



Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson

Richard Avedon
In the American West

Press release

April 30 — October 12, 2025

Press opening

**Tuesday, April 29, 2025
2 PM – 4 PM**

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From Tuesday to Sunday: 11 AM – 7 PM
Full rate 10 € / Reduced rate 6 €

Richard Avedon *In the American West*

April 30 – October 12, 2025



To mark the 40th anniversary of Richard Avedon's iconic work *In the American West*, the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson, in collaboration with the Richard Avedon Foundation, presents an exclusive exhibition focused on this emblematic series.

Between 1979 and 1984, commissioned by the Amon Carter Museum of American Art in Fort Worth, Texas, Richard Avedon traveled across the American West to photograph over 1,000 of its inhabitants. For five years, Avedon photographed miners, herdsman, showmen, salesmen and transient people, amongst others with rich histories, alone or in small groups, before his camera, against a white background that enhanced their features, postures and expressions, for a striking portrait of the territory and its residents, in stark contrast to traditional depictions and glorifications of the legend of the American West. The force of the 103 works that compose the book makes *In the American West* a pivotal event in Avedon's career, and a milestone in the history of photographic portraits.

For the first time in Europe, the exhibition at the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson presents the whole series of images included in the original publication, while also showcasing the stages of its production and reception. The exhibition includes a full selection of engravers prints, which served as reference materials for both the exhibition and the 1985 book, as well as previously unpublished documents, such as preparatory Polaroids, test prints annotated by the photographer, and correspondence between the artist and his models.

To mark this anniversary, Abrams, the book's original publisher, is reissuing the long out-of-print book.

Curator of the exhibition

Clément Chéroux

Director, Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson

Sponsor

This exhibition is part of a selection of programmes enabled by

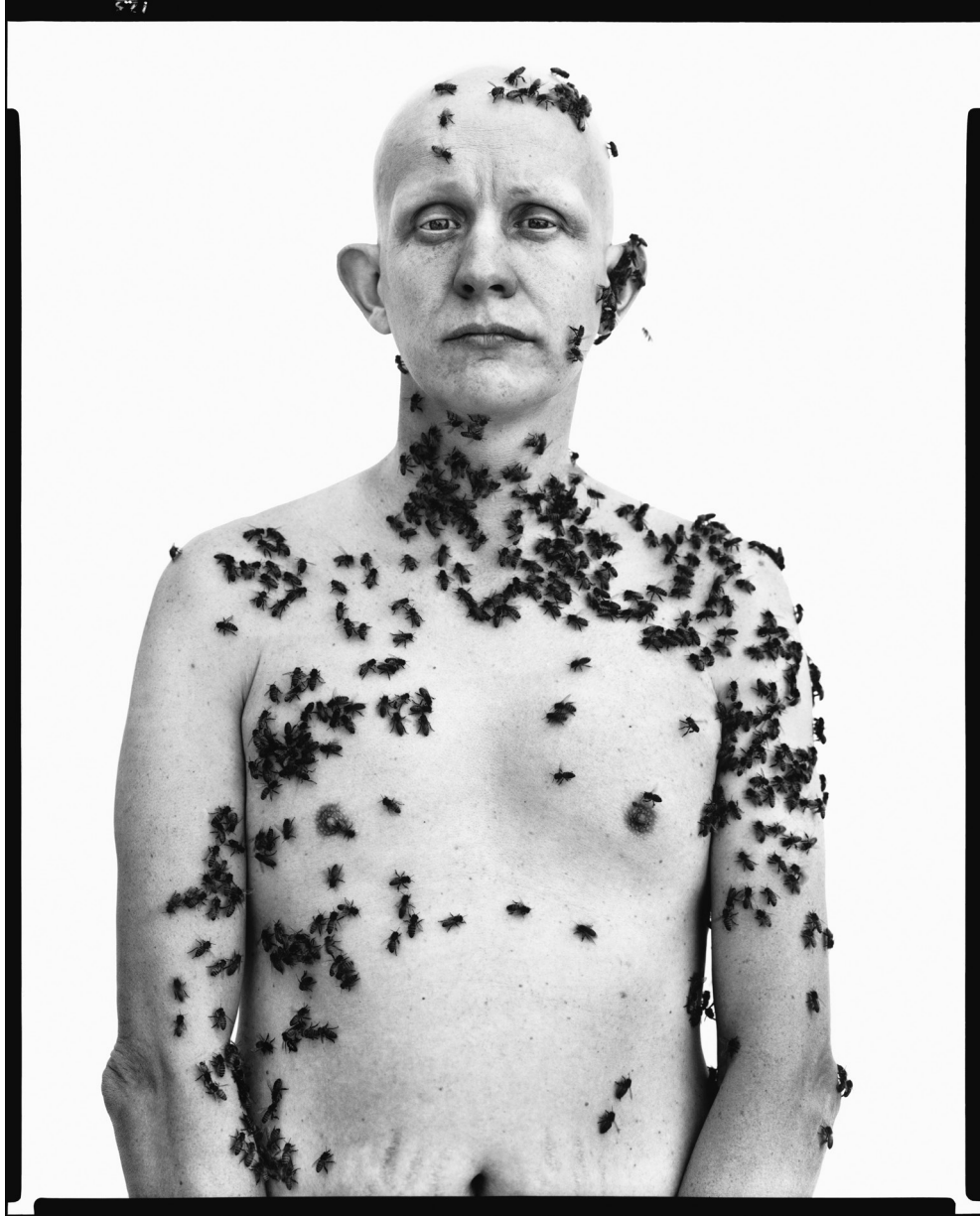
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Richard Avedon
In the American West

