

# WIDEWALLS

## Richard Avedon at Pace Gallery Geneva - A Word on The Work of a Photographic Genius



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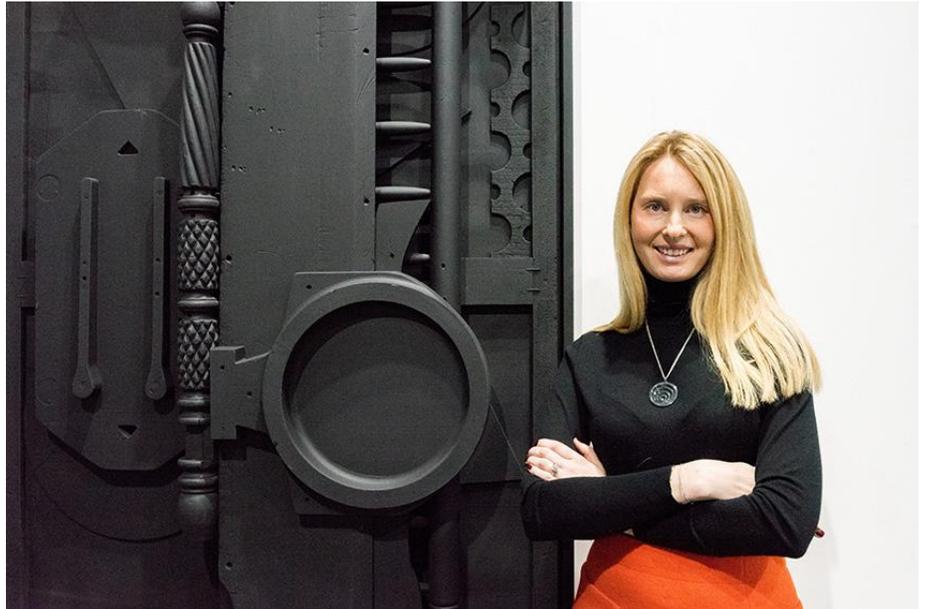
One of my all-time favorite photographs is **Richard Avedon**'s portrait of Marilyn Monroe. During their session, the photographer first made a series of "classic" shots of the actress, where she is flirting with the lens, smiling and being her on-camera self. A known explorer of the complexities of the human spirit, Avedon then announced they were to take a break, allowing her to "drop the act" and become herself for a moment – and that's exactly when the famous image came to be. It is a Marilyn Monroe that we have never seen before, one that we are not used to, one that is being a person instead of a superstar.

This photograph, along with other legendary pictures of legendary people such as Brigitte Bardot, Katharine Hepburn, Bob Dylan, but also Francis Bacon, Andy Warhol, Marcel Duchamp, will now be on view at Richard Avedon's first exhibition in Geneva with **Pace Gallery**. Taking place **between September 21st through November 2nd, 2018**, the show will present **the highlights of the artist's entire oeuvre**, with a special focus on talents whose legacies have particularly impacted Switzerland – Sophia Loren, Charlie Chaplin and Gabrielle 'Coco' Chanel.

Under a single roof, the visitors will be able to witness **Avedon's extraordinary ability to delve into the human psyche using a photographic camera**. Against a simple backdrop he manages to capture the very essence of the person in front of him, resulting in striking imagery charged with emotion. Speaking on this work, the photographer said:

*The white background isolates the subject from itself and permits you to explore the geography of the face; the unexplored continents in the human face.*

Ahead of the exhibition, we sat down with the Director of Pace Gallery in Geneva, **Valentina Volchkova**, to discuss the importance of Richard Avedon's work today, and the gallery's commitment to the artist's legacy.



Valentina Volchkova by Nicolas Dupraz © Pace Gallery

## Richard Avedon at Pace Gallery Geneva

***Widewalls: The exhibition in Geneva follows Pace/Pace Macgill's representation of The Richard Avedon Foundation last November. What did this announcement mean for the gallery?***

Valentina Volchkova: The representation of the Avedon Foundation was very important to us – Pace Gallery and Pace/MacGill – because Richard Avedon is one of the greatest photographers, who has created many of the iconic images of our time. We represent so many great artists so it made sense to represent Avedon too. It's a great honor to serve the Avedon Foundation.

In November 2017 – January 2018, Pace Gallery in NY staged *Nothing Personal*, an exhibition concerned with themes of race, mortality and humanity. In that sense, the exhibition was very political and engaged. It was important for the program and curatorial direction of the gallery to show Avedon in Europe too, especially because it's a new space.

This time, we wanted to focus on a different side of Avedon's brilliant career. This show touches on portraiture, performance and the complexities of the human spirit.

