ALMINE RECH

Masquerade, Make-up & Ensor

Sep 28, 2024 — Feb 2, 2025 | MoMu Fashion Museum Antwerp, Belgium

In MoMu's autumn exhibition, *Masquerade, Make-up & Ensor*, James Ensor's ideas about masquerade, (false) coquetry, seduction, deception and the transient are brought up to the present day. MoMu celebrates the painters of fashion: the craftsmanship and inexhaustible creativity of make-up and hair artists, in a multimedia exhibition in which light, colour, art, fashion and make-up come together.

Down through history, make-up has often been viewed with suspicion and compared to the wearing of a mask: a mask to hide one's true face. James Ensor was a critical observer of the world and the people around him. He recognized their insecurities and insincere coquetry. From 1888, Ensor used masks, clothing and accessories as ambiguous instruments for unmasking: a way of revealing the true nature and deeper feelings of his masked figures. The work of James Ensor leads to universal questions: Why do we wear masks? Why are people so afraid of visible aging? How do we deal with ideals of beauty that are always changing and are impossible to achieve?

Today, make-up and beauty have exploded into a trillion-dollar industry that perpetually confronts humans with their bodily impermanence, imagined imperfections and existential fears. However, like paint, make-up is also a medium for personal expression, artistic experimentation, joy and freedom. *Masquerade, Make-up & Ensor* investigates how closely intertwined make-up is with so many aspects of our being human.

MoMu has joined forces with iconic art, beauty and culture platform *Beauty Papers* to curate the works of leading contemporary make-up artists and photographers in three new video installations exploring the key themes of Ensor's work through the lens of beauty today.

With work by James Ensor, Issy Wood, Cindy Sherman, Tschabalala Self, Genieve Figgis, Harley Weir, Julien d'Ys, Inge Grognard, Peter Philips, Martin Margiela, Christian Lacroix, Walter Van Beirendonck, Cyndia Harvey, Thomas de Kluyver, Lucy Bridge, Eugene Souleiman, Éamonn Freel, Bruce Gilden and many more.