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Ronald Fischer, beekeeper, Davis, California, May 9, 1987. Photograph by Richard Avedon
© The Richard Avedon Foundation

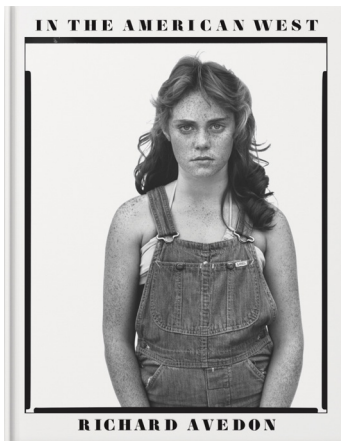
Richard Avedon *In the American West*

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PUBLICATION

Richard Avedon's acclaimed work *In the American West* was first published in 1985 by American publishing house Abrams. For its 40th anniversary, Abrams is republishing the work in its original format.



Texts in English.

Publication date: September 2025

A limited number of copies will be available exclusively at the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson bookstore from the opening of the exhibition.

Price: 120 euros

RICHARD AVEDON (1923 - 2004)

Richard Avedon 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. 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.

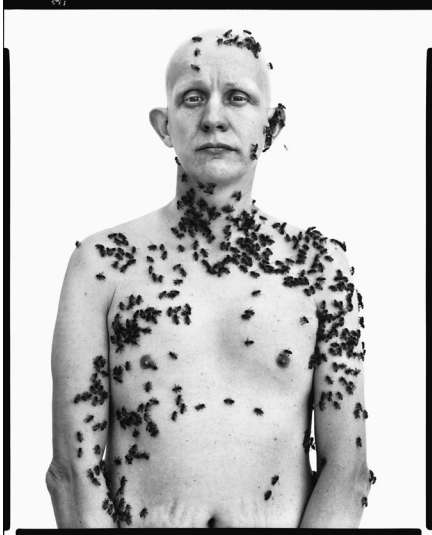
In 1945, Avedon set up his own studio and worked as a freelance photographer for various magazines. He quickly became the preeminent photographer used by *Harper's Bazaar*.

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.

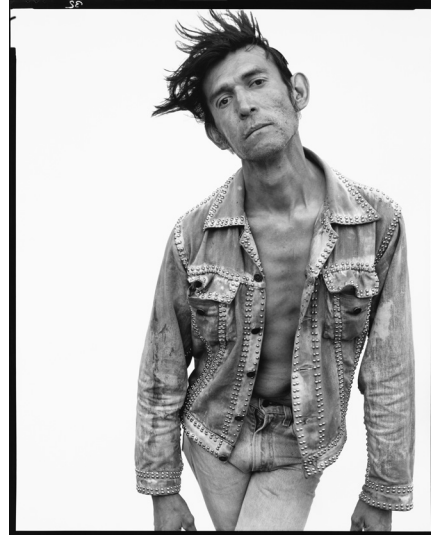
Avedon continued to make portraiture and fashion photography for magazine publications throughout his career. After parting ways with *Harper's Bazaar* in 1965, he began a long-term relationship with *Vogue* that continued through 1988. In later years, he established formidable creative partnerships with the French publication *Egoïste*, 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, he 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.

