A great deal was said about my book... and I thought about all that was said... I'd like to answer in a few words some of the questions that were brought up at the last meeting. I was surprised that there was hardly a word spoken about photography. No one recognized that this was a group of Portraits in a book—no one discussed the development of Portraiture. Penn was there and there was no discussion of his approach to Portraiture, as opposed to mine, or the history of Portraiture.

The book is a book of photographic portraits. That might be something that you all would like to talk about... there is one thing I'd like to show you, and that is... first let me quote for a minute... "I think that Dick was too cruel in taking Eisenhower and Stevenson in—in taking off beat images. That is the cheapest thing in the book" I'd like to show you some pictures from my first book and a few from this book to show that there is quite... there is a very specific line that goes through my work—not off beat or accidental—but, has a great deal to do with what I feel about, about, portraiture. The pictures will show very clearly... I'm not very good at expressing myself. May I have a pencil?

It might be a good idea Dick. To indicate the off-beat, what I meant was the off-pose, really... out of a group of contacts it seemed to me that in choosing the one that you did, you're going beyond portraiture as I understand it, to, almost what the newspapers do when they show the gangster or
the dope addict with his eyes half closed everytime the
flash goes off. You see that seems to me less, far less
than your best work, which God knows...

This is a picture of Humphrey Bogart. Here's one of Rene
Clair. Here's one of Calldreyer. These pictures have been
taken over a period of 15 years...here's one of Eisenhower.
There's nothing "off pose" about those photographs. There's
a very specific intention...there is a very specific feeling
about what a photographic portrait should be. And there is
very little difference between this portrait of Pearl Mesta,
and this one of Dorothy Parker. This one of Janet Flander,
possibly this of Chanel...they all go together because
they're done from a single point of view. Or this one of
the Windsors. I think that makes my point. It's not an
accident, it's something I worked very, very hard to achieve.
I feel that the cosmetic approach of portraiture, the
"nobility of man", no matter how beautifully done, is the
end of an old idea. It shocks me to hear that Penn draws
a line, as to how far a photographer can editorialize, when
he editorializes a great deal himself and very beautifully...
a photographer is nothing but a machine unless he editorializes. If he's an artist at all he speaks for the way he
feels, and it's a funny little line to draw between the way
one man feels and another man feels, and call one accept-
able, or legitimate, or OK, and the other, not. That ought
to start us off (laughter).
If nobody else wants to say anything, I agree that you can't draw the line on where you editorialize, Dick, except, only in the area of the uncontrolled accident...that's what worries me, otherwise you can do whatever you please. I have a very different view of portraiture than you have, that we've spent wonderful Sunday mornings on the phone talking about. I think that people have got to be protected against certain aspects of themselves, and allow to hang themselves, too, at the same time in front of the camera. But I try to find something that is not momentary, but if possible, something timeless in that person. Now, what worried me most about the Eisenhower picture here, is that it is the least timeless of all these, and while you may think it's in the same direction, I feel that...that one separates from the others.

I don't understand why it's less timeless than Chanel or the Duke and Duchess.

I think the Duke and Duchess picture is not at all chosen as an off picture. I think that...I don't know what the big commotion was about that picture, frankly. I don't think that it's your best picture by a long shot. I think that we're used to the cosmetic approach on women like the Duchess, that's all...that's shocking about it, and nothing else. It's not a bit off color, or off time, which I feel the Eisenhower is. And, I may be wrong about this. I feel that in that series of how many you took, 24, this is almost as though he became bleary-eyed at something, and that was not the moment to make
the picture.

AVEDON: This is so much your feeling, a projection of what you feel must have happened...you feel that Eisenhower cannot be like that. I walked into the room of a man afraid of dying. His arm hurt that night, and he spent half of the sitting trying to cover up...for the fact that Mrs. Eisenhower had sat by the bed all night and didn't sleep looking at him, that any pain in the arm could mean a heart attack. And he was smiling away, and then for a moment he relaxed. I'm not trying to say any more...I'm not impressed about the fact...that Eisenhower...it doesn't interest me, that he was the President of the United States, or that Pearl Mesta is a hostess. It interests me that they all have to face their death, and that terror is in all of us, and in my portraits. That's the thing I see. That's the thing I've always worked in relation to.

Well, I think we ought to leave it at that because there's not much point to go beyond. It does seem more fragmentary to me and obviously not to you. Rene Clair seems to be one of the fine clear pictures of that series, and not at all that way.

FRANKFURT: The Bogart picture is...there is a quality to that...that you could use with Eisenhower, and yet I feel that it's a powerful statement about Bogart.
AVEDON: I don't attempt to make a statement about each person as an individual. I'm always more interested in what my feeling is about just living, and the pain of it. And if I had...had any guts at all, both of these books would have been published without any names under the pictures. Might have been a much better way to do it, and maybe one day I will be able to. I don't think it's so important who they are, we're all born the same way, and all end up the same way.

PENN: This may be, Dick, why people didn't speak of the photography very much in the book, but the strength of the whole idea is what came under the discussion first. Because the photography didn't differ that much from your first book and the second. But the idea of this book seemed to be very different... I mean it seemed he took a much more integrated thing, whatever it is that you were saying, and I had my own idea of what it was, and everybody else did too. It really held together, it was all of a piece. And that's why, I mean the photography—we had already accepted, I think that you'll agree that there was no revolutionary new direction. Brodovitch, do you have any feeling about this... you want to get into this?

BRODOVITCH: No, I would rather hear. Maybe somebody else will ask. Later I would be glad to ask some questions.

VOICE: A comment was made in our discussion about the book last time... that the book wasn't very optimistic. Do you think of yourself as an optimist.
To me, the book seemed to end on a very optimistic note.

You sound like Dorothy Kilgallen!

You seem to be a very pessimistic person...about the man's condition. A lot of people made this comment after they finished the book.

To me, I didn't get that same point of view from the... I'm sorry, I don't mean to be fresh, but that's what upset me about the last meeting. To talk about...well...is he optimistic or is he pessimistic...uh...you know what I mean, it's like what kind of person am I? What difference does that make. It's a book! And it's very clear...to me...

Certainly that seems to be irrelevant whether it's optimistic or pessimistic...that's not the point. Does it say what it intends to say and why does it say that?

I jump so quickly...he's caught the essence of the attack on the book which is...Does he hate America or doesn't he hate America? Is it anti-America or for America? Of course, it's an optimistic book. I wouldn't do it if it weren't. It's a book to expose a quality in our life and not a political quality, and to expose in an attempt to change the way we live. It's a book of what I intended it to be, and I can see that I've made many mistakes in it's presentation. I realize that, because what I intended did not come across to most readers.

It's a book about alienation, it's not a book about America only because I'm American. I could've done the same book in any country in the world. It happens that I photographed
America, and it happens that the text led the book more
towards an attack on America than was ever intended before
the text was written. But it's a book about people's separation
from one another and from themselves, and if you take the photo-
graphs out of the book... or go back to the book, and look at it
with that in mind... that's all I intended.

VOICE: Why is it an intent to change it?
AVEDON: What do I want to change? I really can't answer that.
It's in the book, it's there.
VOICE: You just mention a little while ago that if you had any
guts you wouldn't have put the names of the people underneath
the pictures.
AVEDON: Yes.
VOICE: And that the people aren't important...it's what you want them
to do or show...how people live and die. Why did you use
portraits of people in life that are famous? ... Why aren't
they people I don't know?
AVEDON: There are many people in the book that you don't know... as
many as you don't know as you do know. But my life as a
photographer touches on public figures, very often, and public
figures can symbolize certain things. But, if you look at the
book...
VOICE: Would you have accomplished more of what you wanted to do had
you bi-passed people in the limelight...to expect this strong
point of view?

