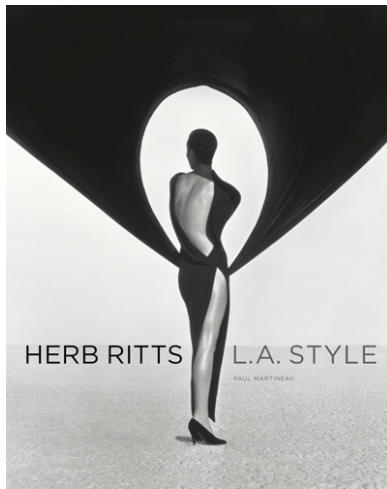


# HERB RITTS

## L . A . S T Y L E

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**A SEDUCTIVE COLLECTION OF  
PORTRAITS AND NUDES  
FROM THE ICONIC PHOTOGRAPHER**

### *Herb Ritts: L.A. Style*

**Paul Martineau**  
With an essay by James Crump

Published by the J. Paul Getty Museum  
April 2012

LOS ANGELES—Considered one of the most important photographers to emerge from the 1980s, Herb Ritts (1952–2002) possessed a distinctive sense of style. He had the ability to seamlessly switch gears between his personal work that helped revive the male nude genre, and his commercial photography incorporating fashion and portraiture. His work is infused with the overriding elegance that is a distinguishing mark of his pictures. *Herb Ritts: L.A. Style* (Getty Publications, April 2012) traces the life and career of the iconic photographer through a compelling selection of renowned as well as previously unpublished photographs and two insightful essays.

Herb Ritts was a Los Angeles-based photographer who established an international reputation for his striking and innovative images of fashion models, nudes, and celebrities. Largely self-taught, Ritts developed his own style, one that often made use of the California light and landscape and helped to separate his work from his New York-based peers. During the 1980s and 1990s, Ritts was sought out by the leading fashion designers of the time, including, Armani, Gianfranco Ferrè, Donna Karan, Calvin Klein, Valentino, and Versace, as well as magazine editors from *GQ*, *Interview*, *Rolling Stone*, and *Vanity Fair* to lend glamour to their products and layouts.

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At the height of his fame, Ritts ushered in the era of the "super model" with his unforgettable portraits of Naomi Campbell, Tatjana Patitz, Christy Turlington, Linda Evangelista, and Cindy Crawford, among others, which magnificently depict feminine strength and beauty. It became a rite of passage for celebrities to be photographed by Ritts, and virtually all of the big names of the day posed for him, including Madonna, Elton John, Richard Gere, John Travolta, Tina Turner, David Bowie, Barbara Streisand, Michael Jackson, Sinéad O'Connor, and Arnold Schwarzenegger.

In spite of his commercial success, Ritts considered his personal work, or fine art photography, as his greatest achievement. His acceptance in the art world as a "fine art" photographer is in large part due to his photographs of male nudes. An avid collector of photography, he possessed a vast knowledge of the history of the medium, and drew inspiration from such past greats as F. Holland Day, Edward Steichen, Alfred Stieglitz, Man Ray, Paul Outerbridge, George Platt Lynes, and Horst P. Horst. Ritts's particular strength was his ability to analyze the male body from a variety of angles, and create classic, yet modern compositions that abstracted the male physique in ways that communicate strength and poise.

From the late 1970s until his untimely death from AIDS in 2002, Ritts's ability to create photographs that successfully bridged the gap between art and commerce was not only a testament to the power of his imagination and technical skill, but also marked the synergistic union between art, popular culture, and business that followed in the wake of the Pop Art movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

An exhibition of the same name will be on view at the Getty Center from April 3 through August 12, 2012; at the Cincinnati Art Museum from October 6 through December 30, 2012; and at the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art in Sarasota, Florida, from February 23 through May 19, 2013.

**Paul Martineau** is associate curator in the Department of Photographs at the J. Paul Getty Museum. He is the author of *Paul Outerbridge: Command Performance* (Getty Publications, 2009) and *Still Life in Photography* (Getty Publications, 2010).

**James Crump** is chief curator and curator of photography at the Cincinnati Art Museum. In 2007, Crump wrote, produced, and directed the documentary film *Black White + Gray*, featuring the influential curator and collector Sam Wagstaff and artist Robert Mapplethorpe.

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