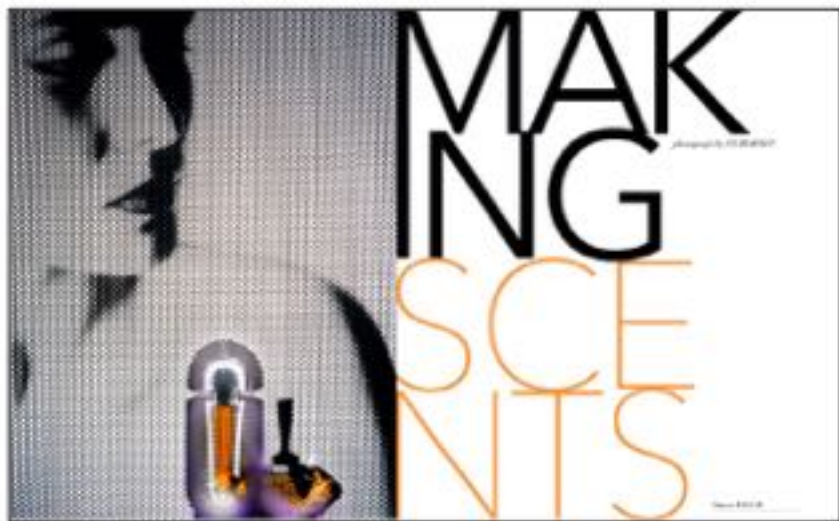
Farmer's Child, 2007
Gelatin silver print, 8^{1/8} x 6^{1/2} inches



Circus Workers, 2007
Platinum palladium print, 20 x 14^{1/4} inches

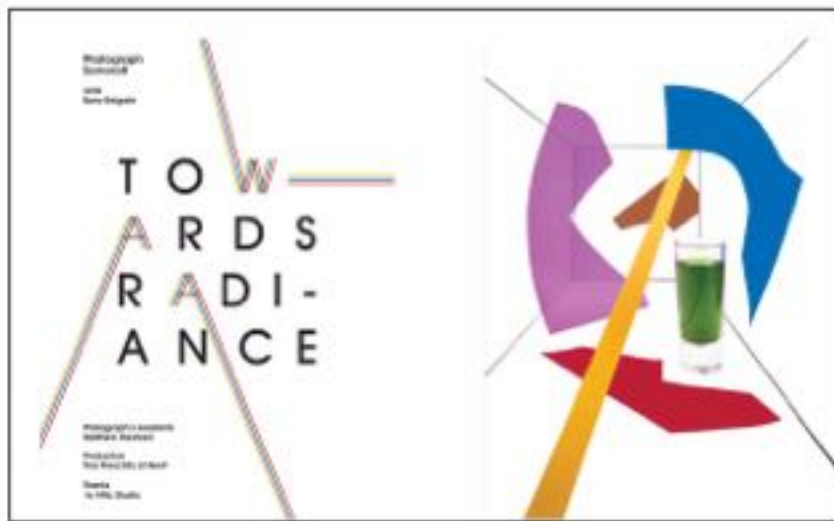
Farmer's Child, 2007
Gelatin silver print, 8^{1/8} x 6^{1/2} inches





Milk, 1985
Dye transfer print, 16x20 inches

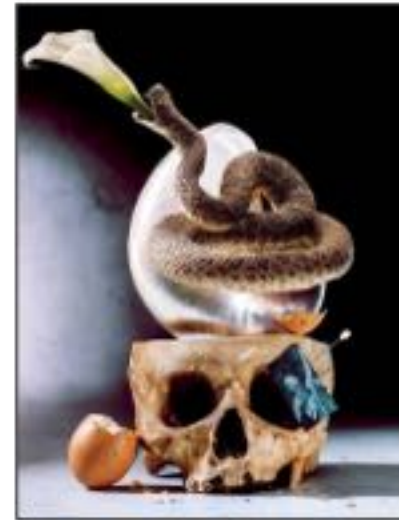
Tea and Lemon, 1983
Dye transfer print, 20x16 inches



