

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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All of Avedon's Women at the Gagosian in Beverly Hills

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A view of the gallery. Installation photography by Douglas M. Parker Studio.

Richard Avedon has a way of capturing a powerful moment with any subject in front of his camera, be it a picture-perfect fashion model or a weathered politician.

Maybe it's because he knew intimately how the dynamic works. The writer Renata Adler, Avedon's friend and collaborator, wrote in "Richard Avedon: Portraits of Power" (Steidl, 2008) that the photographer "was enormously interested in power — especially the role that power plays in photography itself."

So the first solo exhibition of Avedon's work in the Los Angeles area since 1976 aims to show how he parlayed that interest and skill across a broad spectrum of people; that he wasn't just good for capturing high fashion images, even though he is mostly known for gracing the pages of *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* with them.

While Avedon has shot everyone and everything from a naked Allen Ginsberg to elephants (with the model Dovima in a Dior gown), the subjects in this particular show are all women.

Avedon: Women opened at the Gagosian Gallery in Beverly Hills on November 1 and through approximately 120 images aims to highlight the broadest spectrum of feminine beauty — from the expected (a 1959 portrait of Brigitte Bardot, in a larger-than-life print of her looking serious and mysterious) to the unexpected (Cheryl Crane, the daughter of actress Lana Turner, saw for Avedon in 1963 after she was exonerated for the killing of her mother's abusive boyfriend).

More juxtapositions, given the salon-style hanging in the gallery, set images such as the elegant Vicomtesse Jacqueline de Ribes (1955) against socialite Elsa Maxwell lying in bed with her pet skunk (1957). There's also a young and supple Elizabeth Taylor, a vulnerable Marilyn Monroe, and... an elderly, bikini-clad sideshow performer named Esther Blackmon.

While Avedon's best work is arguably in black and white, an additional room is devoted to his unprinted color work, with dozens of transparencies displayed in wall-mounted light boxes. Subjects there range from advertisements featuring Carmen Dell'Orefice (ca. 1958-1959) to supermodels Stephanie Seymour and Christy Turlington.

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue containing an essay by Former French Vogue editor-in-chief Joan Juliet Buck that describes the experience of modeling for Avedon, via interviews with his subjects, including Anjelica Huston, Lauren Hutton, Veruschka, and Andrea D'Amato. As well, art historian Abigail Solomon-Godeau discusses how Avedon's depictions of the feminine extended beyond traditional notions of beauty to convey the deeper significance of his female subjects.

Avedon — along with his varied 60-year career — appears to be one of the Gagosian's favorite subjects. Just last summer, the gallery in New York held an exhibition of Avedon's large-scale murals from the 1960s and 1970s.