

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

MATTHEW ROLSTON

ORIGINS

MATTHEW ROLSTON IS AN ARTIST WHO WORKS IN PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEO; his practice centers on portraiture, most notably subjects drawn from celebrity culture. Rolston, who lives and works in Los Angeles, studied drawing and painting at the Chouinard Art Institute and Otis College of Art & Design in Los Angeles, California, as well as at the San Francisco Art Institute. Rolston studied illustration, photography, imaging and film at ArtCenter College of Design in Pasadena, California, where in 2006, he received an honorary doctorate.

While still a student at ArtCenter, Rolston was 'discovered' by American artist Andy Warhol, who immediately commissioned portraits for his proto-celebrity magazine, *Interview*, of then-emerging Hollywood director Steven Spielberg. Thus began an extensive career; over the last 30 years, Matthew Rolston's photographs have been published prominently in numerous magazines, including *Interview*, *Vogue*, *W*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Vanity Fair*, *The New York Times Magazine*, and over 100 covers of *Rolling Stone*.

"Matthew has a unique beat on our culture," said Jann Wenner, founder of *Rolling Stone* magazine. "The very images we have ingrained in our minds when we think of music, movies, and celebrities are quite often Matthew's creations."

PHOTOGRAPHER

Along with his friend Herb Ritts, Rolston was a member of an influential group of photographers, among them, Bruce Weber, Annie Leibovitz and Steven Meisel, to emerge from the 1980's magazine scene. Rolston's photographs from this era are distinguished by their distinctive and glamorous lighting style, surrealistic tableaux, and detail-rich sets. His imagery has helped define the contemporary aesthetics of American portrait photography and truly embodies modern glamour.

Said Warhol of a young Rolston in a September 1984 entry from *The Andy Warhol Diaries*, "Matthew wears brooches. He's the one who started Michael Jackson wearing them. When he photographed Michael for *Interview*, he gave him his own brooch, and then Michael started wearing them all the time. But Matthew must like women, because when he photographs them, he makes them look gorgeous."

Robert Sobieszek, the former curator of photography for the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, compared Rolston's work to the "four mega-greats of the '50s and '60s: Avedon, Hiro, Penn and Skrebneski... I think Rolston is one of the foremost editorial, glamour/fashion photographers working," he said, "giving us immensely sophisticated, exciting, glamorous shots and portraits that surround us daily."

DIRECTOR

Matthew Rolston is also a filmmaker who works in video. Known for his signature lighting techniques, Rolston has directed award-winning music videos for artists as diverse as Madonna, Janet Jackson, Beyoncé Knowles and Miley Cyrus, as well as extensive print and television campaigns for a wide variety of internationally recognized brands including Campari, Bacardi, L'Oréal, Revlon, Estée Lauder, Elizabeth Arden, Gap, Polo Ralph Lauren and Burberry.

Rolston's short film *The Most Beautiful Woman in the World* (2011, color, 3:00 min) screened as part of SF Shorts: The San Francisco International Festival of Short Films (2013). The Whitney Museum of American Art (as part of *Blues for Smoke*) screened *Whatta Man* (1994, color, 4:52 min) in *Through the Lens of the Blues Aesthetic: An Evening of Short Films Selected by Kevin Everson* (April 2013). Other short films of note include *Foolish Games* for musical artist Jewel (1997, color, 3:57 min), which received a nomination for Most Stylish Music Video at the 1997 VH1 Vogue Fashion Awards; *The Power of Good-Bye* for musical artist Madonna (1998, color, 4:11); *Every Time* for musical artist Janet Jackson (1998, color, 4:22); *Bootylicious* for musical group Destiny's Child, featuring Beyoncé Knowles (2001, color, 3:30); *Be Without You* for musical artist Mary J. Blige (2005, color, 4:09 min), which received a nomination as "Best R&B Video" (MTV Video Music Awards, 2006); and *Candyman* for Christina Aguilera (2007, color, 3:18 min), which earned Rolston a nomination for "Best Director" (MTV Video Music Awards, 2007).

Rolston has directed over 100 music videos, 200 television commercials, and conducted literally 1000's of photo sessions over the course of his career.

FINE ARTIST

Rolston has created four photographic fine art projects that have led to a series of publications and exhibitions.

Talking Heads: The Vent Haven Portraits, consists of monumental portraits of ventriloquial figures housed in the Vent Haven Museum in Fort Mitchell, Kentucky, and was Rolston's first self-assigned photographic series. The work debuted in 2014 at the Diane Rosenstein Gallery in Los Angeles, California, and has since traveled to venues in Miami and Berlin, among others. Rolston's third published monograph accompanied the exhibition.