AVEDON: I don't know. I just know that there are as many people in the book, that are not known, as are known. And that people have a way of talking only about Eisenhower, or one celebrity or another. I wanted the book to go from A Slave to a President. That was my first intention. From a poet to a crook, and, uh... I did many, many more photographs than are published, or were published, and I attempted to get as round a picture of America that I could... not America, but people.

VOICE: Do you feel that you bring in some distinction because of the fact that you use people who are famous?

AVEDON: Distinction about a point of view...?

VOICE: Of a point of view. I look at this person, and can I then follow your frame of thought from Slave to President?

Because I see somebody I know, and now I have a picture in my mind of how this man is, or how that lady is. And now I'm upset. I can't pursue your point of view.

AVEDON: It might make it clearer to see my point of view if you didn't have pre-conceived notions about that man or woman.

PENN: I would think so. Without that frame of reference you wouldn't know if you were seeing a lot of strange people or not.

AVEDON: The mental institution pictures are in the book. To help make clear that the line is very thin, in a lot of cases. And those faces are all unknown to you. This book is an essay, not a book. Although in another context, I think that the pictures might be very interesting without names. It would have to be
in another country, in another 50 years.

VOICE: Were the pictures shot specifically for the book?

AVEDON: I think so.

VOICE: They were?

AVEDON: Yes.

STURGES: At the start of the discussion the word portraiture was mentioned, and I think that some of the basic discussion hinges around a difference in point of view of what Mr. Penn considers portraiture, and what you consider portraiture, and I think it would be interesting to hear about that a little more.

PENN: I think I touched on that, and I don't think there's much more to say. As far as I'm concerned, I try to find a person at a very serene, true, and fairly restful moment. I feel that Dick tries to find them at a moment that has an aspect of truth, which is completely momentary. And I feel that you need accumulative set of images; a mixed kind of picture, to tell what I would like to tell in one single picture. Now, that's not obviously true because, uh...there are many people who get much more from Dick's portraits than they would from mine. But it's my point of view, and it's very...it's poles apart.

AVEDON: The only disagreement we have...we both...we both look for different qualities in our sitting. We very often photograph the same people. I only really disagree with Penn when he
says that, one is a part of the truth, and the other is the whole truth.

**PENN:**
No, I don’t mean the whole truth. I hope I didn’t say that. I think it’s a fatter aspect of the truth than the momentary one because, uh... I feel that it’s more cumulative in front of the camera. That you can edit and distill right in front of the camera, and being a person, do it at a time of rest and an attitude that seems truer, whereas I think that you will hope for a stimulating electric heat, and then take something that seems fascinating to you at that point. And it is fascinating, but I feel it’s white hot, and it’s momentary, and consequently narrower.

**AVEDON:**
Well, there’s a very fine line here, because, Penn’s portraits when they are at their best are the depth of what he intends to do. When he achieves it, it’s so fantastic. And in a world of imitators, there are nothing but, what I call Xerox machines around... you can never-ever-confuse a Penn, with one of the people who imitate him. On the other hand, I feel that people posing are so busy creating their faces, preparing how they want to be seen. Of course, that image reveals a lot about them, but it always reveals to me their public image and in this white hot moment, or, I wouldn’t have put it that way, but in the unguarded moment, or in the moment that I helped to create, I feel that I’ve cut through a great deal of facade, and have gotten what I feel is truer. I hate to say it’s true, or it isn’t true,
because they're both...because it sounds so picky.

I think we agree on one thing, that the important thing is to get past the public facade. The person who arrives at the studio, as everybody know, armed with an image of himself, he's prepared to tell you how he wants to be. He's not going to say it in so many words, because for the most part, he's a fairly sophisticated person, but he has a facade, he's prepared, a certain kind of external armor. The job of a photographer, working for a publication, and we work for similar circumstances, gives for the sake of the reader, to get past this facade. And he develops his technique to that end. Now, I think you do it by some kind of, I don't know what happened yesterday, I'd love to be a mouse there some day....something magical occurs there. I know that in our studio it's usually done very quietly. We speak in very close to whispers. Little conversation first. The person sits at a small table, uh, I can just see their apprehensiveness falling away. When they think: My God... they're not going to be cut up, there's no hot lights for one thing. I'm not going to be expected to hold extraordinary positions for any length of time. We go on talking, and I start making exposures. And many of these exposures are obviously useless -- their steps in the dotted line to the point that we're trying to get to. As far as I'm concerned, I'm enormously supportive of the subject and he feels that ah, "gee, it isn't so bad" and, "this man is nothing to be afraid of, I wonder why I was warned that it
might be an exhausting, or horrifying experience." The guard comes down, it's like that old story that we read as children, of the north wind and the sun tried to take the man's coat off and...you remember that story, and they bet to see who could do it, and the north wind was sure he was able to. And by blowing like hell, the coat merely got tighter around the traveller. The sun came out, and just quietly with no commotion, off came the coat. Its somewhat parallel that way, I feel that the sittings that I have, probably take longer than the ones you have. I think you reach a high point very fast on the curve, and after that, I don't know what you say to each other, I've had sittings that have gone on for an hour and a half where the subject was really quite fed up by then, and I was much fed up, but still searching, and it's at a time like that - that things happen. Now, also I think the organization of the thing purely, practically consumes a lot of my time in the...although - I take pictures all the time. I forget the subject in the structure, a lot of which I think, almost unconsciously, makes it impossible for them to relax, too. Nothing is demanded of them at a time like that, because I seem to be involved with things that don't concern them, and their guard comes down that way too. Now, we keep saying the guard comes down, but that may not necessarily be the true thing that we're looking for, because the guard may be just as valid as the guard coming down. There's nothing more horrifying than, to me, than the expression, "He's got to
relax." Well, that's not what we're talking about here at all. We've got to find some aspect of the truth. The bigger the aspect of the truth, the better. Even here, what I'm saying, I want to contradict—because Dick and I are hired by various publications to take pictures of people, where the truth of a person, is not the main thing that they want—, they want that, and they also want that truth seen through the personality of the photographer. And this, I think separates us somewhat from the commercial portraitist, which is expected. Or even take the LIFE MAGAZINE point of view, as though there was some objective truth about somebody that you were supposed to get, and you would preferably be an anonymous person in doing it. So, that too is...something important to say here but, uh, it's the same aspect of the truth seen through the personality of the photographer. And the Modern Museum, do you remember a few years ago, it had a show of a number of portraits and they took three photographers—and I wonder if one of them is...were you one Dick?—of the same man seen through the eyes of three very fine, distinguished photographers. And it was fascinating— that given the constant—the common denominator of the man, and I would think that the time was not far between the three portraits, out came three extraordinarily different human beings. And obviously the only thing that changed there was the personality of the photographer—through which the subject was squeezed, and came out as it did. I think that's about all I
can say about portraiture from my view without getting into many more details.

VOICE: Could we hear Mr. Avedon's way of working?

AVEDON: The way I work.

VOICE: As opposed to Mr. Penn?

AVEDON: Very different; we use the same camera - we use the same way of lighting - to a degree. I come to a sitting so charged with what I want out of the sitting, before it begins, that I'm almost sick before I start it. And I know, that what I have to accomplish has to be done - on my shoulders - I have to do it, I have to make it happen. Penn makes it happen too but, he's a man of entirely different personality than I am. He sits it out. He's a great poker player I would assume. I've never played poker with you. But, in other words, you know what it is you want, and you stick it out - and you slow it down to your pace, and you make it happen your way. It's just as manipulative as I am. What I try to express of myself in my portraits is very often violent, very often a frightening or a riotous element in myself. It doesn't matter. It's never one thing. It changes, and sometimes I can make it happen in five minutes. Sometimes it can take me quite a long time. More often, quickly. But, I feel I do it by turning myself into what I want my portrait to be like. I don't know if that's clear at all. But, if I want the mood to be hilarious, I come to the sitting in that mood. If whatever my reasons are I want -
the picture to have a quality of fear in it, I bring that element to the sitting; by bringing myself to the sitting in that way. You asked about the technique of this. I try to create the atmosphere that I'm looking for. I don't try it in that calculated way. It cheapens what I do, to talk about it. It's much more complicated and unconscious. I have very strong feelings about people I photograph and I try to bring those qualities out in the sitter.

