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Finding aid for the
Richard Avedon Miscellaneous Acquisitions Collection
AG 98

Finding aid updated by Alexis Peregoy, 2019

Richard Avedon Miscellaneous Acquisitions Collection, 1938-2006

AG 98

Creator

Avedon, Richard, (1923-2004)

Abstract

Collection contains miscellaneous materials, 1938-2006 documenting the life and career of Richard Avedon (1923 – 2004, photographer. Each group of materials was collected from a separate source and is described individually as a subgroup.

Quantity/ Extent

1 linear foot

Language of Materials

English

Biographical/ Historical Note

Richard Avedon (1923–2004) was born to parents of Russian Jewish heritage in New York City. As a boy, he learned photography, joining the YMHA Camera Club at the age of twelve; later, he took up poetry, winning a citywide award for high school students during his senior year at DeWitt Clinton in the Bronx.

Avedon joined the armed forces in 1942 during World War II, serving as Photographer's Mate Second Class in the Merchant Marine. Making identification portraits of the crewmen with his Rolleiflex twin lens camera—a gift from his father—Avedon advanced his technical knowledge of the medium and began to develop a dynamic style. After two years of service he left the Merchant Marine to work as a photographer, making fashion images and studying with art director Alexey Brodovitch at the Design Laboratory of the New School for Social Research.

In 1945, Avedon set up his own studio and worked as a freelance photographer for various magazines. He quickly became the preeminent photographer used by Harper's Bazaar. There, under the tutelage of Brodovitch, his rise to the top of the profession was meteoric. Avedon developed an original approach to making fashion photographs. He showed the models full of expression: smiling, laughing, and often posed in action. Inspired by Hungarian photojournalist and fashion photographer Martin Munkácsi, Avedon photographed models and fashions on the streets, in nightclubs and circus arenas, and in other locations then uncommon.

From the beginning, Avedon made portraits for editorial publication as well: in the pages of Harper's Bazaar, in Theater Arts, and in Life and Look magazines. From the outset, he was fascinated by photography's capacity for suggesting the personality and evoking the life of his subjects. Only rarely did he idealize people; instead, he presented the face as a kind of landscape, with total clarity. He registered poses, attitudes, hairstyles, clothing and accessories as vital, even revelatory elements of the personal image. "My photographs don't go below the surface. I have great faith in surfaces. A good one is full of clues."

Avedon continued to make portraiture and fashion photography for magazine publications throughout his career. After parting ways with Harper's Bazaar in 1965, he began a long-term relationship with Vogue that continued through 1988. In later years, he established formidable creative partnerships with the French publication *Egoiste*, and with *The New Yorker*. In the pages of these periodicals, Avedon reinvigorated his formalist style, investing his imagery with dynamism and theatricality. In addition, he supported his studio by making innovative advertising work for print and broadcast – defining the look of brands like Calvin Klein, Versace, and Revlon.

As his reputation grew and his signature aesthetic evolved, Avedon remained dedicated to extended portraiture projects as a means for exploring cultural, political, and personal concerns. In 1963-64, Avedon examined the civil rights movement in the American South. During the Vietnam War, he photographed students, countercultural artists and activists, and victims of the war, both in the United States and in Vietnam. In 1976, on a commission for Rolling Stone magazine, he produced *The Family*, a composite portrait of the American power elite at the time of the country's Bicentennial election. Some of Avedon's most extraordinary portraits were taken of his father Jacob Israel Avedon during the last years of his life: a photographic confrontation with, and ultimate acceptance of, his illness and subsequent death.

In 1985, Avedon created his magnum opus – *In the American West*. He portrayed members of the working class: butchers, coal miners, convicts, and waitresses, all photographed with precisionist detail, using the large format camera and plain white backdrop characteristic of his mature style. Despite their apparent minimalism and objectivism, however, Avedon emphasized that these portraits were not to be regarded as simple records of people; rather, he said, "the moment an emotion or a fact is transformed into a photograph it is no longer a fact but an opinion."

