the 100 most important people in photography 1998
icons, artists, agents, and more

#1 DIANA, PRINCESS of WALES photographed by PATRICK DEMARCHELIER

LAST CALL: ENTER OUR NEW PHOTO CONTEST (see page 93)

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EDWYNN HOUK GALLERY
When we did our first listing of photography's 100 most important people in 1994, we heard from plenty of readers, some of whom disagreed with our choices and others who told us that we'd put together a valuable guide to the photo business. One thing is certain: The business has changed. In putting together our new list, we noted several trends—for instance, the rising tide of celebrity photography at the expense of traditional news and documentary photography. We have in fact replaced more than half the names from the 1994 list (see page 82).

It's important to understand our criteria in making these decisions. We are not assessing the career-long impact of a particular photographer, and we are not passing judgment on the lasting artistic merit of someone's work. Rather, our list gauges the influence of photographers (and reps, dealers, retouchers, book publishers, etc.) right now. It measures stylistic impact, as well as financial and cultural clout. We take into account industry buzz, but we also look to real accomplishments. Is it subjective? Of course. Photography is a business, but it's also an art. You can't rate influence simply by figuring who has had the most exhibitions or who bought the most pictures at the last auction. But if you ask enough people, you can make educated guesses about who the decisive players are. In coming up with this list we relied on a panel of outside experts and our own hunches.

We made the job easier by setting up rules. First, we decided to exclude anyone who wasn't living or working primarily in the United States. Why? Because there would simply be too many important people to choose from in too many realms of activity. (Our number 1 choice does stretch the rules—but with good reason.) To avoid a conflict of interest with advertisers, we did not include any photographic manufacturers or technical experts. Likewise, we did not include anyone from American Photo or our parent company, Eastside Flirarchi Magazines. (To be fair, we do mention those people on page 87.)

You will note that one of our regular departments, Inside Photography, has been left out of this issue. That's because the entire special section that begins on the following pages is an insider's view of the workings of the photography industry. As you will see, it is a wondrous and powerful business.
Photographer of the Year for the fifth year in a row in the White House News Photographers Association contest, as well as Newspaper Photographer of the Year by the National Press Photographers Association and the Missouri School of Journalism’s Pictures of the Year Contest for a third time—the latest in her roster of honors.

A staff photographer at the Washington Post since 1988, and before that at the Miami Herald from 1980 to 1988, Curry had studied to be a nurse. Fortunately, she realized that photography was her real passion. “I feel so lucky that I have gotten to see so many different cultures and ways of life that I never would have seen,” she says. —C.S.

In 1994, Richard Avedon topped our list of photography’s most important people both for the influence of his pictures and for the impact of his retrospective exhibition, which opened that spring at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. Along with the show came two books—An Autobiography and Evidence. 1944–1994—that looked back at his life and work.

As it turned out, the retrospective was not a summation of a career but a mere interlude. Now 74, Avedon remains a force—and a very active one, at that—in fashion, advertising, magazines, and art. He’s making pictures for a number of advertisers, including Givenchy, Versace, Romo Gigli, Max Mara, and Shiseido. The splashy 1995 and 1997 Pirelli calendars he produced became collectors’ items. He has two new books—a retrospective of his Versace advertising photography and a volume of photographs and interviews of the 1960s. And then there is a major new project for a special issue of The New Yorker related to the millennium. If the project creates half

EDWYNN HOUK gallery owner

Edwynn Hous built his reputation as the owner of the premier gallery in the Midwest. Based in Chicago, he became the country’s acknowledged expert on Bill Brandt’s work. In 1991, Hous teamed with Barry Friedman, an influential dealer specializing in Art Deco and avant-garde art, to open the Hous Friedman Gallery in New York. Last fall, however, Hous, 46, split with Friedman and opened his own gallery in Manhattan. “An art gallery is a single proprietor, a single entity, and it turns out we both had separate ideas of how it would function,” he says. Hous now exclusively represents contemporary artists Sally Mann, Lynn Davis, Annette Merz, and Elliott Erwitt and historical names like Bill Brandt, Bress, and Dorothy Lange. If there were any doubts about how Hous would do on his own, they were put to rest with his opening exhibition, featuring the latest work by Mann. (He has estimated that he sells one of Mann’s prints a day.) At the same time, he premiered her work on the West Coast at the prestigious Cagoufian Gallery in Los Angeles, once again forging an impressive alliance. —F.M.}

48 RICHARD AVEDON photographer

47 THOMAS WALThER collector

Since 1979, Thomas Walther has been one of a handful of collectors who have defined the history of the medium through their acquisitions—where he goes others tend to follow. His collection includes significant works by van Eyck, El Lissitzky, Tina Modotti, Paul Strand, Axel Langdon Coburn, Alfred Steiglitz, Paul Outerbridge, and Edward Weston. “I like to focus on essential qualities in images, like economy of expression, simplicity, and clarity, rather than intricacy of detail or story values,” he says. “I see some of these pictures as an affirmation of life through the unusual grasp of the moment.”

When Walther started collecting, the field wasn’t so crowded and the work wasn’t as expensive as it is today. “I bought photographs that weren’t considered classics,” he says. He recalls spending $3,000 in 1979 for an André Kertész image of a fork. Today that print is worth more than $150,000, according to Toronto dealer Jane Cook.

These days, Walther is selective about his purchases; he has actively ventured into the 19th century, acquiring work by William Henry Fox Talbot and Julia Margaret Cameron, among others. He also expresses an affinity for work done in the 1960s, ’70s, and ’80s. “Those photographers were breaking new ground, creating a leap in visual exploration,” he says. His latest passion is for callotypes and early salt prints.

In 1995 Walther sold 20 pieces from his collection at Christie's for more than $670,000. "It's back on my part that I was into it early, recognized it before many others did, and collected comprehensively," he says. Luck and a lot more. —L.A.