***Widewalls: What can the visitors expect from the show? Any highlights you'd like to mention?***

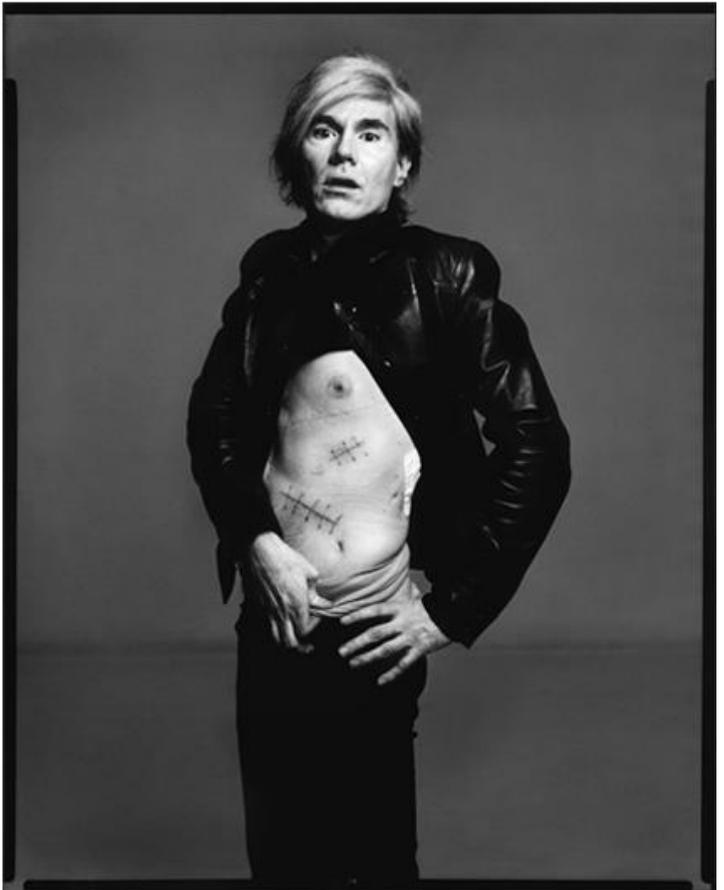
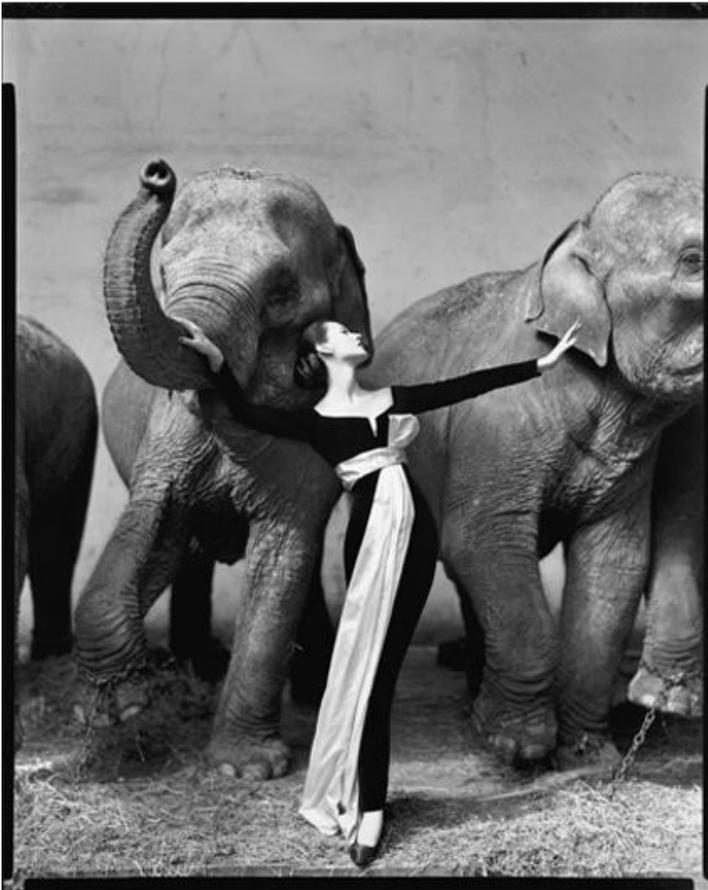
VV: Visitors can expect a strong exhibition featuring remarkable works. A number of central themes of Avedon's oeuvre are presented. As you come in, you immediately sense Avedon's deep psychological spirit.

A particular highlight will be the 1955 photograph *Dovima with elephants* (1955), one of fashion's most emblematic pictures. It is featured in collections of renowned art institutions across the world, including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, and The Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

The exhibition will also highlight Avedon's relationship with artists, such as Francis Bacon, Marcel Duchamp, Alberto Giacometti, and Andy Warhol.

## The Genius of a Timeless Photographer

***Widewalls: The importance of Avedon's work is undisputed. How does it relate to today's day and age, in your opinion?***



Left: Dovima with elephants, evening dress by Dior, Cirque d'Hiver, Paris, August 1955 / Right: Andy Warhol, artist, New York, April 5, 1969. Photographs by Richard Avedon © The Richard Avedon Foundation

VV: Avedon's photographs are intensely rich and extremely relevant to the times we live in. From the political, racial and social engagement to the cycles of fashion, none of his work is obsolete. His avant-garde photographs provided inspiration for a lot of other contemporary artists too so his relevance for art history is huge.

***Widewalls: What does this exhibition mean to you personally?***

VV: Whether you're an erudite collector or new to Avedon's work, you'll find pieces you've seen once in your life. Without necessarily knowing that the work is by Avedon or its full background, everyone knows the legendary portraits of Marilyn Monroe for example.

I personally love the powerful portrait of Francis Bacon, featured in the exhibition. Bacon's gaze seems to follow you in the room, a bit like Mona Lisa. It's a poignant work with an immense psychological force.

The public in Geneva is very informed, very curious so it's important for me to balance the program between conceptual exhibitions (we opened with LeWitt, Nevelson, Pendleton) and more approachable shows that will attract a larger audience.

***Widewalls: What's next for Pace Gallery Geneva?***

VV: Among other exhibitions (including a Richard Tuttle show), we'll be showing the work of Michal Rover at the gallery, concurrent with an exhibition at the exhibition space in Geneva Espace Muraille. Rovner's slowly-animated images of human or animal figures navigating across the screens in different and seemingly infinite directions are inspiring, meditative, fundamental and sublime.

We will also take part in art Genève, Geneva's leading art fair taking place in January / February 2019, so we have a lot of exciting projects in the pipeline.

Featured images: Adam Clayton Powell, congressman, New York, March 6, 1964; Rudolf Nureyev, dancer, Paris, July 25, 1961. Photographs by Richard Avedon © The Richard Avedon Foundation. Courtesy Pace Gallery Geneva.