VOICE:
Wouldn't it sort of change the nature...I know...just if I came in, you know, and you were going to take my picture...and I see you coming on and you know you're very humorous or something like that, and I'm really kind of scared, and you try to get me humorous, well maybe you could after a while, but you take my picture, and put it up there, and you're showing me as very humorous and everything as the way you've got me to pervert. Really, I'm not that way at all.

AVEDON:
I don't think I could make anyone be anything they're not. I can simply bring out a quality in them, if I'm in a fine mood. They'll be in that mood, possibly, if I can create it, and then the way they are when they're like that will come out. I can't make you be me, --like the smile on your face right now. It's not the way I smile but it's a very nice smile. It comes from an atmosphere that I just created as Penn creates his atmosphere, in search of nobility, I think.(Laughter).

PENN:
It's not that, because I know that very often I think that if you just let this man stay here long enough, he's going to
hang himself in front of the camera. So it isn't, that nobility is not the end I assure you--it's just for quietness, whatever it is I would like it to be quiet, and just sit there on the page.

**Avedon:**
A good sample of what he's talking about is his portrait of S. J. Perlmutter. You could spend a lifetime looking at that portrait because it is everything he has said. And there it is. There is no way of telling anyone how to take that picture. Except the feeling that Penn brought to it. And made happen.

**Penn:**
It's interesting about that picture--it was the fifth time I had photographed Perlmutter, through the years, and the other four were miserable. They were published, but they were just awful pictures, and then this one came along, and it is pretty good. It's curious that when the pictures really came off, like that one, I never hear from the subject. I never hear from the subject anyway. But when they come off, you'd think there'd be some little word, even a rude word, but something--it's just like throwing the picture down a hole.

**Avedon:**
Brodovitch said at the beginning, and on the phone this morning, asked if we could talk about the direction photography is going to take--He's been saying that for a long time and that's the hardest thing to talk about. Because in Brodovitch terms, it's always, what's the newest. What's the way of changing, and developing the art of photography. And its a way that photographers don't usually think. In other words, they don't
think of, what to do that's new, they think more of what
to do that will deepen and strengthen their work. But I
gave a little bit of thought to it, and something occurred
to me. I just came back from England where I photographed
the Beatles, and they have a young photographer. I don't
know his name. I do--Bob Freeman, I think, who did the
credits for the Beatles movie. He's a very bright and a very
good young photographer, and I saw a great many of his photo-
graphs of Ringo. The lighting ranged from Penn's to mine.
Perfectly done. And added to that was great sensibility.
In other words, he's not just a hack. He really saw what
was wonderful in Ringo, and brought it out. And one is a
Penn, and one is an Avedon and, but beautiful--and, it's quite
possible that they could be easily confused with our work, and
we could easily publish them as our work, and nobody would
doubt it. I thought a great deal about that, and came as an
end to realize that style and technique, anything that's
imitatable, is the weakest part of an art form. What makes a
picture fine is what the photographer sees that no one else
can see --the face that moves you --is the face to photograph.
Or what in the world you think is beautiful, that no one else
would have recognized. The image, the content, I think, be-
comes more and more important, not what angle, not what light,
not what place, not what cropping, and not what lay-out,
but what we as photographers, as...(what's the word I'm look-
ing for)...as discoverers find true. I didn't put that very
well. We're in such an anti-photography period, the magazines, the art directors I think, have driven the photographers back to the fine arts. I think this is a period in advertising of great art direction, great copy. There is no photography done in advertising at all, to my eye,—and so the photographer luckily has to go further and further underground, further and further away from publication and into his most private feelings.

FRANKFURT: Dick, if you look at—I agree with what you say that for the most part, I think the visual aspect of advertising eight years ago, nine years ago, Penn was doing the food stuff for us, and things you were doing for us were really block busters. That doesn't exist today, I agree that it's copy, it's type, it's a statement that can be ugly, but it's a powerful statement. I wonder, in relation for instance to fashion photography, this, you guys have had sort of the cleaness in the fashion field. You started something 1 years ago with Brodovitch. Penn has a way of taking a good fashion picture. In my mind almost everything else that has been done is almost totally imitative. I can't think of an original statement that's been made by any photographer um, except a variation of an Avedon, or a variation of a Penn, and a, do you agree with that? Or is that an embarrassing question? Do you feel that there is a direction that fashion photography has taken? Or do you feel you're taking a different attack in
terms of a—what you have to say about clothes, within a book: Is there any kind of experimentation or direction? It seems to be involved—

AVEDON: I feel very much what we said about portraiture, applies to fashion, if it's done very well. I just finished editing and photographing an issue of Harper's Bazaar. I don't know why I did this, except for a change. During it, the problem of doing fashion photographs came very clear to me. I certainly didn't want the pictures to look as if they were part of another time. I found that—who was in the clothes, how they stood, how they moved, mattered. The change was not in lighting, and it wasn't in technique. Remember, there was a period about a year or two ago when everybody discovered some crazy lens. It was in Vogue a lot, it was in the Bazaar a lot, and all the faces were going like that—like in a curve, and I remember warning a photographer, who's a friend of mine, to throw that lens away fast, because it was a dead end, and it wouldn't last a year or five years, it would last 3 issues. I don't believe in any of the tricks. I believe that the fashion photographer's job is to record the quality of the woman, of the moment that he is working, its the thing, that makes the Marion Morehouse portrait by Steichen so fantastic. She was the essence of the twenties. She stood like the twenties, she was the best of it, she was boiled down essence of the million flappers, plus the elegance of Steichen's vision of her. And there she was, and our job is always to report on the woman of the moment. The way she lives, the way she dresses. Our conception of beauty
changes, and is always changing. It's up to us to report on it, and to create it. I've always felt that in Penn's fashion, he simply does—now I could be wrong—you simply do in fashion what you do in portraiture. You try to get at the essence and the truth of the woman you're photographing; the clothes, probably in both of our work, although we're both professional enough to know that we're in the dress business, and we have to show a dress, and sell it, but that we do automatically with the right hand—I mean the left hand. With the right, we're trying to draw out a quality in a woman that we feel is beautiful, and I think that the new fashion photographer will simply find a new quality in a woman and show it to us.

FRANKFURT: I don't see this from the point of view of the woman, but just to augue a point--I look at Penn's pictures of fashion, and if I were a woman, and--I think I'd see that clothes, and I'd look at your pictures, and I'd see exceptionally exciting photographs of the people--and I think I'd see the people, and the subject, before I'm aware of the clothes. I think a woman is the only valid evaluator of what you see first--I may be wrong in the evaluation, but...

PENN: May I say this--Dick's aim in fashion is a much higher one, than mine. It's just not my own point of view, but the point of view of the magazine that I work for. He's interested in making a fashion picture tell an aspect of fashion in the biggest sense of life. For example, you must have seen the pictures that Dick took in Spain, of the three strange figures related to each
other, a man and two women. This to me, is short-clothed, but
the clothes were a by-product of some aspect of contemporary life
that was a much more profound statement of fashion—fashion in
living, fashion in feeling, and in thinking, than I would ever
dream of attempting, or even be interested in attempting—in
an anonymous girl with a dress that comes down to the... I think
the— it's a matter of—of the angle of your lens, what you
want to take in here, and I think Dick's statements tend to be
in portfolios where there is a point of view that comes through.
The pictures that I take are individual images that sit inside
their rectangle—you can shuffle them, you can put one in one
issue, and one in another, as happens anyway. I don't attempt
to make them profound— it's not a portrait in the sense that
you think that it is, because I don't think the girl's person-
ality should ever intrude. Really, in a fashion picture. It
should be a projection of a photographer's, in that case, not
back off the girl, because most of them should be, and the
greatest ones are fairly anonymous people who look at the
photographer, and suddenly become somebody, but they are, in
fact, mirrors under those circumstances. But, this gets off
the point a little bit. The important point is that Dick's view
is a much broader one; in that he's telling something about our
time. Mine is a very narrow one—you can see a great deal more
of the buttons and seams. Everything we're saying here is on
the conscious level. Unconsciously, we cannot avoid saying
what we feel at the moment, because we are alive today, you see,
and perhaps in the eye of the picture that shows the buttons and seams, gives the whole story—I don't know. But I always admire your integrated group of pictures as much as I do any individual one, because it always has a point of view.

