

MATTHEW ROLSTON, ARTIST, PHOTOGRAPHER, DIRECTOR, & CREATIVE DIRECTOR

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 Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California, where in 2006, he received an Honorary Doctorate.

While still a student at Art Center, Rolston was 'discovered' by Andy Warhol, who immediately commissioned portraits for *Interview* magazine. Thus began an extensive career; over the last 30 years, Matthew Rolston's photographs have been published in numerous magazines, including *Interview*, *Vogue*, *W*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Vanity Fair*, *The New York Times Magazine*, and over 100 covers of *Rolling Stone*.

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 notable for 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.

"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. After publishing more than thirty years of his photographs, we're still excited by the imagery."

Robert Sobieszek, the former curator of photography for the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), 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 today," he said, "giving us immensely sophisticated, exciting, glamorous shots and portraits that surround us daily."

Matthew Rolston is also a filmmaker who works in video. Known for his distinctive lighting techniques, Rolston has helmed award-winning music videos for artists as diverse as Madonna, Janet Jackson, Beyoncé Knowles and Marilyn Manson, as well as both print and television campaigns for a wide variety of internationally recognized brands including Campari, Bacardi, L'Oreal, Revlon, Estée Lauder, Clairol, Pantene, 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 films 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; *Be Without You* with 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).

Matthew Rolston has continued to form lasting relationships with celebrities and magazines, such as his long association with Oprah Winfrey. Rolston has had the unique distinction of photographing Oprah for more than 40 covers of *O, The Oprah Magazine*. Rolston has shot Oprah for her magazine more than any other photographer.

Responding to ever-changing client needs, Rolston established a production unit he calls 'R-ROLL'. Its mission is to provide his clients with behind-the-scenes documentaries of his photo, film and creative direction assignments. According to Rolston, "there's an overwhelming demand for filmed content, as clients expand their reach beyond traditional media."

R-ROLL was created to serve Rolston's usual mix of editorial, advertising, entertainment and hospitality clients. "I decided to call it R-ROLL as a joke on 'B-roll' (industry parlance for behind-the-scenes footage). The 'R' is for 'Rolston.'" Since its inception, R-ROLL has produced numerous projects for clients such as Time, Inc., Amazon.com, ESPN and A&E/Lifetime Networks. Said Rolston, "We're now entering an era where the 'making of' is just as important as the 'of'. And clients seem to enjoy the integration of our media services. Print, film, design, documentary, you might say we're a 'one-stop-shop.'"

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, California; *The Warhol Look: Glamour, Style, Fashion* (curated by Mark Francis and Margery King), The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (1997); and *Fashion and Surrealism*, FIT Gallery, New York, 1987 (traveled to the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, UK, 1988). His photographs are in the permanent collection of 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.).

Four monographs have been published of Rolston's work: *Big Pictures, A Book of Photographs* (1991), a collection of early work with an introduction by Tim Burton, published by Bullfinch Press, New York; *beautyLIGHT, Pictures at a Magazine* (2008), a survey of twenty years of Rolston's celebrity portrait photographs, published by teNeues, Germany; *Talking Heads: The Vent Haven Portraits* (2012), a fine art project comprised of monumental portraits of ventriloquial figures, published by Pointed Leaf Press, New York; and *Hollywood Royale: Out of the School of Los Angeles* (2017), a mid-career retrospective, published by teNeues, Germany.

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, product design and new media ventures.

Rolston's first hospitality brand creation, developed for Los Angeles-based hotel and restaurant owner Sam Nazarian's company sbe Entertainment, 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.

Matthew Rolston was surprised and deeply saddened by the unexpected death of entertainer Michael Jackson, whom he had known and worked with from the earliest days of his career. 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.

In 1998, Mr. Rolston endowed the "Matthew Rolston Scholarship for Photography and Film," at Art Center. He remains actively involved in this program as a mentor and lecturer on the subjects of modern communication techniques, fashion aesthetics and luxury brand strategies.

Rolston's representatives for his commercial still photography work include [foureleven](#), New York.

Rolston's fine art photography is represented by the [Fahey/Klein Gallery](#), Los Angeles, and [Camera Work Photogalerie](#), Berlin. Rolston's touring fine art shows are represented by [Curatorial Assistance Traveling Exhibitions](#), Los Angeles.

Explore Rolston's fine art projects at the following dedicated links:

[Talking Heads: The Vent Haven Portraits](#)

[Hollywood Royale: Out of the School of Los Angeles](#)

[Art People: The Pageant Portraits](#)

Rolston's production offices are in Beverly Hills, California. He continues to divide his professional time between photography, fine art, publishing, filmmaking and creative direction, traveling frequently between Los Angeles and New York City. Rolston resides in Beverly Hills.