Hollywood Royale: Out of the School of Los Angeles, which includes Rolston's fourth monograph as well as a traveling exhibition, is a retrospective of his editorial portraits from 1977 to 1993. Edited by long-time Los Angeles-based gallerist and curator David Fahey, this series presents an array of portraits that capture the 1980s and its myriad talents. From Michael Jackson and Madonna to Prince, George Michael and Cyndi Lauper, the selection of images reflects the era.

Art People: The Pageant Portraits is a series of emotionally intimate portraits of the volunteer participants in "Pageant of the Masters", a *tableaux vivants* show that is part of an annual arts festival that has been held in Laguna Beach, California for over 80 years. The project features dramatically scaled color prints: one installation alone is over thirty feet wide. Ralph Pucci International first exhibited this series in its Los Angeles gallery in 2017, and this work became Rolston's first solo institutional exhibition on the West Coast when it opened Summer 2021 at Laguna Art Museum. The exhibition was accompanied by a lavishly illustrated catalog.

Vanitas: The Palermo Portraits is yet another dramatically scaled portrait series, this depicting Christian mummies housed in the Capuchin Catacombs of Sicily. The project, which has not yet been published or exhibited, represents Rolston's continuing evolution as an artist and is an attempt to elevate his portraiture to a conceptual level.

Rolston has stated his purpose with artmaking is to "pose questions about the things that make us most human."

HIGHLIGHTED EXHIBITION HISTORY

Rolston's photographs have been exhibited at museums and institutions. Selected group shows include *Beauty CULTure* (with Lauren Greenfield, Herb Ritts, Andres Serrano, and Carrie Mae Weems, 2011), The Annenberg Space for Photography, Los Angeles; *The Warhol Look: Glamour, Style, Fashion*, curated by Mark Francis and Margery King (with Richard Avedon, David Bailey, Robert Mapplethorpe, Steven Meisel and others), The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (1997); and *Fashion and Surrealism*, FIT Gallery, New York, 1987 (with David Bailey, Horst P. Horst, Man Ray, Bruce Weber and others), which traveled to the Victoria & Albert Museum, London in 1988. Rolston's first solo institutional exhibition on the West Coast opened Summer 2021 at Laguna Art Museum, titled *Matthew Rolston, Art People: The Pageant Portraits*.

Rolston's works are in the permanent collections of The Museum of Modern Art, NY, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and the National Portrait Gallery (Donald W. Reynolds Center for American Art and Portraiture at The Smithsonian, Washington D.C.), among others.

EDUCATOR

In 1998, Rolston endowed the "Matthew Rolston Scholarship for Film and Creative Direction," at his alma mater, ArtCenter. According to Rolston, "the scholarship is intended to promote cross-disciplinary studies between film and other creative practices". Rolston remains actively involved in this program as a mentor and lecturer on the subjects of modern communication techniques, fashion aesthetics, luxury brand strategies and social impact messaging in the public interest.

Since 2015, Rolston has served as an adjunct professor and curricular advisor to ArtCenter's Undergraduate and Graduate Film Departments. At ArtCenter, Rolston currently teaches two classes in communications; they are original courses, entirely conceived of and written by Rolston. Although both classes are situated formally in ArtCenter's Film program, they invite class members from diverse disciplines including photography and imaging, creative direction, fine art and other departments of the college.

Rolston's first class, introduced at ArtCenter in 2015, is called *The Power of Pleasure*. It centers on fashion communication. The second, a newer class that Rolston introduced in the fall of 2020, is called *Conscious Communication*; it revolves around social impact messaging. In both classes, students create short films in a classroom atmosphere not unlike that of a professional communications agency. Rolston's role is both educator and chief creative officer of this 'agency'. The students enact the roles of individual writer/director 'makers'.

Rolston is currently at work developing an illustrated textbook of *The Power of Pleasure*, based on his original syllabus and lectures.

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Once again expanding and redefining the scope of his vision, Rolston has added the title of creative director to his résumé, developing innovative projects in the area of experiential design, including hospitality and brand development.

Rolston's first hospitality brand creation, developed for Los Angeles-based hotel and restaurant owner Sam Nazarian's company SBE Entertainment Group, opened in 2010. Called *The Redbury*, Rolston was deeply involved in every aspect of the project, from the naming to the logo, from design concepts to marketing strategies. As creative director, he oversaw an extensive team that included architects, interior designers, graphic designers, music and scent experts – even the uniform company that created the staff wardrobe.

Since that time, Rolston's other hospitality clients have included Mahmood Khimji's Highgate Holdings, Richard Branson's Virgin Hotels and Barry Sternlicht's SH Hotels & Resorts.