Color Story, 1980
Dye transfer print, 20x16 inches

Rum and Cigar, 1985
Dye transfer print, 18x16 inches





Yellow Still Life, 1985
Dye transfer print, 11^{1/8} x 26^{1/8} inches



Boogie Woogie, 1979
Gelatin silver print, 23^{1/2} x 19^{1/2} inches

Trumpet, 1979
Gelatin silver print, 23^{1/2} x 19^{1/2} inches

Egg and Fork, 1978
Dye transfer print, 21^{1/4} x 27^{1/4} inches



Next page: Study with strawberries, 1979
Dye transfer print, 19^{1/2} x 29 inches

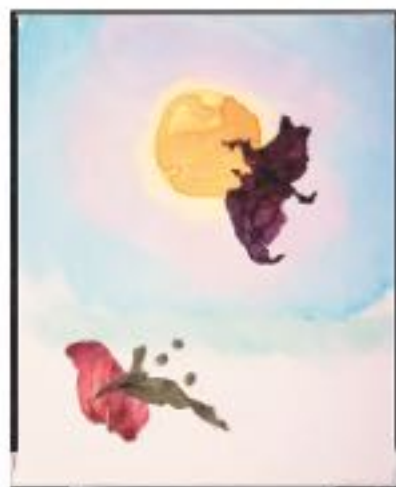


Guitar, 1979
Gelatin silver print, 23^{1/2} x 19^{1/2} inches

Trombone, 1979
Gelatin silver print, 23^{1/2} x 19^{1/2} inches

Vivaldi
Gum print, 15^{5/16} x 11^{13/16} inches

Nutcracker
Vandyke print, 23^{5/16} x 18^{1/2} inches



The Vegetable Series No. 10, 1978
Dye transfer print, 25^{1/2} x 20^{1/2} inches

The Vegetable Series No. 17, 1978
Dye transfer print, 25^{1/2} x 20^{1/2} inches

The Vegetable Series No. 8, 1978
Dye transfer print, 25^{1/2} x 20^{1/2} inches

The Vegetable Series No. 24, 1978
Dye transfer print, 25^{1/2} x 20^{1/2} inches



The Vegetable Series No. 9, 1978
Dye transfer print, 25^{1/2} x 20^{1/2} inches



The Vegetable Series No. 13, 1978
Dye transfer print, 25^{1/2} x 20^{1/2} inches







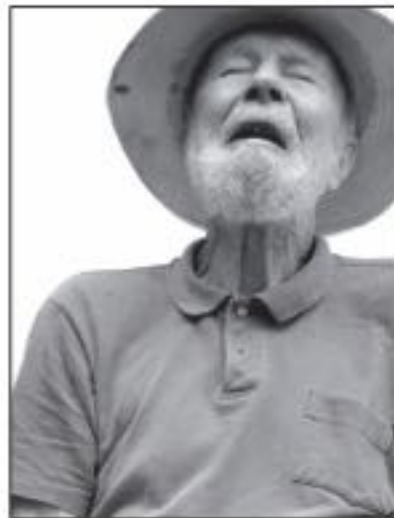
Brassai, 1983
Platinum palladium print, 30x24 inches



