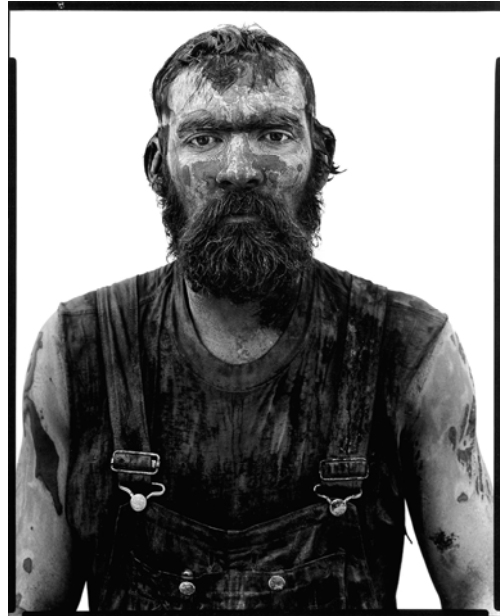


**LANDMARK EXHIBITION *IN THE AMERICAN WEST: PHOTOGRAPHS BY RICHARD AVEDON* TO OPEN AT CENTER FOR CREATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY**

Tucson, AZ – In 1985, the Amon Carter Museum in Fort Worth, Texas organized the exhibition *In the American West: Photographs by Richard Avedon*. The project opened to widespread acclaim and was, in fact, one of the most highly attended exhibitions in the museum's history. On October 21, a restaged version of this monumental exhibition will open at the Center for Creative Photography on the University of Arizona campus, and remain on view until January 14, 2007.

Avedon traveled for five years, making portraits of ordinary people living and working in the Western United States. Assertive, controversial, and graphically striking, these portraits generated extensive (and at times, heated) discussion about the nature of portraiture, photography, and prevailing stereotypes of the region. Avedon's oversized photographs of working class westerners have become icons in photographic history, as capable of generating debate today as when they were first exhibited.



The current exhibition presents a major portion of the works from the 1985 staging of *In the American West*. The works in it were selected by Avedon himself, together with Amon Carter Senior Curator of Photographs John Rohrbach, to mark its twentieth anniversary of the original exhibition. In 1989, the Center for Creative Photography worked with the photographer to establish the Richard Avedon Archive, which today retains the largest institutional holdings of his work spanning his career in photography. Avedon designated that the Center host the restaged version of *In the American West* before his death in 2004.

“We are pleased to be able to present this monumental exhibition in Tucson,” says Douglas R. Nickel, director of the Center. “Richard Avedon had a special fondness for our institution, and was a regular visitor here. It is fitting that the last exhibition he helped organize should come back to the region and research center so closely associated with his distinguished career.”

**Background of the 1985 Exhibition**

*In the American West* was the brainchild of the Amon Carter Museum's first director, Mitchell A. Wilder. By the 1970s, Richard Avedon had become world famous for elevating fashion photography to an art form. But when Wilder saw Avedon's July 4, 1978, portrait of a ranch foreman from Ennis, Mont., he was inspired to ask the artist to continue making photographs of

that type under the sponsorship of the Amon Carter Museum. He gave Avedon license to photograph *his* view of the American West.

Avedon agreed to Wilder's proposal. From 1979 to 1984, he traveled through 13 states and 189 towns from Texas to Idaho, conducting 752 sittings and exposing 17,000 sheets of film with his 8-by-10-inch Deardorff view camera.

Focusing on the rural West, Avedon visited ranches and rodeos, but he also went to truck stops, oil fields, and slaughterhouses. Rather than playing to the western tropes of grandeur and space, he sought out people whose appearance and life circumstances were the antithesis of mythical images of the ruggedly handsome cowboy, beautiful pioneer wife, or enterprising robber-baron. The subjects he chose for the portraits were modern, ordinary people, coping with their own personal cycles of boom and bust.

Instead of glamorizing these figures, Avedon brought their various human frailties to the forefront. All of them were pictured against a seamless white backdrop that removed any reference to place, and many of the portraits were dramatically oversize, shocking in their stark detail. Visitors to the exhibition in 1985 came face-to-face with images that shattered preconceptions of the region and its people.

### **Twenty Years Later**

Although small groups of prints from *In the American West* have been periodically exhibited since 1985 (and included by Avedon in his retrospective exhibitions), a larger portion of the project has not been seen in the United States since its initial tour. Seventy-eight of the original 124 portraits will be on view in this exhibition, including all of the project's most important and best-known images.