Avedon produced and published a number of books over the years. In addition to *In the American West* (1985), his books include *Observations* (1959), *Nothing Personal* (1964), *Portraits* (1976), and his fashion survey *Photographs 1947–1977* (1978). His first museum retrospective came in 1962, at the Smithsonian Institute, and his photographs have been widely exhibited in museums since then: *Avedon* at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts (1970); *In the American West* at the Amon Carter Museum (1985); *Richard*

Avedon: Evidence 1944-1994 at the Whitney Museum of American Art (1994); and his final retrospective, Portraits, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (2002). Since his death, his work has been included in a number of survey exhibitions, most recently, Avedon Fashion 1944-2000 at the International Center of Photography (2009). A complete chronology can be found at www.avedonfoundation.org.

Scope and Content Note

The collection is comprised of nine subgroups, each collected from a separate source. Among the materials are clippings, manuscripts, photographs, letters, an audiotape, tearsheets, an exhibition catalog, exhibition press packet and posters.

The first subgroup contains a photocopy of unpublished manuscript *Richard Avedon: A Study* by Robert Stephens, Visual Studies Workshop, 1978. Approximately one hundred pages, illustrated; with chronology, bibliography, and author index to bibliography.

The second subgroup contains an audiotape of an interview with Richard Avedon by Cokie Roberts of National Public Radio, ca. five minutes. Avedon discusses his exhibition, "In the American West," which opened in 1985. A synopsis of interview is included.

The third subgroup contains tearsheets from New York *Times* Sunday magazine, ca. 1983. The "Diors" (The Wizard, The Mouth, and Oliver) story.

Subgroup four contains the exhibition catalog *Richard Avedon 1979-1984: In the American West* [Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, September-Dezember 2001].

Subgroup five contains memorabilia from Avedon's childhood friend Florence C. Simon. Items include a snapshot showing Richard Avedon, Florence C. Simon and classmates in photography club, ca. 1938. This image is reproduced on page 104 in *Evidence*; a handwritten manuscript describing Florence Simon's friendship with Avedon (1 ½ pages); a page from album of autographs with Avedon's inscription to Simon, June 27, 1939; and a photocopy of "Photography: The Avedon Look," by Charles Michener in *Newsweek* (October 16, 1978), pp. 58-59.

Subgroup six consists of personal papers related to donor Florence Stern Daniels' friendship with Avedon, ca 1939-1943. Collection contains a hand written manuscript (2 pages), "Notes about Richard Avedon," describing her childhood friendship with Avedon, Lauren Bacall and others in Congregation Emanu-el, New York City, in the 1930s. It mentions socializing with Avedon and his practice of selling poems to the newspaper when he needed cash. Also included are letters from Avedon to Daniels, ca. 1940. (7 letters, typed and handwritten); original newspaper clippings of Avedon's poetry, ca. 1940s, (5 poems); original newspaper clippings of Avedon's poetry, ca. 1940s, (4 poems); black and white photographs of Avedon and Daniels, 1940 (2 snapshots); photographic greeting card made and signed by Avedon, "Hello There!" no

date; identity card, Avedon "present upon the occasion of the visit of their Majesties King George VI and Queen Elizabeth to the New York World's Fair," 1939; and clippings from newspapers and magazines, 2005, relating to Avedon.

Subgroup seven contains an unframed, signed, two image poster in original tube, numbered #5056, from *In the American West* (1985). Left image is Juan Lobato, carney, Rocky Ford, Colorado, 8/23/80. The right image is Sandra Bennett, twelve year old, Rocky Ford, Colorado, 8/23/80.

Subgroup eight contains a press package for retrospective exhibition *Richard Avedon: Evidence, 1944-1994*, at the Whitney Museum of American Art, 1994.

Subgroup nine contains an inventory (one folder) of Richard Avedon photographs in the Photographic History collection at the National Museum of American History, 1996.