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."



01
Ronald Fischer, beeper,
Davis, California, May 9, 1987.
Photograph by Richard Avedon
© The Richard Avedon Foundation



02
David Beason, shipping clerk,
Denver, Colorado, July 25, 1981.
Photograph by Richard Avedon
© The Richard Avedon Foundation



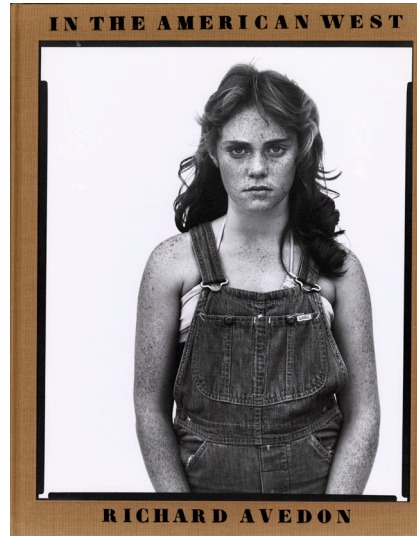
03
Jesse Kleinsasser, pig man,
Hutterite Colony, Harlowton, Montana, June 23, 1983.
Photograph by Richard Avedon
© The Richard Avedon Foundation



04
Ruby Mercer, publicist,
Frontier Days, Cheyenne, Wyoming, July 31, 1982.
Photograph by Richard Avedon
© The Richard Avedon Foundation



05
*Petra Alvarado, factory worker, on her birthday,
El Paso, Texas, April 22, 1982.*
Photograph by Richard Avedon
© The Richard Avedon Foundation



06
Édition originale d'*In the American West* de Richard Avedon, Abrams, 1985.
Couverture : *Sandra Bennett, twelve year old,
Rocky Ford, Colorado, August 23, 1980.*
Photograph by Richard Avedon
© The Richard Avedon Foundation



07
*Boyd Fortin, thirteen year old rattlesnake skinner,
Sweetwater, Texas, March 10, 1979.*
Photograph by Richard Avedon
© The Richard Avedon Foundation



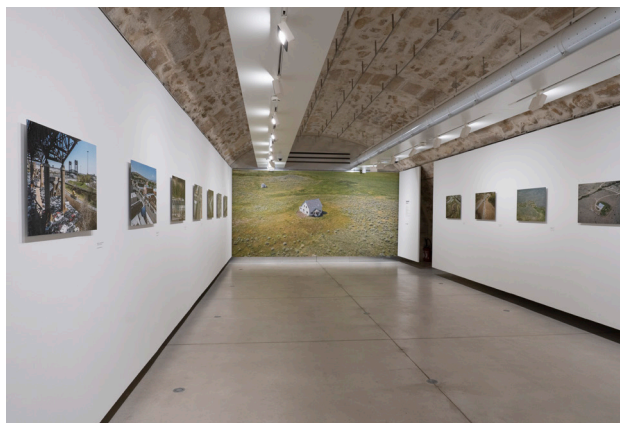
08
*Roger Tims, Jim Duncan, Leonard Markley, Don Belak, coal miners,
Reliance, Wyoming, August 29, 1979.*
Photograph by Richard Avedon
© The Richard Avedon Foundation



01
Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson, 79 rue des Archives, Paris, November 2018
© Cyrille Weiner.



02
Front desk and Bookshop
Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson, 79 rue des Archives, Paris, June 2024
© Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson



03
Exhibition Stephen Shore - *Vehicular & Vernacular*
Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson, 79 rue des Archives, Paris, June 2024
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04
Exhibition Vasantha Yoganathan - *Mystery Street*
Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson, 79 rue des Archives, Paris, May 2023
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05
Exhibition Mame-Diarra Niang - *Remember to Forget*
Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson, 79 rue des Archives, Paris, October 2024
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06
Exhibition Ruth Orkin - *Bike Trip, USA, 1939*
Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson, 79 rue des Archives, Paris, September 2023
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