FRANKFURT:

I think of the picture of the girl and the guy running, with a newspaper over their heads, with iron skates, or a Steve McQueen section—they're almost movies. To me, they are. I look at them that way, that's my own interpretation. There's a certain magic quality to them that is beyond a—I get the picture of the clothes—I think in a sense that's what makes those pictures exciting for the viewer of that particular picture. And it may have something to do with age groups, or who you're talking to. I'm not even sure you think about it.

AVEDON:

I find that fashion photography is such a delight. It's such a vacation from life. I'm amazed that I've been able to go on all these years, these many years, doing fashion sittings with continuing pleasure. It's like a holiday, in other words, if I have an issue in Paris, I get happy, and all serious life really disappears for a moment. You were there, Steve, in one of those supreme moments—one of the wildest of any sitting I've ever taken—you were in—I think I do them the way I do parlor games—and I've always felt that way about fashion, that it's a reflection of the fun of life, and some of the seriousness of it. It's a way for me to recharge myself. It's like a vacation. So when I come back to what is more demanding work, I'm strengthened for it. In other words, I didn't know why I did
that issue of Harper's Bazaar, well, I know perfectly well why—
I couldn't have gone on, as I went on, for the last two years,
doing nothing personal and remain sane. There was so much of
me that went into the book, so many feelings, too much. I had
to stop.

**VOICE:**

May I ask you a question about your book again—come back to
the subject of photography? Your first book you worked with
the author, and your second book you worked with Baldwin. Two
questions really. How did you happen to work with these men,
in your next book which I assume you will do. Are there any
particular authors you like to work with? If so, how come? How
do you relate with them?

**AVEDON:**

My reason for picking an author both times, was different. One
of the reasons is that I wanted to reach an audience larger
than the people who would ordinarily look at books of photog-
raphy. Before Observations, I think that the audience for a
book of photography was very limited. I don't know how many
(with the exception of Cartier Bresson). There were certain
good books that never reached an audience at all. I felt that
by working with Truman, his writing about the people in the
book, would bring more people to the work—the photographic
work. And I felt the same thing about Nothing Personal. That
it enriches. You see, I can't really—so many people have said,
that, there's no need to have a writer for a book of photography.
I feel that it's necessary to have someone illuminating the
photographs, to say more than just my pictures. I don't think
I'll need to use a writer again. If I do another book it will probably be a book of 20 years of fashion, so I don't fall in that area...there would be any necessity for me to have a writer; I have so much material.

This is another subject, you mentioned before, the photographer being driven further and further back to fine arts. I get letters, off and on, from this group up at the Metropolitan Museum. I think it's just a mean trick about this area of photography, fine arts, and so forth. And we also have had arguments and conversations around here, about, where photography fits in in relation to the fine arts; is it an art; how does it relate to painting, and so forth? I wonder if you, to talk a little about what you think of it. I personally feel that photography in the fine art exhibition that exists up at the Museum, does photography more harm than good, because I think a good deal of the pictures seem, to me, to be unimportant pictures--just pictures, as photographs, strung up on the wall, and because they're in the Museum, they're supposed to take on some importance, and in a certain sense I don't think they mean photography. But I wonder, is there,...do you have a feeling about the relationship of photography to fine art? Is it a fine art in your eyes? I know that we talked about this at some length.

I don't think there's any question. I'm not flattered that a museum wants to hang photographs. You know, or am I impressed. I think photography has always been a fine art--when it is a
a fine art, that is, when it's fine photography. And Museum heads—well, there are lousy curators and fine curators, just like photographers—But none of them are artists.

PENN: Like Photography in the Fine Arts, which is some kind of promotion—I haven't been able to put my finger on it.

FRANKFURT: Yes.

PENN: It's not really a fair thing to judge about this. It's a matter of whether a good photographer is, as you say, worthy of being put on a wall. In the same direction, as to where photography goes, I think, as far as I'm concerned, a return to the print is something very important. And I feel very, very strongly. And also if you think of photography...

VOICES: As in print...

PENN: In print, as an end in itself. Not just the print for the printed page. The printed page seems to have come to something of a dead end for all of us. It is the main thing we've headed for, for so many years. Now, the printed page degenerates in quality. If we think of the photography of the last few years as something that happened before the moment, the thing was imprisoned on the film, that is, the effect of the photographer on the subject; who the subject was, whether he kicked the camera or not; whether the subject jumped or blurred; whether the exposure was set in some strange way; whether he used a strange film. All this is something which has happened in these last years. We've all been influenced by it, it was the basis of style. Now, as far as I'm concerned, there is just as much to
happen after the print. I mean, after the making of the exposure. It's sort of like the iceberg under the water. I'm very interested, now, in starting from the image, as it exists, from the negative, and working with it. And I don't think that there's anything more decent or honorable by manipulating the image before it gets on the film, than there is by manipulating it after it gets on the film. Now, we've also all lived in an atmosphere of, and there is a great school of photography of what I think of as the California school, I may be wrong,—of the purest who won't even crop a picture. They must of course be in a terrible bind, if we are, because they've got themselves way up a tree.

I feel that not only can you crop a picture, you can do whatever you damn well please with the picture. And the next step, as I see it, for my own interest, is in that area of manipulation, of control, breakdown reconstruction, and the making of a print. A beautiful print is a thing in itself. Not just a halfway house on the way to the page. Because, this way, it's heartbreaking, as far as I'm concerned. And I've learned the discipline of not looking at magazines when they come out, because they hurt too much. They're too close to the day of the sitting.

**FRANKFURT:**
Because the print becomes more analagous, in the sense, to a painting or a lithograph.

**PENN:**
Think of it in terms of a lithograph, or an etching. I think that's closer, because it has certain qualities; it's
multiplyable once you have arrived at a place where it can be multiplied. It's highly personal. And for a sensitive person it bears the touch of the man who made it. Just indicative of this: A man came down from the Museum in Rochester—from Eastman Museum—to get a picture for an exhibition, and I said to him very sheeplishly, and this was a few months ago, "You know this must seem very old fashion to you, but I feel a return to the print is what interests me most in photography because this has been a kind of a heresy." Well, for all the time that we've been with Brodovitch and long after that, it's always been a terrible thing to say, because he said you were some kind of longhair when you were concerned with print, as a thing in itself. The print was, in a way, to the page, and when I said to him, look I'm interested in the print, he was horrified. And he said, "I can't tell you how many young people, just growing now, are concerned with nothing but the print. The print means so much." This was a great revelation to me. And also, in passing through Rochester once about a year and a half ago, I was just staggered by the prints made by the old photographers. They had a love for print. And that was the end for them, there was nothing else. If it had ever appeared on the printed page, there's a reproduction of a photograph. You see how different this is from the way we think of it in our professional work. It's very different indeed. As though it were a painting, and the reproduction had to fall short of that, because it was a coarse-screened, rapidly printed thing. This to me is thrilling,
and may open areas of work that do align photography more
with the fine arts. Although it still is very much a graphic
art. Somebody is going to blow my head off for saying that.

(Laughing.) I don't share your feeling. My direction is
toward content.

FRANKFURT: I remember something that you said once, that the least im-
portant part of photography, to you, is the camera. You
said that you would prefer if you could do it with your eyes--
and it could just happen.