MICHAEL JACKSON / THE LAST SITTING

Matthew Rolston was surprised and deeply saddened by the 2009 death of entertainer Michael Jackson, whom he had known and worked with from the earliest days of their careers. By a strange twist of fate, it appears that Matthew Rolston is officially the final photographer to shoot Michael Jackson in a formal sitting. Rolston's images of Michael Jackson from a September 24, 2007 shoot are literally "the last sitting" of the legendary performer's career.

REPRESENTATION

Rolston's representatives for his commercial still photography work are [FOURELEVEN](#), based in New York. His fine art photography is represented by the [Fahey/Klein Gallery](#), Los Angeles, and [Camera Work Photogalerie](#), in Berlin. Rolston's touring fine art shows are represented by Curatorial Assistance Traveling Exhibitions, Los Angeles.

PERSONAL

Rolston's production offices are in Beverly Hills, California. He continues to divide his professional time between photography, fine art, publishing, filmmaking, creative direction and arts education. Rolston resides in Beverly Hills.

PODCAST APPEARANCE

In 2018 Rolston appeared on ArtCenter College of Design's Change Lab podcast. The show, hosted by ArtCenter's president Dr. Lorne M. Buchman, features intimate interviews with leading artists and innovators.

Kicking off the third season of ArtCenter's Change Lab podcast with an episode entitled *Matthew Rolston on "Art People," Glamour, Death Anxiety, and the Unity of Opposites*, Buchman and Rolston discuss his creative influences, his aesthetic of the unity of opposites, his self-commissioned fine art projects, his ambivalence about the fashion industry's unrealistic standards of wealth and beauty and his fortuitous meeting, as a young ArtCenter student, with his childhood hero, Richard Avedon.

The total running time for the podcast is approximately 42 minutes. To listen, please click the link below:

<https://www.artcenter.edu/connect/dot-magazine/articles/change-lab-podcast-episode-15-matthew-rolston.html>

EXTERNAL LINKS

Explore Rolston's commercial, fine art, book projects and educational activities at the following dedicated links:

COMMERCIAL PRACTICE

www.matthewrolston.com

FINE ART AND BOOK PROJECTS

www.vanitasproject.com

www.matthewrolstonartpeople.com

www.hollywoodroyale.com

www.matthewrolstontalkingheads.com

www.beautylight.com

ARTS EDUCATION

www.thepowerofpleasure.com

www.consciouscommunication.io

ARTIST CV

MATTHEW ROLSTON

HIGHLIGHTED EXHIBITION HISTORY

Matthew Rolston's works have been the subject of numerous institutional and gallery exhibitions throughout the United States and internationally, which have led to a series of publications authored by the artist. Rolston has shown work at institutions including The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA; Annenberg Space for Photography, Los Angeles, CA; Barbican Art Gallery, London, UK; Greenville County Museum of Art, Greenville, SC; Laguna Art Museum, Laguna Beach, CA; Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK; and The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY. Rolston has exhibited at galleries including CAMERA WORK, Berlin, DE; Diane Rosenstein Fine Art, Los Angeles, CA; Fahey/Klein Gallery, Los Angeles, CA and Ralph Pucci International, Los Angeles, CA.

Rolston's first solo institutional exhibition on the West Coast opened Summer 2021 at Laguna Art Museum, titled *Matthew Rolston, Art People: The Pageant Portraits*.

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2021 *Matthew Rolston, Art People: The Pageant Portraits*, Laguna Art Museum, Laguna Beach, CA

2018 *Talking Heads: The Vent Haven Portraits*, Greenville County Museum of Art, Greenville, SC

2018 *Hollywood Royale: Out of the School of Los Angeles*, Fahey/Klein Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

2017 *Art People: The Pageant Portraits*, Ralph Pucci LA, Los Angeles, CA

2017 *Hollywood Royale: Out of the School of Los Angeles*, Camera Work Photogalerie, Berlin, Germany

2016 *Talking Heads: The Vent Haven Portraits*, Camera Work Contemporary Gallery, Berlin, Germany

2014 *Talking Heads: The Vent Haven Portraits*, Diane Rosenstein Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

1993 *Big Pictures*, Catherine Edelman Gallery, Chicago, IL

1992 *Big Pictures*, Exposure Gallery, Parco, Tokyo, Japan

1991 *Big Pictures*, Staley-Wise Gallery, New York, NY

1991 *Big Pictures*, Arthur Roger Gallery, New Orleans, LA

1991 *Big Pictures*, Fahey/Klein Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

1987 *Matthew Rolston: Magazine Work/Photographs*, Govinda Gallery, Washington, D.C

