

# GAGOSIAN

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**Gagosian to Exhibit Photographs Taken in Italy by Richard Avedon, Illuminating Their Fundamental Influence on His Later Work**

*Italian Days* Opens in Rome on March 12, 2025

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Richard Avedon, *Italy #11, Piazza Navona, Rome, July 24, 1946* © The Richard Avedon Foundation

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**ROME, March 4, 2025**—Gagosian is pleased to announce *Italian Days*, an exhibition that juxtaposes more than twenty photographs by Richard Avedon shot on the streets of Rome, Sicily, and Venice—eighteen of which are from the series *Italy* (1946–48), presented in its entirety here for the first time—with iconic portraits of notable cultural figures that define his distinctive style. Images from a 1946 series portraying Zazi, a Roman street performer, are also included. Gagosian has represented Richard Avedon’s work worldwide since 2011.

Beginning with his arrival in Rome in 1946 just after the end of World War II, when Italy was still largely inaccessible to visitors, Avedon made several trips to the country throughout the subsequent decade. The multiple series of photographs to which these exploratory trips gave rise were pivotal in the development of his sophisticated approach to portraiture. Avedon was particularly drawn to Italy’s beauty and devastation, to the breadth and power of its history, and to the enormous variety of human expression and resilience that he observed everywhere he looked. Revealing his drive for a genuine interaction between photographer and subject, Avedon’s Italian work exercised a profound influence on his practice, infusing every image with an inimitable depth of spirit and range of emotion.



Richard Avedon, *Bette Midler, New York, December 21, 1971* © The Richard Avedon Foundation

Each of the pairings and larger groupings on view at the gallery in Rome reflects a different technique or compositional strategy with roots in Avedon's Italian work. A famous 1957 portrait of a forlorn-looking Marilyn Monroe, for example, and a 1980 image of pawnbroker Ruby Holden from the iconic series *In the American West* (1979–84) both appear to have been anticipated by a Roman street portrait taken in 1947. The roots of the despair and joy Avedon captured in his depiction of Monroe can be found in Rome, as surely as his 1963 self-portrait recalls his image of a warm, proud young Sicilian boy who has emerged from the ashes of war to begin life anew.

The many correspondences on display in *Italian Days*—between subjects, strangers, and moments in time—emphasize Avedon's enduring focus on a shared humanity that transcends technique or circumstance. The downcast gaze that characterizes one of two paired figures of the renowned playwright in *Samuel Beckett, writer, Paris, April 13, 1979*, for instance, is foreshadowed by the earlier *Italy #6, Rome, 1946*, in which a young boy puts his hand to his face as he looks down at the sunbaked cobblestones of a metropolitan street. Another grouping conveys a lighter mood, tracing a line from the playful dancing figure of *Italy #8, Palermo, Sicily, 1947* to later images of American fashion model Dorian Leigh posing with a cyclist on the Champs-Élysées and Audrey Hepburn dancing with Fred Astaire on the set of *Funny Face*. Italy, with its heartbreak and indomitable spirit, pointed the way.

The exhibition is designed by Cécile Degos, who was also responsible for the design of the 2024 exhibition *Iconic Avedon: A Centennial Celebration of Richard Avedon* at Gagosian Paris. Avedon's work will be the subject of an exhibition at Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson, Paris, opening on April 30, 2025.

**Richard Avedon** was born in New York in 1923 and died in San Antonio in 2004. Collections include the Centre Pompidou, Paris; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC; and numerous others worldwide. Avedon's first museum retrospective was held at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC, in 1962; many major institutional exhibitions followed, including at the Minneapolis Institute of Art (1970); Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (1978 and 2002); and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (1994). Posthumous exhibitions include the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk,

Denmark (2007, traveled to Fondazione FORMA per la Fotografia, Milan; Jeu de Paume, Paris; Gropius Bau, Berlin; FOAM Photography Museum, Amsterdam; and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, through 2010). Avedon established the Richard Avedon Foundation in 2004 as the repository for his photographs, negatives, publications, papers, and other archival materials.

#RichardAvedon

## **RICHARD AVEDON**

*Italian Days*

Opening reception: Wednesday, March 12, 6–8pm

March 12–May 17, 2025

Via Francesco Crispi 16, Rome

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