Subgroup ten contains two boxes of selected press clippings, photocopied sets of the press clippings, an exhibition catalog and magazines related to Richard Avedon's exhibition *In the American West*, all collected by the Amon Carter Museum, 14 September to 17 November 1985. Among the magazines is an issue of *Third Coast* containing a spoof of Avedon's style titled "More Faces of the West". There are approximately six sets of photocopied press clippings, one in an Acco® binder.

Subgroup eleven contains an audiovisual public television report about the Phoenix Art Museum's 1986 exhibition of Richard Avedon's *In the American West*, along with an interview of James Enyeart. Tape is titled: "In the American West: Photographs by Richard Avedon; Horizon 25 Sept 1986". Footage shows the installation in the Phoenix galleries, visitors in the gallery, and interviews with a woman photographed by Avedon. She is the young girl on the cover of the book and may have been a speaker at the opening of the exhibition in Phoenix. There are three copies of the report in three different audiovisual formats: ¾" videocassette, ½" videocassette and a DVD viewing copy made in 2006.

Subgroup twelve contains ephemera related to "Photographs by Richard Avedon," exhibition, Minneapolis Institute of Arts, July 2 – August 30, 1970

Subgroup thirteen contains the entire issue of *Rolling Stone* magazine, "The Family 1976 Richard Avedon," October 21, 1976.

Arrangement

Arranged into subgroups based on provenance.

Names and Subject Terms

Avedon, Richard, 1923-2004 [<http://vocab.getty.edu/ulan/500013773>]

Fashion photography [<http://vocab.getty.edu/aat/300135798>]

Restrictions

Conditions Governing Access

Access to this collection requires an appointment with the Volkerding Study Center.

Conditions Governing Use

Photocopying of unpublished manuscripts is not permitted without the permission of the author. Duplication of the audiotape is not permitted; notes may be taken from it.

See the Archivist for information.

It is the responsibility of the user to obtain permission from the copyright owner (which could be the institution, the creator of the record, the author or his/her transferees, heirs, legates or literary executors) prior to any copyright-protected uses of the collection.

The user agrees to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless the Arizona Board of Regents, the University of Arizona, Center of Creative Photography, including its officers, employees, and agents, from and against all claims made relating to copyright or other intellectual property infringement.

Provenance

Materials acquired from a variety of different sources.

Subgroup One gift of Judith Golden, Tucson, Arizona, 1989.

Subgroup two, gift of National Public Radio, 1986.

Subgroup three, gift of Amy Rule, 1993.

Subgroup four, gift of Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, 2001.

Subgroup five, gift of Florence C. Simon, 2005.

Subgroup six, gift of Florence Stern Daniels, 2005,

Subgroup seven, gift of Judy M. Laviolette and Ted Jensen, 2006.

Subgroup eight, donor unknown.

Subgroup nine, gift of Shannon Thomas, Photographic History Collection, NMAH, 1996.

Subgroup ten, gift of the Amon Carter Museum, 1999.

Subgroup eleven, donor unknown.

Subgroup twelve, purchase from Christian A. Peterson, Photography Books, 2017

Subgroup thirteen, gift of Claudia L. Kruse, 2019.

Related Materials

AG 89 Richard Avedon Collection

Preferred Citation

Richard Avedon Miscellaneous Acquisitions, 1938-2006. AG 98. Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ.

Processing Information

Collection updated by Leslie Squyres in 2019; finding aid updated in 2019.

