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Press Release

Annie Leibovitz The Early Years, 1970 – 1983: Archive Project No. 1

Hauser & Wirth Los Angeles

14 February – 14 April 2019

Public opening: Saturday 16 February, 3 – 6 pm



Los Angeles... Beginning 14 February, Hauser & Wirth will present 'Annie Leibovitz. The Early Years, 1970 – 1983: Archive Project No. 1,' a new installation of the 2017 exhibition of the same title presented by the LUMA Foundation's Parc des Ateliers in Arles, France. As the first comprehensive exhibition in Los Angeles devoted to the earliest work of this renowned American artist, 'The Early Years' features more than 4,000 photographs taken between 1970 and 1983. Works on view trace Leibovitz's development as a young talent, capturing the dramatic cultural and political shifts of the Seventies. Arranged chronologically and thematically, the exhibition begins with her work for Rolling Stone magazine and visually chronicles the defining moments and key protagonists of the decade. Over the course of her career, Leibovitz became an avatar of the changing cultural role of photography as an artistic medium. Pinned to walls gridded with string, the images on view reveal her singular ability to merge the tactics of portraiture and photojournalism with profound humanism and sly wit. The exhibition also includes Leibovitz's photographs of artists who became her personal heroes – Andy Warhol, Richard Avedon, Ansel Adams, and Henri Cartier-Bresson, among others.

Curated by Leibovitz, 'The Early Years' can be seen as an excavation of self. The artist personally selected what she believes to be the most significant images taken during the an especially formative period in her career – an array of images and subjects that reveal her internal dialogue, motivations, and insights. The exhibition will be complemented by an artist book published by Hauser & Wirth Publishers titled 'Archive Project No. 1,' which Leibovitz conceived as a reference tool that expresses her working method and the obsessiveness of taking photographs – an immersive and tactile experience of her accumulated history.

About the Exhibition

Annie Leibovitz bought her first camera in the summer of 1968 after her freshman year as a student at the San Francisco Art Institute. Hauser & Wirth's exhibition begins with photographs taken during this formative time in Northern California and is punctuated by images of the Bay Area landscape and photographs shot during drives Leibovitz often took on the highways between San Francisco and Los Angeles. While still a student, Leibovitz approached Rolling Stone magazine in 1970 – just three years after its inception – with a few of her photographs.

HAUSER & WIRTH

After two of her images were published, she switched majors from painting to photography, and embarked on what would develop into a symbiotic relationship between the young photographer and a magazine that became famous for reflecting the American zeitgeist.

Moments of freedom and an unyielding imagination fed the evolution of Leibovitz's career as captured by 'Annie Leibovitz. The Early Years, 1970 – 1983: Archive Project No. 1.' The exhibition highlights the courageous choices that enabled her artistic growth and future successes. The monumental display of works taken during Leibovitz's notorious thirteen-year tenure at Rolling Stone magazine blurred the lines between celebrity and civilian, interviewer and interviewee, artist and subject, dissolving the boundary separating Leibovitz from those captured in her photographs. Documenting fellow reporters and photographers in addition to their subjects, Leibovitz highlighted those hidden behind the camera and brought them to the forefront.



'The Early Years' includes reportage of major political moments of the Seventies in the United States, such as the 1972 presidential campaign which she covered with the writer Hunter S. Thompson. In another poignant photograph from the resignation of Richard Nixon on August 9, 1974, Leibovitz's camera records his helicopter as it takes off from the White House lawn. Leibovitz's immersion within the political landscape is further demonstrated through a series of photographs from the 1976 election, when figures such as Jerry Brown and Jimmy Carter seized national attention. Images from the Democratic National Convention in New York City showcase candid moments between Dianne Feinstein, and journalists such as Sally Quinn and Dan Rather. Leibovitz's unobtrusive lens implicates both the photographer and her peers as significant actors and contributors to particular cultural moments.

Similarly, when traveling with the Rolling Stones to document their tour of the Americas in the summer of 1975, Leibovitz entered the band's world to such a degree that only her camera served as a reminder of her identity. In one such image on view in the exhibition, a cadre of frenzied fans storm a chain link fence outside a stadium in Cleveland, OH, where the Rolling Stones were performing. It was Leibovitz's distinct ability to immerse herself in varying environments that enabled a direct engagement with her subjects, revealing their true, honest, and perhaps most vulnerable selves.

