

FASHION: 1958 – 1972

...I always thought in my best fashion work I was able to show that beauty is as isolating as genius, but with no real rewards.

Richard Avedon, 1985

In the fifties and sixties Avedon's fashion photography became increasingly analytical of the industry within which he worked. Throughout his career he recognized the model, and therefore woman, as performer, however in this period his work casts further commentary upon the emerging cult of celebrity, the model as the consummate performer and the industry that provides her stage.



Suzy Parker and Mike Nichols,
Paris, 1962



Margot McKendry and China Machado with
members of the French press, Paris, 1961

POINTS OF DEPARTURE:

1. In the two images above Avedon comments upon the fashion industry within which he operated and the paparazzi coverage of celebrity emergent in the sixties.
 - a. The image on the right shows two models with members of the French press in Paris in 1961. Why do you think Avedon chose to

stage these women within the context of the industry of which they are a product?

- b. Describe the image on the left. How do you read what is taking place within the photograph?
 - c. Of the two images which image looks the most consciously constructed by the photographer?
 - d. The photograph on the left is not a real paparazzi image but rather a constructed scene in which Avedon set up models to mimic the newspapers obsessive following of celebrities at the time, such as Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton. It was shown in Harper's Bazaar in newspaper format in 1962. How do you think this image would have been read when seen amongst conventional fashion spreads?
2. Adam Gopnik, an art historian and close friend of Avedon described him as 'a director of pictures. All his occasions are performances; all his subjects actors; all his images scenes.' In what way does Avedon use both of these images to highlight fashion as performance?



Suzy Parker and China Machado with Robin Tattersall and Reginald Kernan, Paris, 1959



Naty Abascal and Ana-Maria Abascal with Helio Guerreiro, Spain, 1964

3. The two images above are both examples of narratives in which Avedon creates fictional contexts for his models to operate within.
- a. Look at the image on the right. What atmosphere is conjured by the positioning and attitudes of the models?
 - b. Compare this image to the image on the left. How does Avedon's direction of the two images affect the general ambience of the two

scenes? In what way does the comparison of the two illustrate Avedon's shifting attitude towards the fashion industry?

- c. At the time the image of the disaffected woman seemed very radical in an industry still dominated by the imagery of overtly 'happy' models. His innovations however inspired many future photographers. Can you think of any current advertising campaigns which feature bored or disinterested models?