

Yousuf Karsh: American Portraits

National
Portrait
Gallery



During a career that spanned six decades, photographer Yousuf Karsh (1908–2002) created iconic portraits of many of the twentieth century’s most influential men and women—from fields as diverse as business, medicine, entertainment, politics, and the arts. Karsh photographed countless international figures, but his images of Americans—from Marian Anderson to Albert Einstein to Grace Kelly—are counted among his finest portraits. This exhibition features forty-eight black-and-white photographs from the National Portrait Gallery’s collection, including writer Ernest Hemingway; artists Georgia O’Keeffe and Andy Warhol; actors Ingrid

Bergman and Humphrey Bogart; athletes Muhammad Ali and Jackie Robinson; business leaders Elizabeth Arden and Warren Buffett; architects Frank Lloyd Wright and I. M. Pei; first ladies Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis and Eleanor Roosevelt; and entertainment giants Walt Disney and Jim Henson, among many others.

A refugee from his native Armenia, Karsh immigrated to Canada in 1925. His uncle, a professional photographer, facilitated Karsh’s apprenticeship with the renowned Boston portrait photographer John H. Garo in 1928. By the time Karsh returned to Canada, he had “set [his]



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heart on photographing those men and women who leave their mark on the world." In May 1933, he opened his portrait studio in Ottawa. The phenomenal success of his 1941 portrait of Winston Churchill, included in this exhibition, served as the catalyst to Karsh's career. Thereafter, he traveled the world fulfilling portrait commissions and editorial assignments.

Karsh developed his distinctive portrait style by drawing inspiration from a variety of sources. Introduced to stage-lighting techniques, he experimented with artificial lighting to achieve the dramatic effects that became the hallmark of his portraiture. Believing that "the heart and mind are the true lens of the camera," Karsh also developed a genuine rapport with his sitters and partnered with them to fashion portraits that were both revealing and respectful. This exhibition celebrates his unique ability to capture the personality and character of those he photographed and showcases some of his most memorable works.



EXHIBITION SPECIFICATIONS

Content:

- 48 black-and-white photographs
- Digital files for all exhibition texts, title graphic design, organizer credits, and logo
- Sample ideas of Portrait Gallery educational programming

Support Services:

- Installation and display guidelines
- Portrait Gallery courier to oversee unpacking/packing and installation/deinstallation
- Press kit, including sample press release, press images, and captions with credits

Space Required:

Approximately 250 linear feet

Security and Special Requirements:

- High security
- 5 to 7 footcandles required
- 70°F ±2; RH 50% ±5%

Availability:

Limited to 4 venues, beginning February 2018

Participation Fee:

\$25,000 for a 12-week booking period plus one-way shipping within contiguous US

Shipping:

One-way shipping via Portrait Gallery-approved professional fine art shipper with dual driver, air-ride transit

Contact:

If you would like to be considered as a host museum, please contact the Department of Exhibitions at the National Portrait Gallery expressing your interest and include an AAM Standard Facility Report. Please address inquiries to either:

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