Container List

Subgroup 1, 1978

Box Folder

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1 | Manuscript: <i>Richard Avedon: A Study By Robert Stevens</i> |
| | 2 | Chronology for <i>Richard Avedon: A Study By Robert Stevens</i>
Bibliography for <i>Richard Avedon: A Study By Robert Stevens</i>
Author index for <i>Richard Avedon: A Study By Robert Stevens</i> |

Subgroup Two, 1985

Box Folder

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 3 | Audiotape of NPR interview with Avedon by Cokie Roberts |
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Subgroup Three, 1983

Box Folder

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 4 | Tearsheets, <i>NY Times</i> , "The Diors" |
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Subgroup Four, 2001

Box Folder

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| 1 | 5 | Exhibition catalog
<i>Richard Avedon 1979-1984: In the American West</i> [Kunstmuseum
Wolfsburg, September-December 2001] |
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Subgroup Five, 1938-2005

Box Folder

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|---|---|--|
| 1 | 6 | Snapshot showing Richard Avedon, Florence C. Simon and classmates in photography club, ca. 1938. This image is reproduced on page 104 in <i>Evidence</i> . |
|---|---|--|

7 Autobiographical manuscript describing Florence Simon's friendship with Avedon (1 ½ pages), April 2005

Page from album of autographs with Avedon's inscription to Simon, June 27, 1939 Photocopy of "Photography: The Avedon Look," by Charles Michener in *Newsweek* (October 16, 1978), pp. 58-59

Subgroup Six, 1940-2005

Box Folder

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|---|----|---|
| 1 | 8 | Autograph manuscript, "Notes about Richard Avedon," February 2005, by Florence Stern Daniels. (2 pages) |
| | 9 | Letters from Avedon to Daniels, ca. 1940. (7 letters, typed and handwritten) |
| | 10 | Original newspaper clippings of Avedon's poetry, ca. 1940s. (5 poems) |
| | 11 | Original newspaper clippings of Avedon's poetry, ca. 1940s. (4 poems) |
| | 12 | Black and white photographs of Avedon and Daniels, 1940 (2 snapshots) |
| | 13 | Photographic greeting card made and signed by Avedon, "Hello There!" |
| | 14 | Identity card, Avedon "present upon the occasion of the visit of their Majesties King George VI and Queen Elizabeth to the New York World's Fair," 1939 |
| | 15 | Clippings from newspapers and magazines, 2005-06, relating to Avedon |
| | 16 | Clippings from newspapers and magazines, 2005, relating to Avedon |

Subgroup Eight, 1994

Box Folder

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|---|----|--|
| 1 | 17 | Exhibition press package <i>Richard Avedon: Evidence, 1944-1994</i> . Whitney Museum of American Art, 1994 |
|---|----|--|

Subgroup Nine, 1996

Box Folder

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|---|----|---|
| 1 | 18 | Inventory of Avedon photographs in the Photographic History collection at The National Museum of American History, 1996 |
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Subgroup Twelve (12), 1970

Box Folder

- 1 19 Ephemera related to "Photographs by Richard Avedon," exhibition, Minneapolis Institute of Arts, July 2 – August 30, 1970

Subgroup Thirteen (13), 1976

Box Folder

- 1 20 *Rolling Stone* magazine, "The Family 1976 Richard Avedon," October 21, 1976

Subgroup Ten, 1985

Box Folder

- 2 1-6 Selected press clippings with sets of photocopies about *In the American West*
- 2 7 Exhibition Catalog, *In the American West*
Magazines containing articles about the exhibition
Rolling Stone, September 26, 1985
Sunday Times Magazine, October 13, 1985
Texas Monthly, September 1985
Third Coast, October, 1985, with enclosed letter commenting on article
Vanity Fair, September, 1985
- 3 Sets of photocopied clippings about *In the American West*, one set in Acco® binder compiled by the Amon Carter Museum. September 14- November 17, 1985, and original clippings.

Subgroup Seven, 1985

Box Folder

- 4 Unframed, signed, two image poster in original tube, from *In the American West* 1985)

Subgroup Eleven, 1986

Box Folder

- 5 "In the American West: Photographs by Richard Avedon," Phoenix Art Museum, 09/25/1986; possibly story on Phoenix television; Caroll Hartwell, Curator of Photography, Minneapolis Institute of Arts comments on the photographs; Umatic videocassette; VHS videocassette; DVD viewing copy