

# London

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# Travelogue *'We English'* by Simon Roberts



★★★★★

**Chris Boot** £40

Low and leaden skies, grey rain-streaked beaches, toxic-looking yellow stubble in farmers' fields, caravan parks hoisting the flag of St George and the assorted leisure activities of the Great British Public: shooting at birds, car boot sails, mud races and Derby Day. Simon Roberts travelled up and down England in a motorhome between August 2007 and September 2008 to carry out his study. The influence of past masters – including Tony Ray Jones and Martin Parr – is evident, but Roberts's wide-open images allow in as much landscape as possible. This shows we leisure-practitioners in context, organic elements within a larger canvas. We look as dull as the topography and weather, occasionally lit up by a Turner-esque ray of sunshine. While Roberts is not the first to find beauty in bleakness, or in the mundane, even moronic, weekend habits of the English, he brings to the treatment an irony-free and lovingly meditative gaze. An accompanying essay, 'The English Outdoors' by Stephen Daniels, highlights the timelessness of our culture of harmless pastimes, but the pictures speak for themselves: this is how we play, and we don't do it with smiles on our faces. *Chris Moss*

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## Cultural breaks *Art events worth flying for*

### ► **Irving Penn: Small Trades, Los Angeles** Until Jan 10 2010

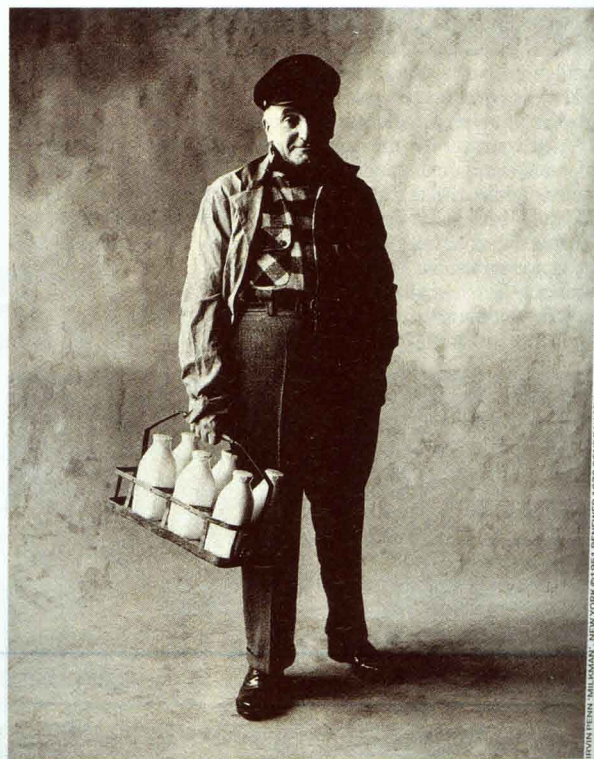
Irving Penn, one of the most respected photographers of the twentieth century, died on October 7. His career, which spanned more than six decades, ranged across reportage, fashion, still life and portrait studies. 'Small Trades' presents some of his very best images, capturing his skill at portraiture. Working in Paris, London and New York in the early '50s, Penn photographed skilled tradespeople dressed in work clothes and carrying the tools of their occupations. A neutral backdrop provided the stage on which his subjects could present themselves with dignity and pride. Penn revisited his 'Small Trades' series over the decades, producing ever more exacting prints. In 2008 the J Paul Getty Museum acquired the most comprehensive group of images, selected by the photographer – 252 prints in all – which are being exhibited in their entirety for the first time.

The Getty Center, 1200 Getty Center Drive, Los Angeles (+1 310 440 7300/www.getty.edu).



### ◀ **AiM International Biennale, Marrakech** Nov 19-23

The third AiM Biennale offers a range of visual arts, documentary film and literature. The main exhibition, 'A Proposal for Articulating Works and Places', will feature 23 artists and at least six new productions, including works from Francis Alÿs, Yto Barrada and Loredana Longo. Attendees will also include Turner nominee Isaac Julien, BBC arts doyen Alan Yentob, Moroccan director Faouzi Bensaidi and Moroccan writer Abdellah Taia. The Museum of Marrakech, Place Ben Youssef, Marrakech (+212 24 44 1893/www.aimbiennale.org).



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