

## **Lisa Oppenheim**

*Ourselves and the Expression of Ourselves*

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York

September 3 - October 23, 2025

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery is pleased to present *Ourselves and the Expression of Ourselves*, an exhibition of new work by Lisa Oppenheim, on view in New York from September 3 through October 23, 2025. This is the artist's sixth solo exhibition with the gallery.

Over the last two decades, Lisa Oppenheim has developed a body of work that is rooted in the field of photography while also investigating the medium's often overlooked margins and histories. For *Ourselves and the Expression of Ourselves*, Oppenheim transforms and embodies the practice of one of the twentieth century's most well-known yet enigmatic artists whose multifaceted career spanned nearly eighty years: Edward Steichen (born Edouard Jean Steichen, 1879, Luxembourg — 1973, Redding, Connecticut).

Steichen, a photographer, designer, curator, and flower hybridizer, was first known for his work introducing Cézanne and the European avant-garde to America with Alfred Stieglitz at 291 Gallery during the early years of the twentieth century. His influence extended through different formats and decades including his collaboration with Stieglitz on the publication *Camera Work*, developing aerial photography during the First World War and heading the U.S. Naval Photographic Institute during WWII, designing revolutionary textiles for Stehli Silks, and directing the photography departments of both Condé Nast and The Museum of Modern Art. Steichen's gesamtkunstwerk, *The Family of Man*, was first seen at MoMA and subsequently toured the globe for another eight years, existing now as the eponymously titled book, in continuous print since the show's opening in 1955. Through all these endeavors, Steichen maintained a flower breeding practice. In a first, he displayed the Delphiniums hybridized at his Connecticut farm at MoMA in a 1936 exhibition that lasted just one week. This from the exhibition's press release: "*Although Mr. Steichen is widely known for his photography, this is the first time his delphiniums have been given a public showing. They are original varieties, as creatively produced as his photographs.*"

Steichen viewed his flower cultivation on the same level as his photographic practice, on par with his work producing and designing exhibitions, books, watches, textiles and in 1928, a piano. For this exhibition — the title taken from a press release from *The New York Times* in 1926 announcing Stehli Silks' Americana collection — Oppenheim embodies the practice of Steichen. She creates photographs, textiles, object arrangements that exist as elements of his life and pursuits filtered through her artistic practice. In this way, she forges a new form of appropriation, not of specific artworks or ideas, but rather as rethinking and reworking biography — of performing the life of another in her studio and darkroom. Here she produces a speculative form of biography as an exhibition, which ultimately is an expression of her own work as an artist.

In a new series of photographic prints, Oppenheim revives a now-extinct variety of iris named *Monsieur Steichen*, which was created in 1910 by an amateur botanist as a tribute to Steichen. There are no known photographs of Mons. Steichen, nor extant examples of the flower. Oppenheim's works bring this flower back to life using photographic techniques from two very different eras: dye transfer, which Steichen himself used in the 1930s and 40s, and artificial

intelligence. Through AI technology, Oppenheim created images of hypothetical hybrids by merging images of the two varieties of iris that were originally used to create Mons. Steichen. She then produced analog prints of the AI-generated images using the labor-intensive and almost entirely outmoded process of dye transfer. Using her own “incorrect” color combinations, Oppenheim creates a vast range of possible “Mons. Steichen” that explore the concepts of both genetic and photographic verisimilitude.

A series of paravents explores Steichen’s textile designs that he created from black and white photographs of everyday objects and motifs such as static electricity, gravel, floral designs, and microscopic views of organic life. In collaboration with fashion designer Zoe Latta, Oppenheim developed a collection of new fabrics based on photographs that Steichen took but that Stehli Silks ultimately *did not* produce as textiles. Oppenheim “hybridizes” the paravents with her photographic *Steichen Studies*—combining photographs she took in Steichen’s archives with photographic experiments she conducted in her dark room—so that each folding screen is a visual mini-narrative offering insight both into Steichen’s biography as interpreted by Oppenheim as well as her own creative practice.

Oppenheim was born in 1975 in New York City, where she currently lives and works. She received her BA from Brown University in 1998, and later an MFA from the Milton Avery Graduate School for the Arts at Bard College in 2001. She also completed the Whitney Independent Study Program and the Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten in Amsterdam.

Oppenheim has been the subject of solo exhibitions at MUDAM The Contemporary Art Museum of Luxembourg (2025); Huis Marseille, Amsterdam (2024); MOCA Cleveland (2017), the FRAC Champagne-Ardenne (2015), Kunstverein in Hamburg (2014), Grazer Kunstverein (2014) and notable group exhibitions including *Woven Histories: Textiles and Modern Abstraction*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (traveled to Los Angeles County Museum of Art; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa and The Museum of Modern Art, New York); *Afterlives*, The Jewish Museum, New York (2021); *Off the Record*, Guggenheim Museum, New York (2021); *Light, Paper, Process: Reinventing Photography*, The Getty Center, Los Angeles (2015); *Photo-Poetics*, Deutsche Bank Kunsthalle, Berlin and Guggenheim Museum, New York (2015); and *New Photography* at The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2013).

Her work is held in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; The Jewish Museum, New York; The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; Israel Museum, Jerusalem; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; The Centre Pompidou, Paris; Victoria & Albert Museum, London; Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum, St. Louis; MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge; and Milwaukee Art Museum, among others.