

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

BAZAAR

Right: Kay Fortson, 1976,  
by Andy Warhol. Below:  
Jacqueline Kennedy, First  
Lady, West Palm Beach,  
Florida, January 3, 1961,  
by Richard Avedon



ART

# AMERICAN IDOLS

The Gagosian Gallery's latest show  
pairs the iconography of Richard Avedon  
and Andy Warhol *By* JONATHAN JONES

Richard Avedon loved flesh. Andy Warhol feared it. That's one thing you might conclude from an exhibition at the Gagosian Gallery that compares these two New York masters. Avedon started his career at *Bazaar* in the 1940s and by the time of his death in 2004 was recognised as a serious artist as well as a revolutionary fashion photographer. In 1969, he took a panoramic picture of Warhol and some of the people who frequented the Factory, in which quite a few superstars stand as naked as Adam and Eve; you see their youth and beauty in a way you never do in Warhol's own, less sensual, art.

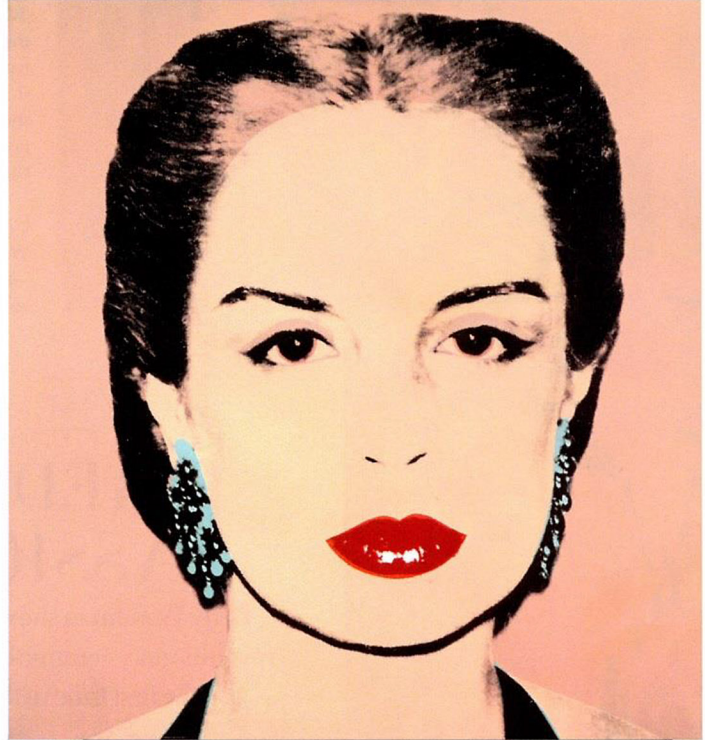


Above: Miriam Davidson,  
1965, by Warhol.  
Right: Avedon's Audrey  
Hepburn, actress, New York,  
January 20, 1967



## TALKING POINTS

Left, from top: Louis Armstrong, musician, Newport Jazz Festival, Newport, Rhode Island, May 3, 1955, by Avedon. Liza Minnelli, 1979, by Warhol. Right, from top: Carolina Herrera, 1979, also by Warhol. Marilyn Monroe, actress, New York, May 6, 1957, by Avedon



Faces, too, are naked in the art of Richard Avedon. Old faces appeal to him deeply, and his black-and-white intensity brings out the lines and valleys made in human skin by time as things of wonder and beauty. With this fixation on distinctive human bodies and faces, Avedon is a true American individualist whose pictures reveal people in all their strangeness, uniqueness, specialness.

Warhol is a very different American artist. The man who made his name painting cans of Campbell's soup – every one a different flavour and yet each red and white cylinder basically identical – was not convinced that people are special. Under the skin, this lifelong (secret) Catholic saw the bare, black image of death. His portraits of celebrities are not so much studies of distinction as dreams of spiritual transcendence and sainthood: Elizabeth Taylor as Mary Magdalene, Jacqueline Kennedy at JFK's funeral as a weeping *mater dolorosa* of America, numbed by grief.

Avedon's photography rivals the richness of painting, evoking in its energy and depth such Baroque masters as Rubens and Rembrandt. Warhol's painting imitates the stillness of Victorian photographs and the passport-booth camera's machine-like coldness. Both looked at the same brilliant, violent age. The Gagosian show is a visual history of modern times, for Avedon and Warhol each documented America's changes, losses and conflicts. It's fascinating to compare their perspectives. Do our times deserve Avedon's humanist celebration or Warhol's tragic irony? □

*'Avedon Warhol' is at the Gagosian Gallery ([www.gagosian.com](http://www.gagosian.com)), Britannia Street, London WC1, from 9 February to 23 April.*

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