'The Early Years' concludes with photographs Leibovitz took in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The images reflect a signature technique Leibovitz developed early in her career, as she consciously and consistently fit style to subject. This was achieved through collaborating with her subjects, photographing them in their homes where

HAUSER & WIRTH

friends, lovers, children, and other personal markers might appear. During the latter part of this period Leibovitz began using a medium-format camera that produced square photographs. The camera was appropriate for shooting set-up portraits with a strobe light. Leibovitz staged planned portraits based on a straightforward idea often stemming from a deeply personal collaboration with her subjects. Evidencing a level of uncanny intimacy and uncommon depth of engagement, this relationship can be seen in one of her most celebrated photographs on view, in which a naked John Lennon clutches Yoko Ono. The portrait, made on December 8, 1980, was meant to serve as an intimate emblem of the couple's relationship. When Lennon was killed just hours after the photo was taken, the image became a powerful visual memorial.



Annie Leibovitz's prolific output during this period, and her inventive approach to photography itself, position her distinctly within the traditions and trajectory of American portraiture during the twentieth century. Her unique photographic language dovetailed with – and advanced – the medium's evolution as a force for art making. The singularity of her vision, which included combining portraiture with photojournalism that captured historical and cultural touchstones throughout the United States and abroad, places Leibovitz within a lineage of some of her personal heroes – artists like Andy Warhol and Richard Avedon, both innovators of their mediums. Idols like Robert Frank and Henri Cartier-Bresson inspired Leibovitz to turn the tide on photography's reception. Combining Frank's highly personal and emotional style of photographic reportage with Cartier-Bresson's Surrealist and even sculptural art photography, Leibovitz embraced her own inclination toward personal journalism.

'Annie Leibovitz. The Early Years, 1970 – 1983: Archive Project No. 1' will be on view at Hauser & Wirth Los Angeles daily from Tuesday – Sunday, 11 am – 6 pm from 14 February through 14 April 2019.

About the Artist

Annie Leibovitz has achieved international recognition for her photojournalism and portraiture, which serve to shape both the contemporary cultural imagination and our retrospective view of the late twentieth century. Through innate qualities of personality and talent, she achieved an unusually intimate and authentic understanding of her subjects that is beautifully transcribed in her photographs. In the Seventies and early Eighties, when she documented everything from Nixon's resignation to the Rolling Stones on tour, Arnold Schwarzenegger's Mr. Olympia contest, and the youth, drugs, and camaraderie of the political and artistic worlds, Leibovitz chronicled a seminal era in American history.

Leibovitz produced 142 cover photographs for Rolling Stone, where she was the chief photographer for over ten years, before transitioning to Vanity Fair and Vogue. She has been a working photographer for nearly fifty years and her large and distinguished body of work encompasses some of the most well-known portraits of our time.

HAUSER & WIRTH

Leibovitz has carefully curated her work in books, including 'Annie Leibovitz: Photographs 1970 – 1990' (1991), 'Olympic Portraits' (1996), 'Women' (1999), 'American Music' (2003), 'A Photographer's Life: 1990 – 2005' (2006), 'Annie Leibovitz at Work' (2008; revised and updated in 2018), 'Pilgrimage' (2011); and 'Annie Leibovitz: Portraits 2005 – 2016' (2017). Her work has also been exhibited at the National Portrait Gallery and the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC; the International Center of Photography, New York NY; the Brooklyn Museum, New York NY; the de Young Museum, San Francisco CA; the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands; the Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Paris, France; the National Portrait Gallery, London, United Kingdom; and the Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia.

Leibovitz is the recipient of many honors, including the Lifetime Achievement Award of the International Center of Photography, the Centenary Medal of the Royal Photographic Society in London, the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art Award to Distinguished Women in the Arts, the Commandeur in the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French government, the Wexner Prize, and the Prince of Asturias Award for Communication and Humanities.

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Gallery hours:
Tuesday – Sunday
11 am – 6 pm

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Golden Gate Bridge, 1977; San
Francisco, 1968; Half Moon Bay,
California, 1968; Kibbutz Amir, Israel,
1969

Rolling Stones tour,
Cleveland, Ohio, 1975

1976 Democratic National Convention:
Dianne Feinstein, Sally Quinn, Hunter
S. Thompson, and Dan Rather, New
York City

Hunter S. Thompson's kitchen,
Woody Creek, Colorado

Andy Warhol and Diana Vreeland,
New York City, 1976

Chris Stein and Deborah Harry,
Indianapolis, Indiana, 1979