1982 *Matthew Rolston/Portraits*, Jennifer Dumas Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

1982 *New Hollywood Portraiture*, FOTO Gallery, New York, NY

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2021/2022 *Installation* (with Sadie Barnette, Varnette Honeywood, Robert Mapplethorpe, and others), curated by Laura Dvorkin and Maynard Monrow, The Bunker Artspace | The Collection of Beth Rudin DeWoody, West Palm Beach, FL

2021 *On the Edge, Los Angeles Art 1970s-1990s*, from the Joan and Jack Quinn Family Collection (with Jean-Michel Basquiat, David Hockney, Robert Mapplethorpe, Ed Ruscha, and others), Bakersfield Museum of Art, Bakersfield, CA

2020 *Hollywood Babylon: A Re-Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome* (with Isabelle Albuquerque, Vaginal Davis, Mike Kelley and others), curated by Benjamin Lee Ritchie Handler | Nicodim Gallery, and Jeffrey Deitch Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

2020 *Vanity Fair: Hollywood Calling* (with Annie Leibovitz, Helmut Newton, Herb Ritts, Collier Schorr and others), Annenberg Space for Photography, Los Angeles, CA

2018 *Greater Than LA* (with Larry Bell, Genevieve Gagnard, Lauren Halsey and others), curated by Michael Slenske | Desert Center, Los Angeles, CA

2014 *The Editor's Eye: The Anthony Mazzola Years* (with Slim Aarons, Bill King, Francesco Scavullo and others), Hearst Gallery, Hearst Tower, New York, NY

2014 *Joan Quinn Captured*, Brand Art Center, Glendale, CA

2013 *Joan, Joan, Joan*, The Vi Smith Concourse Gallery at John Wayne Airport, Santa Ana, CA

2013 *Through the Lens of the Blues Aesthetic: An Evening of Short Films Selected by Kevin Everson*, The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY

2011 *Mysterious Objects: Portraits of Joan Quinn*, Santa Ana College Main Gallery, Santa Ana, CA

2011 *Beauty CULTure*, Annenberg Space for Photography, (with Lauren Greenfield, Herb Ritts, Andres Serrano, Carrie Mae Weems and others), Los Angeles, CA

2000 *The Warhol Look: Glamour, Style, Fashion* (with Richard Avedon, David Bailey, Robert Mapplethorpe, Steven Meisel and others), The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA

1999 *The Warhol Look: Glamour, Style, Fashion* (with Richard Avedon, David Bailey, Robert Mapplethorpe, Steven Meisel and others), Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia

1998 *The Warhol Look: Glamour, Style, Fashion* (with Richard Avedon, David Bailey, Robert Mapplethorpe, Steven Meisel and others), Musée de la Mode, Marseilles, France

1997 *The Warhol Look: Glamour, Style, Fashion* (with Richard Avedon, David Bailey, Robert Mapplethorpe, Steven Meisel and others), The Barbican Art Gallery, London, England

1997 *The Warhol Look: Glamour, Style, Fashion* (with Richard Avedon, David Bailey, Robert Mapplethorpe, Steven Meisel and others), The Art Gallery of Toronto, Toronto, Canada

1997 *The Warhol Look: Glamour, Style, Fashion* (with Richard Avedon, David Bailey, Robert Mapplethorpe, Steven Meisel and others), The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY

1989 *New Nudes* (with Annie Leibovitz, Erica Lennard, Herb Ritts, Jan Saudek and others), Govinda Gallery, Washington, D.C.

1988 *Fashion and Surrealism* (with David Bailey, Horst P. Horst, Man Ray, Bruce Weber and others), Victoria & Albert Museum, London, England

1987 *Fashion and Surrealism* (with David Bailey, Horst P. Horst, Man Ray, Bruce Weber and others), FIT Gallery, New York, NY

1987 *New Nudes* (with Annie Leibovitz, Erica Lennard, Herb Ritts, Jan Saudek and others), G. Ray Hawkins Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

1985 *Working In L.A.* (with Herb Ritts and Greg Gorman), G. Ray Hawkins Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

1984 *Modern Masters* (with Jean Pagliuso, Kim Steele and Bruce Weber), Delahunty Gallery, Dallas, TX

1984 *Modern Masters* (with Jean Pagliuso, Kim Steele and Bruce Weber), Hokin Kauffman Gallery, Chicago, IL

SELECTED TALKS AND LECTURES

2022 *William Mortensen at 125: A Virtual Panel Conversation*, with gallerist Stephen Romano, photographic historian Deborah Irmis, author and editor Michael Moynihan, Ph.D. and documentary filmmaker Brian Chidester, Laguna Art Museum, Laguna Beach, CA