PENN: The subject matter is important, but it doesn't, I don't think
it stands in the way of evolution. I must say I'm tired of the
faces of man. And I'm pretty tired of girls, and attitudes,
and dresses. But, I'm actually interested in certain aspects of
both of them. I must tell you about something, here, that may
give you a key to what I feel too, and it seems completely off
the track, but a man named, the colored man, Evans, I guess a
couple of years ago, when a couple of transparencies showed at
the studio. One was a picture of a bowl of spaghetti. The pic-
ture was a very boring picture, that's not the point. The
point is, that the range between the tomato sauce and the white
spaghetti, and the highlight on the spaghetti, was beyond the
range of color film. There's just too much spread--color film
couldn't take it. And then he showed me a duplicate right
next to it, which was absolutely extraordinary, because, he had
taken the original, and through his manipulation, he had sep-
arated the highlight on the white spaghetti from the spaghetti.
He had isolated the spaghetti from the picture. Darkening
it, he had kept the highlight white, and made a jump in
there; that made the picture extraordinarily better than the original. So the duplicate in fact was a much better picture. Much more reproducible, more beautiful to look at, more appetizing, whatever standard you want to apply to it. This to me—was a shock—and yet, began to show a certain direction. There’s one other thing in this area—ectochrome as you know, fades, it loses its yellow through the years. And there was a picture that had to be reproduced 10 or 15 years after it had been taken. He was able to take this ectochrome, which was deficient in yellow, and isolate out three units—the blue, the sienna, the magenta and the yellow, from that—multiply the yellow by nine times, put the three pieces together again, and return the original transparency. This again indicated what can be done, in the after stages. Just as you can do this purely scientifically, to return to a norm, you can also start from a norm, and use it as a plastic dimension. Again this is horrifying to purists, but to me it opens a whole area of work that fascinates me.

FRANKFURT: You need a greater technical facility to make a statement that you might be interested in, or, to pick up a camera.

PENN: It requires a frightening amount of equipment, laboratorial help, and simple knowledge. It becomes a very complex medium, but I don’t know any way out of it. I wish it could be simpler.

DRAGOTI: I want to ask you something—Steve brought this out a little while ago. In your things of Spain—the fashion shots. When I saw them they were such a tremendous feeling of a continuity of thought about the three people that were in that series.
But I almost expect to read about them somewhere—or to want to know about them more. It's hard for me to conceive that you would have taken those shots without almost running a full circle of thought about the three people. At least developing in your own mind, such fantastic predisposition about the three people on that page. Otherwise their attitudes towards each other or just attitudes period—I could be wrong, but, there was a great pre-thought about each one of those people and their relationship to each other. That, it almost took it out of fashion for me—I expect almost to want to know about them personally. Did you run the gamut of pre-thought about these people?

AVEDON: Not in the sense of a great deal of work in advance. Not in the sense that I decided, how each picture would be, but I knew all about them—by the way the models have nothing to do with the roles they play in the pictures—in other words, the two girls are sisters. They dance flamenco all night. They laugh a lot; the man is a little like he is in the photographs. But he's never met them before the day they had their picture taken together. I knew all I wanted to say about Spain in Harper's Bazaar and all I wanted to say about that way of life. And I knew that I chose three people to do it—I couldn't have done it with two people. And then I improvised the pictures as I went along. There was always the theme in my mind. I was sick when I did the pictures, and they kept literally carrying me down miles of rock to where the sitting was. I'd like to work that, and then they'd say "now", and I'd get to work and I had
only one thing in mind. And that was how I meant the models to feel about each other. Then I would take each picture as it came.

**VOICE:** Did you get a lot of comment on that series?

**AVEDON:** Yes, there were different reactions. Everyone read something different into the picture. Most of what they read, I intended to be there.

**VOICE:** You forgive the way I ask this question. I detect—I wonder, in talking particularly about portraits, on the one hand, fashion on the other, and this print making, which seems to me a highly personal thing, whether you're not really saying, instead of I—the audience—and are you, in fact thinking of a different group of people to say a particular thing to, and are you trying to single them out? Do you perhaps feel that in fashion you're talking to a very shallow group, and a very professional group at the same time? What do you feel about the audience when you take a picture? The people who are going to see it?

**AVEDON:** I never consider them at all. (Laughter) I never think when working that anyone is going to look at my pictures. When I set about to do the pages in Spain, or a collection, or a book, I don't think—"Well now what, who is the audience for Harper's Bazaar?" The editors of Harper's think about that a great deal, and I hear very often, "Well, our readers aren't interested in this or that"—they think—they know who their readers are. I wish I could be so sure who I was reaching with photographs.
I do pictures that I think are right for me at the time, and I assume that they'll interest somebody. I don't really think about—-I think it would be death to start thinking about—what "they" are going to think of what I'm doing now, or how I'm going to stimulate them, or please them?

Did you think that way in the beginning of your career?

Yes. No, the very first picture that I ever took for Brodovitch—he gave me my first assignment, and in that very first assignment, I tried to do what I thought Harper's Bazaar wanted. I took a model to Mexico, and I photographed in the manner of Louise Dahl Wolfe. And I brought it back to Brodovitch and he said—and this was a trip of 10 pages and ended up a neat double spread—three little pictures—or four little pictures, and he said, "This has nothing to do with what I expect of you." I said then that I couldn't have fashion editors with me, because they frightened me (that was when I was a kid of 19) and I had to do it my way. And I remember that I photographed my girl friend at the time, and without shoes on, and without gloves on — the fashion editor said, "We can't publish these, the girls aren't wearing shoes, and they don't have gloves on." And Brodovitch said we are publishing them and the editor of the magazine said we are publishing them. And they were published, and I'll never forget that when the issue came out. It was twenty years ago, you said that they were the best pages
in this issue, and they only happened because of a complete disregard for the audience, for what I should be doing, and should be thinking. It was an expression of the way I felt about that girl at the age of nineteen.

**VOICE:** Without fashion in photography, or in the subject matter, would you collectively ever have achieved any height—for instance, if you only had to deal with the commercial world of selling merchandise products? Would that be any bar, any level, or would it be blah?

**PENN:** I would never have been a photographer.

**AVEDON:** I think that what made us able to bring quality to advertising, our quality in advertising—is, that, we've had the pasture, this playground, to work in and to be encouraged in.

**PENN:** And have a part of each year now.

**AVEDON:** And every day. I don't know about you, but if I didn't have Harper's Bazaar each month, and did only ads—if I didn't have an outlet, and a place to explore, and experiment, and do things beyond restrictions, I wouldn't have anything to bring to advertising. It's because of these pages in Harper's Bazaar that I can come to an ad full of ideas, and feelings. I think maybe there could be a man who could do it, but to have to do it without publishing elsewhere, and to have to do it without the help—and I don't know about you, but I get an enormous amount of help from Harper's Bazaar in that there are brilliant
young editors that come with great ideas to fashion sittings, in the sense of what's exciting, and what's new, they constantly revitalize me. I, in turn can take that excitement, and bring it to my advertising.

**VOICE:**
Well, profoundly, you're involved in trying to be truthful, honest, almost God-like. Which is noble. And advertising itself should be noble, because it influences the whole damn world. And we in turn steady it, without fashion, because we're noble--most of us-- but nothing gets together. It's like a big accident, and becomes Doyle-Dane-Bernach.

**AVEDON:**
What?

**VOICE:**
What the hell should we do?

**PENN:**
Can I say one thing? One point that I always take--and it's terribly clear to me in separating these two things. When you work for a magazine, you please the reader--you're producing a product, and the only thing that makes you desirable to a magazine, as a photographer, is that you make things on the page that please the reader, not to the reader's end to want to buy the next issue of the magazine. As advertising photographers, as we are, with the other hand of our other personalities, the question of pleasing is completely academic. It's not why we're here. We're here to affect the reader. And if by chance we please him, that's a mistake. Or it's nice. But it isn't what we're here for. We're here to make him react in a certain way--it's a completely manipulative activity, and as such it's completely different as I see it from the other. I'm surprised that we can, with the same nervous systems, go from one mood to
another—sometimes within the same days, because it is so different. I think it's a remarkable circumstance that we live in. Where, photographers are admired and grow in an atmosphere of pleasing, and then are bought, for considerable sums of money—as manipulators.

