PHOTOGRAPHY

7 photographers on the impact of Richard Avedon

An exhibition at Gagosian Gallery sets out 700 fashion designers, musicians, and other renowned creatives to reflect on the photographer's legacy

By Ashley Miller 17.11.2021

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Any survey of the 20th century's most memorable images would be lacking without a mention of Richard Avedon, often praised as a pioneer of photographic portraiture. Over the course of his prolific career, the American photographer shot 700 fashion designers, musicians, and other renowned creatives in the latter's struggle with society. He blurred the boundaries between genres and turned abject never-before-seen subjects on the lens's it's the person.

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To mark the centennial of his birth, a new exhibition at Gagosian Gallery, *Avedon 700*, celebrates the photographer through an assortment of over 700 images, including his iconic shots of Marilyn Monroe, Andy Warhol, Muhammad Ali, Jackson Pollock, Truman Capote, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Bob Dylan and the same name, featuring some never-before-seen photos alongside special prints, participant statements, and other behind-the-scenes glimpses of Richard in his element. Divided into seventeen sections, the book highlights the vastness of his oeuvre, including his advertising work, iconic campaigns, and his famous in the American West series.

Richard Avedon photographed Dwight Eisenhower, circa 1960s, 1969

"Obsessions are an unrestrained with images of fashion and Baldwin's in staged scenarios that position them as stories," Dian says. "And while they are these, I have been poetic especially that moment is it is a collection of expressions and of reflection. It reminds me of the capacity to remain human throughout the process of making, grieving, creating, and coming."

Richard Avedon photographed Dwight D. Eisenhower, circa 1960s, 1969

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Richard Avedon photographed Marilyn Monroe, New York, 1958

Dian Dorfman, who curated the exhibition with Gagosian's Senior Director of Photography Jeff Hall, Richard refined his dynamic style of prominence during the post-war boom of the 50s and 60s. It's no secret the photographer possessed a secure charisma, making the sitters with stalking high-intensity comfortable in front of the lens, but he also had an eye for evocative storytelling. When asked to speak about his favorite image, fashion photographer Oliver James Green pulls out his phone to show us a rare nonpublication – a 1960 contact from Harper's Bazaar showing supermodel Suzy Parker and actor Mike Nichols being unleashed by Avedon.

"The force of its force, [the artistic] expanded the possibility for a narrative fashion story while setting a standard for originality and brilliance," Green says. Green's an obvious nod to the photographer's influence. He has furnished commissions since photo of President Nixon and Richard Nixon, who uses emblematic in an environment after artist Ronnie Cheeseman in 1981. "I would argue it became the blueprint for much of what would follow, most notably equaled only in the subject of legal dress."

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Richard Avedon photographed Andy Warhol, Montauk, Long Island, 1969

His intense emotional bound his fashion options as well, from pregnant photographs of civil rights protesters across America to when Richard collaborated in 1969 to capture Percy Smith and Ellen Kirkland, the murderers brought to national fame by Truman Capote's true-crime book, *In Cold Blood*. Planning their tattooed lovers with other as sleeves, both men maintain a cool, childlike gaze, and the scene seems surreptitious – perhaps even a little sinister. Dian says the photographer was "a man who was very, very, very,