

Richard Avedon quotes:

Youth never moves me. I seldom see anything very beautiful in a young face. I do, though - in the downward curve of Maugham's lips, in Isak Dinesen's hands. So much has been written there, there is so much to be read, if one could only read. I feel most of the people in my book, *Observations*, are earthly saints. Because they are obsessed, obsessed with work of one sort or another. To dance, to be beautiful, tell stories, solve riddles, perform in the street. Zavattini's mouth and Escudero's eyes, the smile of Marie-Louise Bousquet: they are sermons on bravado.

-Richard Avedon, 1959

I was overwhelmed. Mrs. Vreeland kept calling me Aberdeen and asking me if a wedding dress didn't make me want to cry. They're all serious, hardworking people—they just speak a different language.

So I took my own models out to the beach. I photographed them barefoot, without gloves, running along the beach on stilts, playing leapfrog. When the pictures came in, Brodovitch laid them out on the table and the fashion editor said, 'these can't be published. These girls are barefoot.' Brodovitch printed them. After that, I was launched very quickly. Those candid snapshots were in direct contrast to what was being done. I came in at a time when there weren't any young photographers working in a free way. Everyone was tired, the war was over, Dior let the skirts down, and suddenly everything was fun. It was historically a marvelous moment for a fashion photographer to begin. I think if I were starting today, it would be much harder.

-Richard Avedon, 1965

And if a day goes by without my doing something related to photography, it's as though I've neglected something essential to my existence, as though I had forgotten to wake up. I know that the accident of my being a photographer has made my life possible.

-Richard Avedon, 1970

There's always been a separation between fashion and what I call my "deeper" work. Fashion is where I make my living. I'm not knocking it. It's a pleasure to make a living that way. It's pleasure, and then there's the deeper pleasure of doing my portraits. It's not important what I consider myself to be, but I consider myself to be a portrait photographer.

-Richard Avedon, 1974

My photographs don't go below the surface. They don't go below anything. They're readings of the surface. I have great faith in surfaces. A good one is full of clues. But whenever I become absorbed in the beauty of a face, in the excellence of a single feature, I feel I've lost what's really there...been seduced by someone else's standard of beauty or by the sitter's own idea of the best in him. That's not usually the best. So each sitting becomes a contest.

-Richard Avedon, 1980

When the sitting is over, I feel kind of embarrassed about what we've shared. It's so intense. Snapshots that have been taken of me working show something I was not aware of at all, that over and over again I'm holding my own body or my own hands exactly like the person I'm photographing. I never knew I did that, and obviously what I'm doing is trying to feel, actually physically feel, the way he or she feels at the moment I'm photographing them in order to deepen the sense of connection.

-Richard Avedon, 1985

I believe in maniacs. I believe in type As. I believe that you've got to love your work so much that it is all you want to do. I believe you must betray your mistress for your work, you betray your wife for your work; I believe that she must betray you for her work. I believe that work is the one thing in the world that never betrays you, that lasts. If I were

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going to be a politician, if I were going to be a scientist, I would do it every day. I wouldn't wait for Monday. I don't believe in weekends.

If you're headed for a life that's only involved with making money and that you hope for satisfaction somewhere else, you're headed for a lot of trouble. And whatever replaces vodka when you're 45 is what you're going to be doing.

-Richard Avedon, 1988

I've worked out of 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 the "yes." I have a white background. I have the person I'm interested in and the thing that happens between us.

-Richard Avedon, 1994