Helmut Newton, 1983
Platinum palladium print, 19^{1/2} x 20^{1/2} inches



André Kertész, 1982
Platinum palladium print, 30x24 inches



Pete Seeger, 2012
Platinum palladium print, 15^{1/2} x 24 inches



Benny Goodman, 1983
Platinum palladium print, 20^{1/2} x 41 inches



Mask, 1983
Platinum palladium print, 18 x 17^{1/2} inches



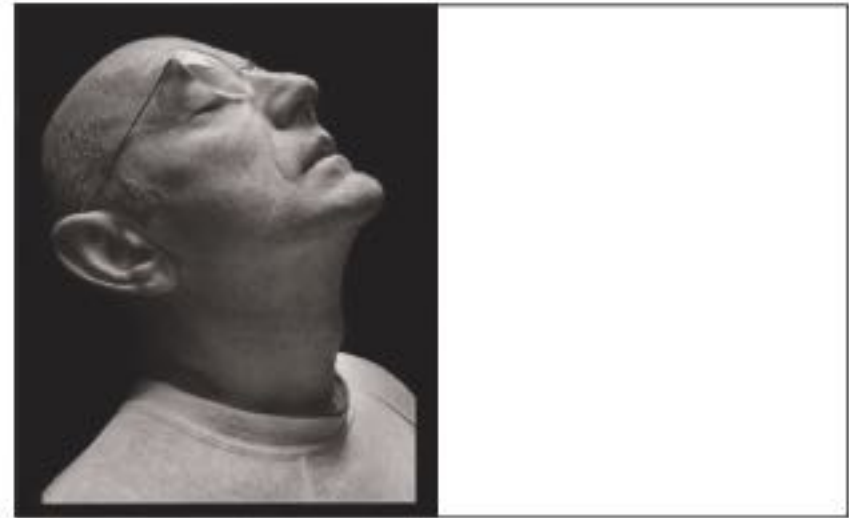
Spanish girl, 1982
Platinum palladium print, 13^{3/4} x 14^{3/4} inches



Italian girl, 1983
Platinum palladium print, 19^{1/2} x 17^{1/2} inches



Arnold Newman, 1979
Platinum palladium print, 19^{1/2}x20^{3/4} inches



Duane Michals, 1980
Platinum palladium print, 19 x 15^{1/8} inches



Giannina Braschi, 2011
Platinum palladium print, 30x24 inches



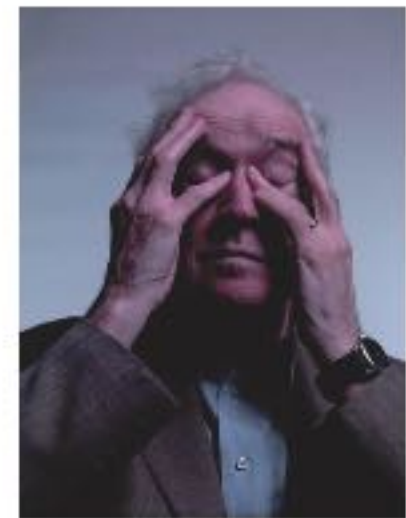
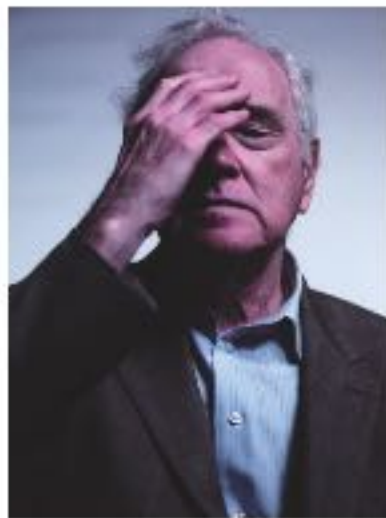
Milton Glaser, 2012
Platinum palladium print, 16x16 inches



Turkish girls, 1983
Platinum palladium print, 22^{1/8} x 19^{1/8} inches



Turkish boys, 1983
Platinum palladium print, 24 x 19^{1/8} inches



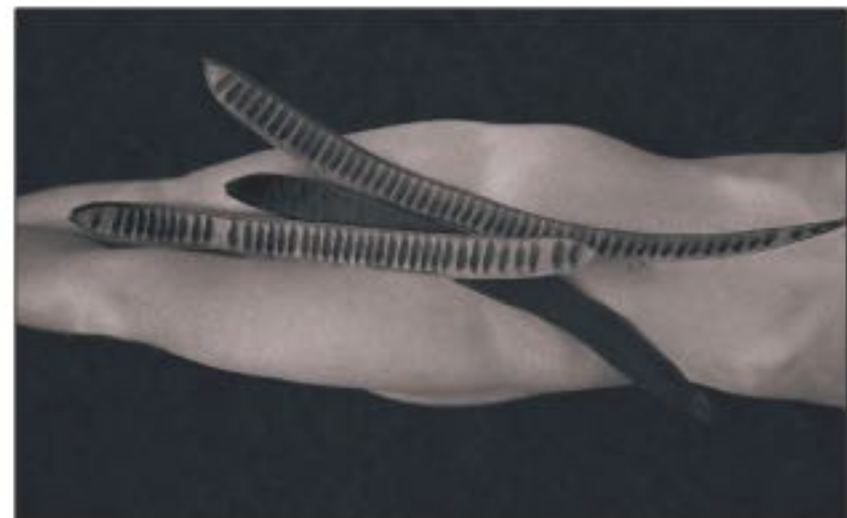
Donald Kuspit I - IV, 2012
Dye transfer prints, 27^{1/4} x 20^{3/4} inches