**AVEDON:**

There are restrictions—there are laws and rules that we have to cope with. In advertising there are more. Editorial, there are a few less and when one is working for oneself they are the most. It's just a question of adjusting to what the ground rules are.

**FRANKFURT:**

Isn't this in a sense analogous to what you spoke about earlier? About the demise of photography, if you will, as a form in advertising. I don't feel this way. I recall advertising for Jello Pudding. He had a kind of a format in mind, and then he went to Irving and said, take a wonderful picture of Jello Pudding. I don't give a damn what's happening in the picture—just make it a wonderful, appetizing, exciting picture as you see it. And Irving proceeded to do this, and McCall's put it in an ad, which was an interesting, not so interesting a layout, but it was a particular picture which affected people. It was so "advertising", it was so "magic" in itself at that time, that it had enormous impact. And I think that a lot of what matters is really in the hands of the art director. I think that when we have unimaginative art directors, you're going to run into a problem where, the art director, will in a sense, give so many restrictions to the advertiser, or agency or whatever the combination becomes, that there's just so much that Dick or Penn
or whoever, can do with a picture, but where, yet—where
the photographer, in the solving of a particular problem,
is given a rein, which in a sense fashion is,—I mean I
think there are restrictions. But not nearly the restrictions
that you may run into with a Revlon picture or whatever the
ad might be. Then I think you're asking a photographer to be
an executor of somebody else's idea, and layout, and how much
of them can really be in it?

VOICE:
I want to say something else, that because of the bigness of
this thing, the money, the billions of dollars involved in it,
that some giants have to emerge. And that, they, maybe can be,
or predict, they will be in advertising. For instance, if you
feel that beer is part of the American scene, it's not our
fault, but it might be helpful—if you read the history of
Vienna, of beer, you'd be surprised that it starts at Noah's
Ark. It's a part of man. So you wouldn't be ashamed of, or
feel reticent about doing it. You might make beer as real
as beer is. We all treat it so superficially. It's an accident,
or it's genius when our writer knows the guts of man, and he
comes out with beer, properly, and it sells like—pfft!—
takes off, and the sales chart goes up that big. Beer lives
in that world. You could make a beer, Rheingold, Ballantine,
any name beer, I think, an instant success, financially, by
the right emotional approach. It's a whole new world.

PENN:
May I say here, what happened, is, the times have changed from
a few years ago where the ideas have taken over. And you have
agencies like Doyle-Dane, which is the highpoint of this
particular thing, where ideas have been made...ideas and words. And that damn polaroid in the back room, which has produced the pre-digested superb piece of advertising, that leaves no room for photography. So the pushing of goods still goes on just as effectively. It's just, that, the way of doing it has changed from a few years ago when photography was the shovel for pushing, now it's more a little trio of thinkers, who do the pushing. But I think that's all that has happened.

And I think that it happened as a necessity. I think the whole nature of advertising—the amount of advertising has grown so much, and the photographers of quality are very few, so that as a self-protective measure, art directors and the copy writers have had to take over. A Penn, a moment like Penn's Jello, happened after the war happened as a great explosion. It influenced and changed the face of advertising. That can't ever happen every week. I think that what's happening now is that you've gone overboard, you're doing everything as art directors, except encouraging photography to grow. It should be a little better balanced, so that both elements are working at the same time. Now, I see no photography at all in the art director's show. In ads, you are building your own dead end.

I agree with you, and I think that the, for me, the word is more persuasive than the picture. And I think that the word, when it is properly stated, is a very powerful tool. It seems to me that in relation to our time, because you do progress, and God knows Irving has 49 imitators, and you've got 76, and they
VOICE: are imitators.

Certainly.

FRANKFURT: And I think the art directors to a large degree are at fault, here in a sense, because they encourage the imitation, or superficial imitation, to one of you or another. But it seems to me that maybe the area—where photography—where images—can emerge or ever will emerge, is not the printed page or on the television screen. Because I have a feeling the same persuasion that happened originally, 8 years ago and so forth, on the printed page, in a sense, is—may be more analogous to television now. Because of the impact, I think of the great impact, that a visual image can have, on emotions and persuasion and so forth. And in a certain sense even more than the word, because in a sense there's less that has to be said. I don't think it's really happening as yet, but I was going to ask you, because it's slightly analogous—it's something I've always wondered—I don't really know you as an individual. I know Penn, and we've discussed this, but, it always seemed to me that you've gone and you talk about treating Capote and Baldwin and so forth. I always wondered, why hasn't Dick Avedon moved to film? Why hasn't he made a movie? Why hasn't he taken that whole thing and just directed it? Because it seems to me there's something so great, that would like to come out. Maybe I'm all wrong, this is my own interpretation.

AVEDON: That sounds like a little contempt for still photography.

FRANKFURT: No, no! Not contempt!

PENN: Oh, yes you are!
FRANKFURT: No, I think that movies are more the 20th Century form. Very possibly, I think they are maybe visually, in a sense, a certain evolution from the printed page. Movies are emerging now.
I think they will be an enormously powerful medium.

AVEDON: There's no question. I think that the fallacy in your thinking is, that you take one person and say oh, he takes great still pictures—he'll be a great movie maker. A great movie maker is a man who can write, direct, understands cutting, understands the visual element. He can put them all together, and express himself as we do in still photography through a film. And that's when you get a DeSica, a Truffault, or Sahajit Ray. I've made one film and my contribution to it was considered successful. It didn't interest me to do it again. I'm not a writer, and I'm not a director, really. Are you talking strictly in terms of movies, or television commercials?

FRANKFURT: Movies, movies.

AVEDON: I know that with still photographs everything I have to say I can get onto that paper. And I can control it. But, when I worked in the movies, I was part of a collaborative effort, that I enjoyed, but in the end it was like a wine with water in it. It wasn't an expression of myself.

VOICE: There's another point here—I think, from my point of view that movies and commercials for television—television mainly—Television got blamed for being the worst thing that ever happened to man. I heard a funny term today, I can't
remember who described this. And, yet, oddly enough the new generation is merging as a mature generation. As the kids get to be eighteen who were brought up with it, they are very sophisticated people, brought up on the moving medium, they have been fed this since they were born. And it may be sophisticated. It makes them aware of many more things. Agreeably, on a much lower plane than we'd like it to be. It's been a good influence, not bad, and that's the contribution to the printed page.

AVEDON:

To get back to art directors and photographers—it surprises me, that in recent years whenever I'm hired by a new agency or even by you, an old picture of mine is taken out and a cigarette is stuck in, they say, "do that". Yes, I can do it—I can do it hardly being there—I can telephone it in. If I'm given a TV commercial to do, it's layed out, spelled right out for me, why not use me, and really use me, in the way that you admire my pictures in Harper's Bazaar or my books. Why don't you come and say, "here's the problem, let's solve it together. Come and ask me about beer."

VOICE:

I would like to come and ask you about beer. If it were the correct time, but a lot of times people say to you, give up your position as a professional, and you're going to, your idea is Irving Penn or Avedon—that's the best way to get fame, you know, big idea name. Well, maybe you sincerely don't mean that. You're not allowed to in this business.
You're never free as advertising men to come to people like us and say, here, do the whole thing, because you're underwriting an expenditure which is enormous, and then one day you go hat in hand to the client who says, "It stinks," and what happens to the bill? That is a problem and I don't think that we can solve that here.

I find that maybe eight or ten years ago much more photographic experimentation took place.

It was cheap.

It was never cheap!

