

# ARTFORUM

## Erwin Blumenfeld

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A Dadaist collagist-turned-photographer, Erwin Blumenfeld began publishing his fashion shoots in magazines like *Vogue* and *Cosmopolitan* in the late 1930s. Working with print solarization and superimposition, and using mirrors and gauzy fabrics to divide photographic space, Blumenfeld transformed both the models and their clothes into collagelike elements. In *Fashion Collage*, ca. 1950—which depicts a woman laden with boxes, her head covered by a blank white spot, standing against a backdrop of New York City—he flaunts each fragment that makes up the work. In *Nude in Stockings, New York*, 1945, he isolates a model's fishnet-clad legs from her torso, defamiliarizing the body as he emphasizes the product's texture.

Blumenfeld creatively manipulated available technology to produce these images, posing a woman in black gloves and a dainty hat behind a chain-link fence to fracture her in *Model with Black Gloves and Hat (for Vogue)*, Paris, 1939. In his works, the disjointed facets of collage are most often staged using mirrors. The model in *Dayton Ad, New York*, 1955, looks at her multiple reflections in the mirror, mimicking and returning the gaze of the viewer. This replication culminates in *Kalediscope*, 1961, in which a pinwheel of mirrors splinters the figure, recasting her as a design motif.

Spanning the artist's commercial photography career through the 1960s, these vintage gelatin silver prints are rounded out with a few color images reissued by the artist's heirs for the exhibition. In *Red Cross (cover for Vogue)*, 1945, the model's shadowy body melts into the cross that segments the space, with only the green of her hat distinguishable from the red lines that structure her. Sleek, off-kilter, and provocative, Blumenfeld's fashion photographs showcase the artist's fluency with Dadaist vernacular as much as the clothes he helped to promote.



Erwin Blumenfeld, *Fashion Collage*, ca. 1950, gelatin silver print, 12 x 8 1/2".

— Lori Cole

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