Frances McLaughlin-Gill, 1979
Platinum palladium print, 20^{1/2} x 20^{1/2}
inches



Helmut Schmidt, 1984
Vintage gelatin silver print, 7^{1/16} x 7^{3/16} inches



Nude 36, 1982
Dye transfer print, 17^{3/4} x 17^{3/4} inches

Nude 68, 2013
Dye transfer print, 18^{1/2} x 27^{1/2} inches



Roy Cohn, 1979
Vintage gelatin silver print, 12 x 9^{1/8}
inches



Leonard Bernstein, 1984
Vintage gelatin silver print, 7^{1/2} x 6^{1/2}
inches



Andreas Feininger, 1980
Gelatin silver print, 51^{1/2} x 52 inches



Derek Jarman, 1985
Vintage gelatin silver print, 9^{1/2} x 10^{1/2}
inches



Nude 45, 2013
Gelatin silver print



Nude 75, 2013
Dye transfer print, 27^{1/2} x 18^{1/2} inches



Girl with Green Leaf, 2013
Dye transfer print, 27^{1/2} x 18^{1/2} inches

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

Sirius Arts Centre, Cork, Ireland, 2014
Benaki Museum, Athens, Greece, 2014
Fondation Stelline in Milan, Italy, 2013
Centro de Arte la Regenta, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain, 2013
Tenerife Espacio de las Artes, Tenerife, Spain, 2013
Sala Municipal de Exposiciones de las Francesas, Valladolid, Spain, 2012
Villa Brandolini F4 Un'Ida di Fotografia, Solighetto-Treviso, Italy, 2012
Galleri Image, Aarhus, Denmark, 2012
Piazza San Marco, during the Venice Biennial, Italy, 2011
OMI International Art Center, Sculpture park, Ghent, NY, since 2008
Kunst-Station Sankt Peter, Köln, Germany, 2008
The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, CT, 2007
Rothko Chapel, Houston, Texas, 2006
With the Association of Independent Commercial Producers, 1996
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA, USA.
The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA, USA.
Detroit Institute of Art, Detroit, MI, USA.
Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL, USA.
High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA, USA.

BOOKS

Two Crowns of The Egg, Damiani, 2014
A Moment. Master Photographers, Portraits by Michael Somoroff, Damiani, 2012
Absence of Subject, Walter König, 2011
Michael Somoroff: Illumination I at the Rothko Chapel, Rothko Chapel Books, 2008
Image of the Not-Seen: Search for Understanding, The Rothko Chapel Art Series, 2005
Kinder in Europa, Nicolai, 1988

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Museums:

Museum of Modern Art, New York
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden Library, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg, Germany
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Corporate:

Condé Nast Archive, New York
Deutsche Bank, Frankfurt, Germany
Eastman Kodak Company, Rochester, New York
Estée Lauder, New York
Forbes, New York
Hasselblad Corporation, Stockholm, Sweden
Hearst Publications, New York
Hugo Boss, Metzingen, Germany
Konica, Tokyo, Japan
Sony Corporation, Tokyo, Japan
Wempe, Hamburg, Germany

Private:

