

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

14 December 2015

AVEDON



WARHOL



February 9–April 23, 2016
Opening reception: Tuesday, February 9, 6–8pm

Gagosian Gallery
6–24 Britannia Street, London WC1X 9JD
Telephone +44.207.841.9960
www.gagosian.com

My camera and I, together we have the power to confer or to take away.
—Richard Avedon

They always say that time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself.
—Andy Warhol

Gagosian London is pleased to present the first major exhibition to pair works by Richard Avedon and Andy Warhol. Both artists rose to prominence in postwar America with parallel artistic output that occasionally overlapped. Their most memorable images, produced in response to changing cultural mores, are icons of the twentieth century.

Portraiture was a shared focus of both artists, and they made use of repetition and serialization: Avedon through the reproducible medium of photography, and in his group photographs, for which he meticulously positioned, collaged, and reordered images; Warhol in his method of stacked screenprinting, which enabled the consistent reproduction of an image. Avedon's distinctive gelatin-silver prints and Warhol's boldly colored silkscreens variously depict many of the same recognizable faces, including Marella Agnelli, Bianca Jagger, Jacqueline Kennedy, Marilyn Monroe, and Rudolf Nureyev.

Both Avedon and Warhol originated from modest beginnings and had tremendous commercial success working for major magazines in New York, beginning in the 1940s. The 1960s marked artistic turning points for both artists as they moved away increasingly from strictly commercial work towards their mature independent styles. The works in the exhibition, which date from the 1950s through the 1990s, emphasize such common themes as social and political power; the evolving acceptance of cultural differences; the inevitability of mortality; and the glamour and despair of celebrity.

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Each gallery will juxtapose works that underscore these themes, beginning with *The Family* (1976), Avedon's ambitious conceptual portrayal of sixty-nine individuals at the epicenter of American politics at that time, together with Warhol's monumental portrait of the revolutionary Mao Tse-tung, *Mao* (1972). In both works, little emotion or expression is revealed in the sitters' faces or postures. Such deadpan was a mark of Pop art ambivalence, more commonly associated with Warhol, but equally applicable in this instance to Avedon.

Both artists sought out individuals who were outside, as well as inside, the mainstream. For Avedon, this resulted in the larger-than-lifesize mural of *Andy Warhol and members of The Factory* (1969), who represented the heart of New York subculture and incarnated the sexual and cultural revolution. Meanwhile, Warhol memorialized the beauty of drag queens—who he once described as “ambulatory archives of ideal moviestar womanhood”—in his pioneering series of silkscreens, *Ladies and Gentlemen* (1975).

The third gallery contains an extended meditation on the darker side of human existence, as well as its potential salvation: Warhol's *Skull and Guns* paintings are juxtaposed with photographs from Avedon's *Brandenburg Gate* portfolio, taken during the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

Finally, celebrity was a topic that was equally explored by both artists: Avedon in his iconic images of *Brigitte Bardot* (1959) and *Audrey Hepburn* (1967); and Warhol in his dramatically rendered superstars, such as *Double Elvis* (1963) and *Four Marilyn's (Reversal Series)* (1986). Driven by their cosmopolitan awareness and mindfulness of the potential for their work to stir change, as well as their diverse cast of modern muses, Avedon and Warhol harnessed the power of images to reflect the revolutionary social attitudes of their time.

A fully illustrated publication accompanying the exhibition will include essays by Michael Bracewell and Ara H. Merjian, as well as a chronology documenting the artists' careers and points of intersection.

Richard Avedon was born in New York City in 1923 and died while on assignment for *The New Yorker* in San Antonio, Texas, in 2004. His work is included in the collections of major museums around the world, including the Museum of Modern Art, the Smithsonian, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, along with countless other institutions worldwide. Avedon's first museum retrospective was held at the Smithsonian Institution in 1962. Many major museum exhibitions have followed, including those at the Minneapolis Institute of Fine Arts (1970), Museum of Modern Art (1974), Whitney Museum of American Art (1994), and two at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1978 and 2002). A 2007 retrospective exhibition organized by the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Denmark traveled to Milan, Paris, Berlin, Amsterdam, and San Francisco. “Richard Avedon: People” was presented at National Portrait Gallery, Canberra in 2013, and traveled to Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth in 2014, and the Ian Potter Museum of Art, Melbourne from 2014–15.

Andy Warhol was born in Pittsburgh in 1928 and died in New York City in 1987. His work is included in public collections worldwide. His first major exhibition was at Ferus Gallery, Los Angeles, in 1962. Since then, his work has been the subject of numerous exhibitions in museums and galleries throughout the world, including retrospectives at Pasadena Art Museum (1970, traveled to Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Stedelijk van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven; Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris; Tate Gallery, London; and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York); Museum of Modern Art, New York (1989, traveled to Art Institute of Chicago; Hayward Gallery, London; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; Palazzo Reale, Milan; and Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris); and Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin (2001–02, traveled to Tate Modern, London; and Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles). Recent exhibitions include “Warhol: Headlines,” Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Rome (2011–12); “Andy Warhol: Shadows,” Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2014–15); “Transmitting Andy Warhol,” Tate Liverpool (2014–15); and “Andy Warhol: Campbell's Soup Cans and Other Works, 1953–1967,” Museum of Modern Art, New York (2015).

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Press Enquiries
Bolton & Quinn
T. +44.207.221.5000
www.boltonquinn.com

Contact: Erica Bolton
E. erica.bolton@boltonquinn.com

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Image: Left: RICHARD AVEDON, *Audrey Hepburn, actress, New York, January 20, 1967* © The Richard Avedon Foundation
Right: ANDY WARHOL, *Miriam Davidson* (1965), Spray paint and silkscreen ink on canvas, 80 1/4 x 80 1/2 inches (203.8 x 204.5 cm) Private Collection © 2015 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York