I get the same fees today that I got the day I started to take advertising pictures, when everybody in this room was in short pants.

Well, here's Henry, the world's most famous murderer of photographers! But also, Henry has made the transition, and it's just a side step from the editorial way of thinking to the advertising way of thinking and maybe back again. Before you came I said that the two things were terribly different, that one was to please, that "someone" who bought a commodity, and the other was to manipulate people whether they were pleased or not. How do you feel, Henry, making these experimental commercials?

I think my experience is, from my own experience, they liked the editorial. They always profess to like the editorial viewpoint. But when you do it in advertising, they say it's a smash—but, you can keep all that. But add four
more things—then it's destroyed, and you might as well do
the old things. It's not—they profess, that they like to
think, but it's like the name of, the magazine writer comes
in to do it, he gives them prestige with the client, but I
think so far that's as far as it's gone for me. And the
problems have been there to be translated, and I think it's
a good idea because I think editorial should set a pace
for advertising, developing in direction. I'm very happy
to follow, myself, in an advertising direction, but they
don't accept it.

FRANKFURT: Of course in some cases there is more imagination in the
advertising than in the editorial.

HENRY: Imagination is not concerned with Dick and Irving. I think
it's very good idea—men in the agency, who would then give
them something.

PENN: That's why there are so many people of lesser talent, perhaps,
then we are, who are much easier to deal with.

HENRY: That's the secret of their success.

AVEDON: Who are they?

PENN: They make calendars.

HENRY: Well, let's say Doyle-Dane's use of Wingate Paine is a very
good combination of talent, film and bright light. Wingate's
shooting the car just right—it's very good. But you don't
need to have the background. I think advertising doesn't
give the photographer the expectancy of something they
haven't thought about. It's what the top people should be
given, but they come back with something even Bill Bernback
in a nightmare couldn't have thought about.

**PENN:**
I think, in this direction, a good part of the work we do in advertising is just technically very, very, sound. Fortunately we're able to make technically sound results too, but the door is closed on pushing the horizon at all. Not only is it not asked for, but, if you tried to, you'd be rocking the boat, or whatever the current word is.

**AVEDON:**
I'll tell you what—what I hate are the Art Directors who say, "Now I want that editorial approach." When they come into the studio I have to steel myself because it means a game is going to go on. Penn, I'm sure is exactly as I am. We know what we're dealing with. When we have a Revlon ad to do, we have a Revlon ad to do--period. It's a lot better to know what you're dealing with, and do a professional and excellent job coping with the realities, than pretending they don't exist. There is an awful lot of that kind of advertising that comes into my studio. A lot of very high-faluting talk about art and beauty and truth.

**VOICE:**
I don't think they're quite the same thing. They are two parallel lines. They meet occasionally, but they are not really supposed to meet. Advertising reflects that even more than photography, I think. The world around us is more contemporary. And obviously as your audiences become more sophisticated, influences in the majority will be much more. I think that photography sometimes really "indulges" in a magazine which is being paid for by the agency. I really
wonder, literally, how much photography has progressed. But advertising has a completely different and obviously economic function, and by itself it's an art form—I wouldn't say far more challenging, just different.

HENRY: Then why do they always come to Penn and Avedon and want editorial photography, instead of giving them an opportunity to come up with something for advertising that would be completely different?

FRANKFURT: I think it's the "absence of an idea", Henry, I doubt that Gage or Chrone, or other people in this room, will come to the aid of Dick to have them take a beautiful picture, and a lot of advertising with very inadequate photography, could possible be a strong idea. I think Volkswagen is a good example. Anybody can take a picture of that car.

AVEDON: As advertising photographers, we should be as much a part of creating that finished ad, as the copy writer, and the art director, because unfortunately you've got to fill the page with a picture. As long as you use a photograph, and 90% of the ads do, you have to deal with photographers, and you lose out by not getting the best of them. In other words, any photographer that's brought into a television commercial, into an ad, should be a partner in the making of it. Otherwise, you're throwing your money away.

VOICE: Yet your audience, who buys it, whatever the age level, there are restrictions.
AVEDON: We don't talk about freedom of expression, we talk about dealing with restrictions, and creating within them.

VOICE: Creating within the ad is only a part of the ad. That's the point. It's not--here it is, make me an ad.

AVEDON: I think we understand that perfectly. That's my point.

PENN: Steve said a minute ago that the word has gotten to be important, rather than the picture. I agree that that has been so, but at the expense of a whole kind of advertising. I'd like to see the word that you can put on the page, to sell something that really can only be sold by an image that makes your mouth water. I really would like to see the word.

VOICE: You know what the word is?—5¢ off.

VOICE: I was just asking if you recall the full page ad all black, and at the bottom it said, 'this is a green field with a blue sky and the white clouds.' Now I'm not going to that it makes your mouth water.

PENN: No, I'd like to see it done the second time.

HENRY: That's something where the absence of vision is very important.

AVEDON: Anything becomes ineffectual if it's repeated, any one photographic idea, and any one way of working. I haven't seen an ad, frankly, that stimulated me to look at in a long time. Driving through London I saw an enormous billboard, it happened to
be of beer, and I stopped the cab. It was of a brown, sunburnt, worker, you didn't even see his face, the beer was up, it was dribbling down his throat. With enormous emotional impact in his throat I looked and thought, "my God, it's a photograph," and I felt thirsty. But that kind of a photograph hasn't been in advertising in a long time. They couldn't get through the red tape.

**PENN:**

**FRANKFURT:** I think that in the specifics of food advertising, I think that one of the things, we're guilty of this; we do more food advertising probably than anybody, we're terribly guilty of it, and that sometimes the best thing we think about is how appetizing the food is, and of course the first thing that Penn think of is how appetising the food is, and I think that the very impact of beautiful advertising, as you say, it makes your mouth water, is the visual. I think food is a category unto itself—just as automobiles are, or whiskey is.

**PENN:**

You see what is happening, Steve, is that a new medium has moved into television, and taken over from the printed page. It's just that the field has now gotten divided. There are certain things that you just can't do on television—like, let's say, a bowl of extraordinary stew—on television looks really like dog food. That's for the printed page. A smear of lipstick as it goes on a girl's face, on television, looks to me like something made out of cardboard. In a Revlon ad done by Dick, just sitting there quietly
on the page, it really is alive. The field has become divided; one is wonderful for its purpose, and the other for its purpose, fortunately.

VOICE:

I think another fortunate thing that happened... We went through this on one of our products in depth for a new client. And the funny thing that happened is, that they're in a very competitive business, they want to retain the market, they want to go up, and they are very involved with human beings, and we are very involved in trying to solve their problems, because they are very involved with people that use the product. And it got so real, that if you were brought into this thing, on a creative level, jointly, you probably would start a new dimension in print, let alone T.V., because you'd be getting to the armpits, to the throat, you know, right to the real thing that makes and motivates people. And with all the experience you have, you probably will crack through the depth of the emotion, and the necessity to get people to buy. But it all gets clumped together, you probably can become very important people, because that's what the client wants--results.

Of course he does. What client doesn't?

VOICE:

It's also now so distilled, that you almost have to have a magic pill, to get him to move, to where he wants to.