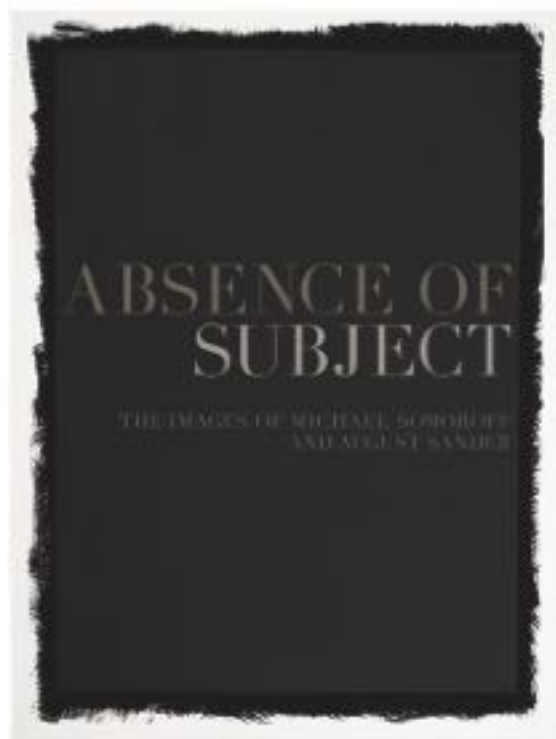
Ghada Amer, New York
Jean-Charles Blais, Paris, France
Luc Bondy, Berlin, Germany
Klaus Maria Brandauer, Vienna, Austria
Doris Dörrie, Munich, Germany
Steve Forbes, New York
Milton Glaser, New York
Herbert Grönemeyer, Köln, Germany
Jochen Holy, Metzingen, Germany
Wolfgang Joop, Hamburg, Germany
Alain-Dominique Perrin, Paris, France
Thomas Ruff, Düsseldorf, Germany
Doris Runge, Bamberg, Germany
Heikki Sarmanto, Helsinki, Finland
Peter Schmidt, Hamburg, Germany
Ralph Towner, New York
Tomi Ungerer, South Ireland

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ABSENCE OF SUBJECT

Photographs and text by Michael Somoroff; book written and exhibition curated by Diana Edkins; foreword by Anne Wilkes Tucker; text by Julian Sander; design by Mary Shanahan.

Published by Buchhandlung Walther König, Köln, 2011.

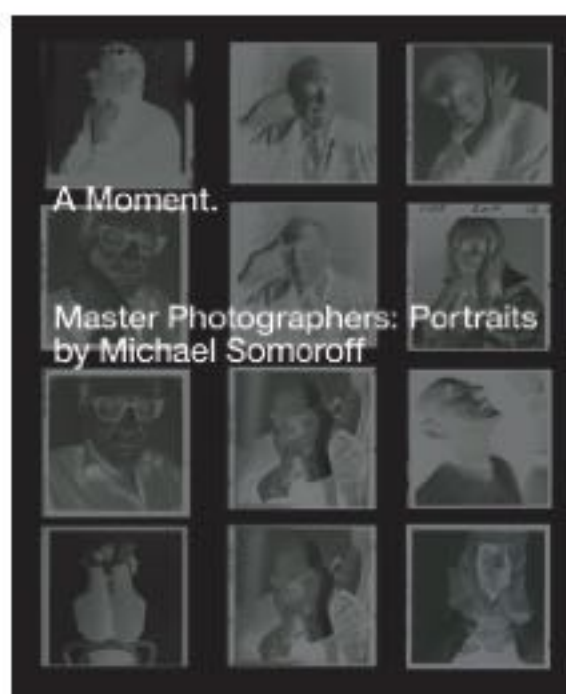
Michael Somoroff pays homage to August Sander's monumental photographic work *People of the 20th Century*. Seemingly simple at first, it is a complex, elliptical, ambitious work comprised of forty photographs and seven animations as well as forty August Sander original photographs. Ever since the medium was first invented, photography's relationship with the real world has been as perplexing as it is fascinating. Far more than a medium such as painting, photography was supposed to have a certain level of truth. We know that Sander's subjects are fixed. Anne Wilkes Tucker has noted that, "only his single observation of each subject exists for us; frozen in stance and situation." In recent decades, in particular, the idea has taken root that truth and reality are ambiguous concepts in photography. Somoroff explores this notion. The digital revolution has brought the unprecedented potential for manipulation into focus. Through the use of software Somoroff has taken out what we have always believed to be the "essential element"—the subject, the portrait. The backgrounds, once a secondary fragment, now become the primary motivator. They have now been translated into new fully conceived images that rightfully belong to the "postmodern" idiom.