Rohrbach began working with Avedon in early 2003 on image selection and installation design. Following Avedon's death on October 1, 2004, Rohrbach has continued to work with The Richard Avedon Foundation to ensure that the photographer's initial vision is preserved for a new generation of visitors.

The Tucson presentation is being coordinated by Britt Salvesen, curator of photography at the Center for Creative Photography.

The New York publisher Harry N. Abrams Inc. has reissued the exhibition catalogue with a new introductory preface by Rohrbach.

*In the American West: Photographs by Richard Avedon* was organized by the Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas. Generous funding for the exhibition is provided by the Katrine M. Deakins and Crystelle Waggoner Charitable Trusts, Bank of America.

Richard Avedon. *Red Owens, oil field worker, Velma, Oklahoma, June 12, 1980*. Courtesy The Richard Avedon Foundation © 1980 The Richard Avedon Foundation.

***In the American West: Photographs by Richard Avedon* Programs and Events**

Friday, October 20, 2006

Reception and Panel Discussion

Reception, 5–6 p.m.

Panel Discussion, 6:30 p.m.

*Working with Avedon*

Panelists Laura Wilson and Ruedi Hofmann assisted and worked closely with Richard Avedon from 1979 to 1984 as he sought out and photographed more than 700 subjects for *In the American West*, traveling by Suburban across the Great Plains and the Rocky Mountain States, from the Rio Grande to Canada. They will discuss Avedon's working style, his rapport with his subjects, and his vision for the project.

Panelist: Laura Wilson

Photographer Laura Wilson was Avedon's research assistant from 1979 to 1985. She found subjects for his approval, all the while documenting—in both photographs and words—the project's evolution. In 2003, the University of Texas Press published Wilson's book, *Avedon at Work*.

Panelist: Ruedi Hofmann

Hofmann, an award-winning New York-based photographer, was the master printer for the book and the exhibition *In the American West*. He worked with Avedon as his studio manager and primary photo assistant on all of his projects from 1981 to 1986.

Moderator: John Rohrbach

Rohrbach is Senior Curator of Photographs at the Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth. Twenty-five years after the original *In the American West* exhibition, Rohrbach assessed the project's historical and cultural significance, reintroducing it to people who know it and bringing it to a new generation. He worked closely with Avedon to select the images and to develop the layout for the current exhibition.

Monday, November 20, 5:30 p.m., Auditorium

Lecture

*Avedon in Twelve Pictures*

David A. Ross was a close friend of the artist for twenty-five years, beginning when Ross worked with Avedon on his first retrospective exhibition held at the Berkeley Art Museum in 1978. Ross went on to direct the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. At the ICA Ross presented *In the American West*, and at the Whitney he oversaw the organization of the survey exhibition *Richard Avedon: Evidence*. Examining a dozen photographs, Ross will explore the work of Richard Avedon and his unique contribution to the history of photography. He will posit that Avedon remains one of the twentieth century's most productive and misunderstood artists, one of only a handful who achieved equal recognition as an artist and for his innovative work as a commercial photographer. This program is sponsored, in part, by the Tucson Visiting Artist's Consortium

## **ABOUT THE CENTER FOR CREATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY**

The Center for Creative Photography at the University of Arizona actively collects, preserves, interprets, and makes available materials that are essential to understanding photography and its history. Through its archives, collections, education programs, exhibitions, and publications, the Center promotes research into and appreciation of the photographic medium. The Center for Creative Photography holds more archives and individual works by 20th-century North American photographers than any other museum in the world. The archives of over 60 major American photographers—including Ansel Adams, Harry Callahan, W. Eugene Smith, Edward Weston, and Garry Winogrand—form the core of a collection numbering over 80,000 works. The Center for Creative Photography has an integrated program of preservation, access, and education that celebrates the history of photography and its contemporary practice.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:** 520-621-7968 or <http://www.creativephotography.org>

**GALLERY HOURS:** Monday–Friday, 9 am to 5 pm; weekends, 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. Selections from the collection are on view in the Permanent Collection Gallery.

**ADMISSION:** Center for Creative Photography exhibitions, print room viewings, and education events are always FREE and open to the public.

**LOCATION:** The CCP is located on the University of Arizona campus, Fine Arts Complex, 1030 N. Olive Rd., Tucson, AZ.

**PARKING:** Parking is available at the Park Avenue Garage at the NE corner of Park and Speedway Blvd. The pedestrian underpass gives you direct access to the CCP. Parking directly behind the CCP (off 2<sup>nd</sup> Street) is free after 5:00pm on weekdays and all day Saturday and Sunday.

## **Media Contact**

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