PENN:

The first meeting that you always have with new clients, it's like sort of a first date, is always extraordinary, until you get down to brass tacks. Then you find that it's full of dirty beer drinkers, and "you can do this,"
but "I don't think you'll go for that," and the account man
says he doesn' like it, but he'll take it to the client.
Pointed out the fact that in the business generally, and we
deplore it, we're fighting against it yearly, have been for
the past couple of years and it's a very slow uphill fight.
I think Bernback has been most successful, because he's
held a position, and refused to compromise, for the most part,
as much as other agencies have. There is an element of fear--
it's expensive. The element of intuition somehow is gone,
an individual who has an idea, who thinks something is
going to work and it does work, gives way to the Univac
machine, to research, to numbers. We talked about the Vogue
cover that had been in research, how to get the most people
to look at the magazine cover--a gal in a red dress, or a
cat, a baby, and you put all three together, and you're going
to get a tremendous score. Well, fine, you know, - once.
And I think that this is in a certain sense a disease that
advertising is suffering from, in that, there are these
committees, and let's face it, where there are committees,
there is rarely spontaneous creation, I think. Who, in many
cases, out of fear, because of the economics of it. It's so
expensive to put that page in the book or that minute on the
air, are looking for something to latch on to, to give them
that security and, generally, what they latch on to is a
number. And the number almost demands that it comes first.
If you're not a Goddamn good debater, and can debate your
point, and consequently that last thing that gets into the
picture, very often, is the picture. And this, I think, is just a disease of the business, generally. I think, for me, that the most original advertising statement last year was the Avis advertising, and it was devoid of pictures. There was somebody saying something in a powerful, persuasive, compelling, - ugly in a certain sense way - that separates it from all the sameness around it, because it was different.

HENRY: That's what I say. If I were starting an advertising agency, I would look for a charming Hungarian man with a doctorate who had a gray hair. And you hire him and we make all the fine things the client wants to hear.

FRANKFURT: I'll hire him first.

VOICE: I disagree with you. You wouldn't have done at Y & R what you did. At McCann they did that 8 years ago with a lady with a Hungarian accent. (laughter)

VOICE: I have more faith in the future, and I think right now because of the economic squeeze...

FRANKFURT: I know that you have an impossible difficult time to get research to prove to you that calling a product soft whiskey, was going to sell it. This was an idea backed up by conviction, and enough selling ability on the part of the agency to convince the client that should try it. And I'm sure, that if you pre-researched or pretested, because this is one of the biggest problems we have, any of the great ideas - what's great, Beethoven is great - I don't know if "great" is the right word.

HENRY: I say it's a good heavy man's whiskey and you would sell
FRANKFURT:

it too.

When an agency breaks away from that, I think then, something happens. Carl broke away in a sense when you did the Jello stuff. I think in the days of Carl Lins, advertising, and this was only a few years ago, was more devoid of ideas, because I think that it was more the picture that was doing the selling. You look at the magazines, I think it's true, I think it was because of the time, it was after the war, it's full of things you would talk about. I think, today, it is gone. I think it's gone in the direction of the word, the unseen kind of difference, for the sake of being in different circumstances. Maybe it has gone back, or will go back. You talk to illustrators. We had this conversation a couple of months ago, and you know, they're obviously up in arms—they say the agencies kill illustrations, they kill the painter, they kill the artist, because there is no room for that person any more to exist in advertising which was an important part of his, you know, keeping the food in his children's mouths. What does the illustrator do today? Storch, or somebody, did a whole book with illustrations for Christmas, and everybody stood up and said my God, you know, I may do a picture. Again, this is the art director's fault. It's the fact that a good many art directors are followers rather than leaders, or innovators, and will tend to pick a thing that looks good, as I think photographers are, and copy it, because it's easier to copy rather than make an original statement. I think Helmith is for me, as
an art director in advertising, is a constant innovator. I think Volkswagen is what it is today, as is Avis, and Gallo. This is the thing, for me, that makes advertising exciting, and that you can do it, if you're strong enough.

**PENN:** Having used up illustrators and now using up photography, what are you going to use next?

**VOICE:** Television probably.

**FRANKFURT:** I think that there's such a romance with television, and until people realize that television isn't the end-all, you know that this magic box isn't going to sell everything that came down the pike. The magazines will sell it, but, look at the magazine sales, Time-Life, Bazaar or whatever, and they will explain to you why it is better to put a lipstick in a magazine. The medium that could use the biggest renaissance is radio--radio is absolutely disastrous.

**AVEDON:** I just think, that copywriters are digging their own graves. For instance, the Jamaican account of Doyle Dane--great use of type, wonderful copy and where a picture could make the ad look really wonderful, they don't have photography. No one went down there and got--I don't know how the pictures were done. They looked as if they were taken out of National Geographic. So, that marvellous combination of three working elements, that are wonderful together is incomplete--imagine, if a fine photographer expressed his interpretation of that kind of copy, and that kind of layout. I think that more and more, the copy line alone fails, unless it's hit by
real genius. David Ogilvy's innovations of seven years ago, are rather boring when they come out now -- rather old fashion, have no place to go.

FRANKFURT: It was boring six years ago.

AVEDON: It was boring pretty quickly. You have to keep all the elements alive. You need to develop, give money for experimentation to still photographers, new movie makers, copywriters, art directors, and keep them all working together. And artists, I've used artists a lot in the issue of Bazaar that I just did.

PENN: You did?

AVEDON: Oh, yes. As an editor of that issue of the Bazaar, I found they were the most interesting contributors. We combined photography with artists, and there are marvellous artists around--it's very exciting. But no one has thought of bringing them out into our fields. I think we all have to get along together, to create some exciting end result. There is a sort of hierarchy of art directors with their shows and a hierarchy of photographers with their shows and everybody's giving awards to themselves, and it's all so boring. The excitement will come when you get all the best of each group together and they work together.

PENN: If I could make a plea for some autocratic direction in advertising, I think it would sum up the way I feel. What has happened is, because of the great expense of it, and because of the research things, it has gotten to be such a
democratic process that everybody's view is given equal weight, and it's tabulated, not actually on paper, but it could very well be tabulated on paper, and out comes mediocre, gray result. Now the most expensive thing in the world is to put a mediocre ad on expensive space, it's worse than putting a terrible ad on expensive space, because at least that will be noticed. And certainly it is worse than putting a good ad on expensive space. And the biggest problem from my view, not just as a photographer, but just as an observer, and a consumer, is the boring quality of advertising, which comes about because too many people have too little to say, all together, about what's going to get on the page. Well, nobody has enough to say. If you could just find a really autocratic person to run advertising, I'm sure that even a boob can put interesting things on the page. I'm sure that a stupid page is an exciting thing if it's stupid enough, if you'll notice it. There are so many protections even against stupidity, in the committee, and the group thing, and out comes just nothing. The pages of Life keep going up in cost every year. You can't afford to put on it anything less than the best—or the worst.

HENRY: There must be some kind of reversal of the dynamics which is going more and more to giving, finding out by research and
other means, what they think people want to see and doing that. The reversal would be that you would do something, and then find out how it was received. So the thing would at least have a chance to be researched after the fact, not before. That you wouldn't have to make research and then make an ad, but make an ad and see how it sees and then, change.

And then kill it, if you like.

Yea!

That would be worthwhile. That would be very economical.

Not to find out, because if you ask 2,000 people, or mix 2,000 colors together, you're always going to get some kind of brownish grey.

I'm not sure I have that much faith in research.

I didn't mean research when I say that, I meant sales figures.

I don't think there is such a thing. I don't think that you can make that direct an association. I think we're going through a cycle now, and the reason we're going through this cycle, is the businessman in advertising—the guy who says, "I'm going to spend 90 million dollars in advertising, and, if I have a good high average, or what you call a 'grey effort', that's a pretty darn good investment of that money whereas, if I have outstanding effort here, a lousy one here, an outstanding one here, and a medium one here, I have no doubt reached the same place, but it's so inconsistent, that it's untidy." I think it's
a businessman's phase in advertising. I think we ought to go back to the committee, but a different committee—one guy to run interference for the guy who is really creative and has a creative judgement, and is the innovator, and the third guy to prove that he was right. And I think that then you have an effective committee.

PENN: You've just defined a Utopia.

HENRY: The trouble was, before, it was the artist against a committee one one side, and now it is a committee against a committee—which is really the deadlock (laughter).
Alexey Brodovitch Workshop Session Notes:

DESIGN LABORATORY, 1964. Including a

biography of Alexey Brodovitch.

Also, Richard Avedon/Irving Penn Session, n.d.

(Gift of Ben Fernandez)