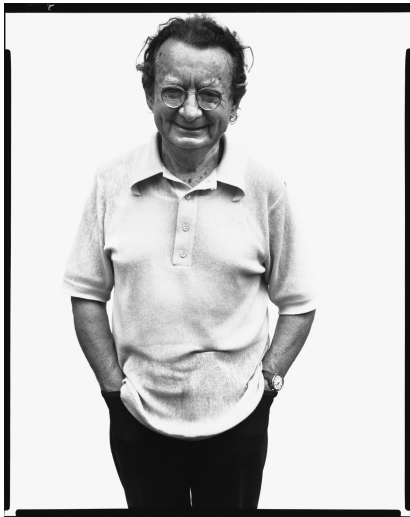


## PORTRAITURE: THE FAMILY

*I've worked out a series of no's. No to exquisite light, no to apparent compositions, no to the seduction of poses or narrative. And all these no's force me to a yes. I have a white background. I have the person I'm interested in and the thing that happens between us.*

Richard Avedon, 1994

The Family was published for a special edition of Rolling Stone in 1976. It was composed of sixty-nine photographs of the power elite in America on the eve of the presidential election. Avedon uses his signature white backdrop throughout the series.



I.F. Stone, journalist,  
Washington, D.C., 1976



Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, mother  
of President John F. Kennedy,  
Massachusetts, 1976

### POINTS OF DEPARTURE:

1. The Family was not only composed of politicians. Of the above two images the left depicts I. F. Stone an investigative journalist who became famous for scouring public archives and scoop political stories. On the right is an image of Rose Kennedy, the mother of John Kennedy, famous for both her social standing and philanthropic

- activities. Both occupied positions of power but within very different realms.
- a. What do their chosen outfits and poses say about the images both Stone and Kennedy desire to project of them selves?
  - b. What effect does Avedon's use of a white background have upon these two photographs? Do you think it highlights their similarities or their differences?
2. Although Rose is one female figure within The Family portfolio she is one of very few examples of her gender. It is a selection of images predominantly white and predominantly male. Considering this and considering that Avedon chose his own subjects what is he saying about the weighting of power in America in the seventies? If Avedon were alive to photograph The Family of today what differences, if any, do you think he would record concerning the allocation of power in America?
3. The use of the white backdrop is historically associated with the 'mug shot' and the 'objective' gaze. Do you think Avedon's use of this technique on this and many other projects signifies an objective or subjective gaze?