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Gagosian to Present *Richard Avedon: Facing West* in London, Opening January 15, 2026

Exhibition Features Rare Works from *In the American West*, Forty Years Since the Renowned Series' Debut



Richard Avedon, *James Story*, coal miner, Somerset, Colorado, December 18, 1979 © The Richard Avedon Foundation

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LONDON, December 15, 2025—Gagosian is pleased to announce *Richard Avedon: Facing West*, an exhibition of rare prints from the photographic series *In the American West* (1979–84), including works that have not been shown since their debut in 1985. Opening at the Grosvenor Hill gallery in London on January 15, 2026, *Facing West* is curated by the photographer's granddaughter, Caroline Avedon.

In the American West, an extended series commissioned by and first exhibited at the Amon Carter Museum in Fort Worth, Texas, celebrated its fortieth anniversary in 2025. At the time of its debut in 1985, Avedon was well known for fashion photography, portraits of people in power, and his work with the civil rights movement. These images, which picture the heart and soul of hardscrabble, working-class America, represented a significant new development in his work. Returning to the series four decades after its initial unveiling, *Facing West* prompts reflection on the evolving interpretation of the photographs' imagery, and on the series' status as its maker's magnum opus.

Avedon spent five years, from 1979 to 1984, traveling to twenty-one US states. He conducted more than a thousand sittings, finally producing 126 editioned images, 21 of which are on view in London. With the help of introductions made by an assistant, Laura Wilson, he selected a wide variety of people to photograph, representing a range of professions and rural pastimes, and depicting often-overlooked subjects from drifters to coal miners. Regarding his portraits as subjective interpretations (“All photographs are accurate,” he stated. “None of them is the truth”), Avedon often confronted suffering but succeeded in conveying the hidden strength of his subjects, instilling the project with a sense of hope. Seeking human connection, he stood outdoors and next to the camera to engage with his subjects who, in a departure from the conventions of series portraiture, he also named and defined, resisting both generalization and idealization.

Using an 8 × 10 Deardorff camera, natural light, and scant props, Avedon photographed his sitters against a white backdrop, retaining the black border from the film negative edge to emphasize the images’ absence of compositional manipulation. He also explored new methods of presentation, mounting the prints on aluminum. Caroline Avedon’s selection of images moves from darkness to light—from hardship and labor to youth and hope—and highlights some lesser-known shots to emphasize a diversity of experience for a new generation.

Among the works’ subjects are coal miner James Story, whom Avedon compared to Saint Sebastian for his embodiment of both strength and innocence, and Richard Wheatcroft, a rancher from Jordan, Montana, whom Avedon photographed twice (in 1981 and 1985), and with whom he developed a friendship. In a diptych of Wheatcroft, the subject appears at first glance to have barely changed in the two years between shoots, though closer inspection reveals the subtle wear of intervening life experience on his stance, clothing, and face. Inspired by Avedon’s method of emotional storytelling through sequence and contrast, the curator also establishes thematic pairings throughout the exhibition, creating narrative links and renewing a dialogue around identity, class, and the complexities of the American experience.

Avedon’s *In the American West* book was the focus of an exhibition at Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson in Paris in 2025, marking the publication’s fortieth anniversary; the exhibition will travel to additional venues in 2026–27. To commemorate the milestone, Abrams has also released a special reprint of the book.

For Richard Avedon’s biographical information and exhibition history, [please visit gagosian.com](https://www.gagosian.com).

#RichardAvedon

Extended through April 11, 2026

RICHARD AVEDON

Facing West

Opening reception: Thursday, January 15, 6–8pm

January 15–March 14, 2026

20 Grosvenor Hill, London

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