In videos Somoroff takes the new image as its base and now adds an element instead of taking away. In each of the videos (run on a continuous loop), Somoroff surprises us with tiny increments of inexplicable movements which are utterly absorbing, potent dramas of time and space—endless in the moment, over before you know it.

These works dwell in the poetry of stillness, forcing the viewer to go beyond the work and reflect upon himself.

Absence of Subject was first exhibited during the 2011 Venice Biennale and continues to travel throughout Europe.

Diana Edkins - Curator



A MOMENT.

MASTER PHOTOGRAPHERS: PORTRAITS BY MICHAEL SOMOROFF

Photographs and text by Michael Somoroff; essay by William A. Ewing; design by Eileen Boxer

Published by Damiani, 2012.

« A good photograph is one that communicates a fact, touches the heart, and leaves the viewer a changed person for having seen it, it is in one word, effective. »
- Irving Penn

A Moment. Master Photographers: Portraits by Michael Somoroff is a body of work made in the 1970s. Somoroff took it upon himself to photograph in-depth his heroes and mentors, the master photographers of the twentieth century. He had been introduced to their work and subsequently to many of the photographers themselves by his father, the pre-eminent still-life photographer Ben Somoroff.

In honor of each of these photographer-mentors, Somoroff began a series of portraits of his heroes, including Brassai, Ralph Gibson, André Kertész, Jacques-Henri Lartigue, Arnold Newman, Helmut Newton, and others. Each was caught at a quintessential moment, thereby defining a period of photography that was unique—the climax of the analog photographic experience.

A Moment. Master Photographers was published by Damiani, in 2012, with an essay by William A. Ewing, who first met Michael as he was executing these portraits; at the same time Ewing was putting together Somoroff's first show at the International Center of Photography. The book contains a vast array of cutting-edge artists photographed formally as well as behind the scenes.

A Moment was awarded a 2012 Best Photo Books of the Year prize by *American Photo* magazine, which stated: "In a series of evocative portraits, Somoroff shows us photographic legends whose names are more familiar than their faces, including such elusive figures as André Kertész, Brassai, Robert Doisneau and Art Kane. Beginning in 1978 and ending with a 2011 triptych of Lillian Bassman (made shortly before her death) the project reflects a mutual respect between artists." *Publishers Weekly* noted, "Somoroff's skillful portraiture suggests a piousness as much for that moment in time as for the individual artists."



TWO CROWNS OF THE EGG

Photographs and text by Michael Somoroff; essay by Donald Kuspit; poetry by Giannina Braschi; designed by Eileen Boxer.
Published by Damiani, May 2014.

"I want everything to be in my book. So nothing is left unsaid. I want to say it all. Live it all. See it all. Make everything anew. The end must be the beginning."
—Giannina Braschi

Two Crowns of the Egg is an ode by Michael Somoroff to his wife Irina. This stunning, exquisitely designed book presents an intense series of portraits and nudes of Irina Somoroff, taken over the course of seventeen years, along with the photographer's masterful still lifes, that together explore the elusive nature of love, and the psychological and artistic power that only a muse can wield. Like Alfred Stieglitz's portraits of Georgia O'Keeffe, the series portrays the multiple aspects of the artist's gaze upon his lover.

This collaborative work of art about enduring love and the search for Truth involved a creative team comprised of Michael Somoroff, art critic and distinguished professor of art and philosophy Donald Kuspit, cutting-edge Latin American writer Giannina Braschi, reputed art book designer Eileen Boxer, and of course, Irina Somoroff.

Kuspit contributes a rich and insightful text that places the collaboration between artist and muse in a compelling historical and psychological context. Somoroff worked together with Braschi on a selection of exuberant poems from her postmodern poetry classic *Empire of Dreams*. He created the still lifes in response to the poems that provide a lyrical subtext on love, intimacy, passion, betrayal, and forgiveness. The book concludes with a reflection by Somoroff which offers a personal revelation concerning the love story of his marriage with its ups and downs that creates a very intimate body of work.