2021 *In Conversation: Matthew Rolston / Art People*, with New Yorker Magazine contributing writer and cultural critic Christina Binkley, Laguna Art Museum, Laguna Beach, CA

2021 *In Conversation - Matthew Rolston and Michael Slenske: Art for Artist's Sake*, with arts writer and curator Michael Slenske, Soho Warehouse, Los Angeles, CA

2021 *In Conversation - Matthew Rolston and Merle Ginsberg: Art for Artist's Sake*, with arts and culture editor Merle Ginsberg, The Britely, West Hollywood, CA

2021 *In Conversation: Matthew Rolston*, with cultural critic Lindsay Preston Zappas and Getty Curator of Photographs Paul Martineau, Laguna Art Museum, Laguna Beach, CA

2019 *Studio to Studio: Hollywood's Enduring Influence in Contemporary Art*, with Academy Museum Exhibitions Curator Jessica Niebel, Lucas Museum of Narrative Art Curator Ryan Linkof and art critic Hunter Drohojowska-Philp, Spring Place, Beverly Hills, CA

2019 *The Power of Pleasure: Decoding the Art of Visual Seduction*, Santa Monica College, Santa Monica, CA

2019 *Is Glamour Art? A Conversation*, with Autre Magazine founding editors Oliver Kupper and Summer Bowie, Frieze LA, Paramount Studios, Hollywood, CA

2018 *In Conversation- Looking Back: Andy Warhol's Interview Magazine*, with KCRW's Frances Anderton, NeueHouse, Hollywood, CA

2018 *Art People: A Conversation*, with cultural critic Katya Tylevich, Ralph Pucci LA, Los Angeles, CA

2018 *Photographic Arts Council of Los Angeles Artist Gallery Talk*, Hollywood Royale, Fahey/Klein Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

2018 *In Conversation: Matthew Rolston's Hollywood Royale* with New Yorker Magazine contributing writer and cultural critic Christina Binkley, SoHo House West Hollywood, CA

2018 *Hollywood Royale: Artist Talk with Matthew Rolston*, with gallerist Ute Hartjen, The Battery Club, San Francisco, CA

2018 *Iris Night Lecture Series: Hollywood Royale*, with director and Vanity Fair contributing editor Matt Tyrnauer, The Annenberg Space for Photography, Los Angeles, CA

2018 *Glamour, Berlin and Hollywood: Matthew Rolston*, with Lee Kaplan, founder of Arcana Books on the Arts, Goethe-Institut Los Angeles, CA

2018 *Hollywood Royale by Matthew Rolston*, with Lee Kaplan, founder of Arcana Books on the Arts, ArtCenter College of Design, Pasadena, CA

2018 *In Conversation: Matthew Rolston's Hollywood Royale*, with Wolfsonian curator Cathy Leff, SoHo Beach House, Miami, FL

2018 *In Conversation: Matthew Rolston's Hollywood Royale*, with author and Warhol diarist Pat Hackett, SoHo House New York, NY

2017 *In Conversation: Matthew Rolston's Hollywood Royale*, with cultural critic Nadia SAYS, SoHo House Berlin, Germany

2014 *The Rise of the Fashion Film*, with New Yorker Magazine contributing writer and cultural critic Christina Binkley, ArtCenter College of Design, Pasadena, CA

2011 *Iris Night Lecture Series: Matthew Rolston on "Beauty CULTure"*, with arts and culture editor Merle Ginsberg, The Annenberg Space for Photography, Los Angeles, CA

2009 *beautyLIGHT by Matthew Rolston*, with arts and culture editor Merle Ginsberg, ArtCenter College of Design, Pasadena, CA

PUBLICATIONS

Five monographs have been published of Rolston's work:

Big Pictures, A Book of Photographs (1991), is a collection of early work with an introduction by director Tim Burton, published by Bullfinch Press, New York.

beautyLIGHT: Pictures at a Magazine (2008) is a survey drawn from twenty years of Rolston's celebrity portrait photographs published by teNeues, Germany.

Talking Heads: The Vent Haven Portraits (2012), is a fine art project comprised of monumental portraits of ventriloquial figures, published by Pointed Leaf Press, New York

Hollywood Royale: Out of the School of Los Angeles (2017), is a mid-career retrospective, published by teNeues, Germany.

Matthew Rolston, Art People: The Pageant Portraits (2021), is a museum catalog published by Laguna Art Museum in conjunction with their exhibition.

SELECTED PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA

National Portrait Gallery, The Smithsonian Museum, Washington, D.C.