



This page: a film still of Audrey Hepburn, taken by Richard Avedon, that features in 'Funny Face'.
Opposite: Richard Avedon, Eiffel Tower Paris, January 27, 1959



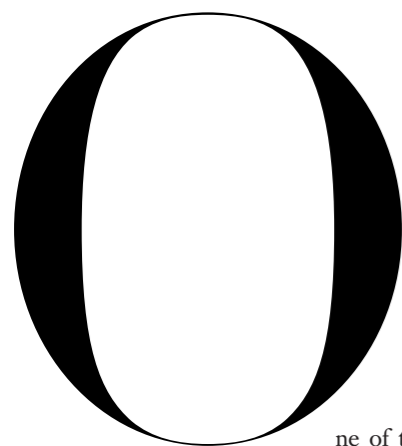
PHOTOGRAPHS: RICHARD AVEDON. © THE RICHARD AVEDON FOUNDATION. © PARAMOUNT PICTURES

DANCE TO THE

Sixty years ago, Richard Avedon and the women of *Bazaar* who made him famous
In our own 150th anniversary year, we celebrate the film's mirroring

MUSIC OF TIME

were immortalised in *Funny Face*, starring Audrey Hepburn and Fred Astaire.
of fashion, fantasy and iconic photography. By *Catriona Gray*



One of the most famous scenes in the 1957 film *Funny Face* is when Audrey Hepburn, perfectly cast as a bookworm turned model, glides down the steps of the Louvre in Paris. She wears a sheath-like red Givenchy dress, and holds a gossamer-thin scarf behind her, so it billows out above her head, floating in midair as she walks. 'Take the picture! Take the picture!' she cries, as her co-star Fred Astaire, in the role of a photographer, Dick Avery, snaps one of the most memorable images of the film. *Funny Face's* narrative is punctuated with these picture-perfect stills. There's one of Hepburn standing, toes turned out, in front of the Eiffel Tower, mouth caught in an 'O' of surprise as she lets go of a bunch of multicoloured balloons. Another frame shows her in the Parisian flower market, clasping masses of golden lilies against her floral-print dress, so that the real and artificial blooms merge into each other.

These precise compositions bear the mark of an expert's eye. What's not commonly known is that Richard Avedon, the photographer on whom the film was based, was also on set, pressing the button at exactly the right moment. The director Stanley Donen had linked Avedon's 8 x 10 camera to the studio's huge VistaVision apparatus by a set of mirrors, so that whenever Avedon clicked the shutter, he shot the exact picture that was being filmed, precisely in sequence. '*Funny Face* is replete with diffusions, distortions, colour separations and other photographic hi-jinx,' remarked the contemporary critic Edward Jablonski, when the film made its debut in February 1957, 60 years ago this month.

Funny Face was a homage to the *Harper's Bazaar* of a decade before, chronicling a period of extraordinary creativity that resulted in a new template for fashion magazines around the world. It began with the appointment of the remarkable Carmel Snow as editor-in-chief in 1934; shortly afterwards she hired the visionary Russian émigré Alexey Brodovitch as art director, and then appointed Diana Vreeland as fashion editor. It was Brodovitch – whose revolutionary typography and layouts laid the foundations for how *Bazaar* still looks today – who gave Avedon his first commissions. The photographer shot two images for the November 1944 issue, where he is introduced to readers as a contributor. The caption beside the editor's letter is a potted biography of Avedon's career to that date, revealing his irrepressible lightheartedness.

'Richard Avedon is 21 years old. "I want to be a fireman when I grow up," he says. After two years in the merchant marine, he took up fashion photography last April: on page 108 he makes his first

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flaking façades, the bystanders in drab wartime garb staring in astonishment at the dramatic silhouette of a Dior suit and furs – but for the most part, the dream prevailed.

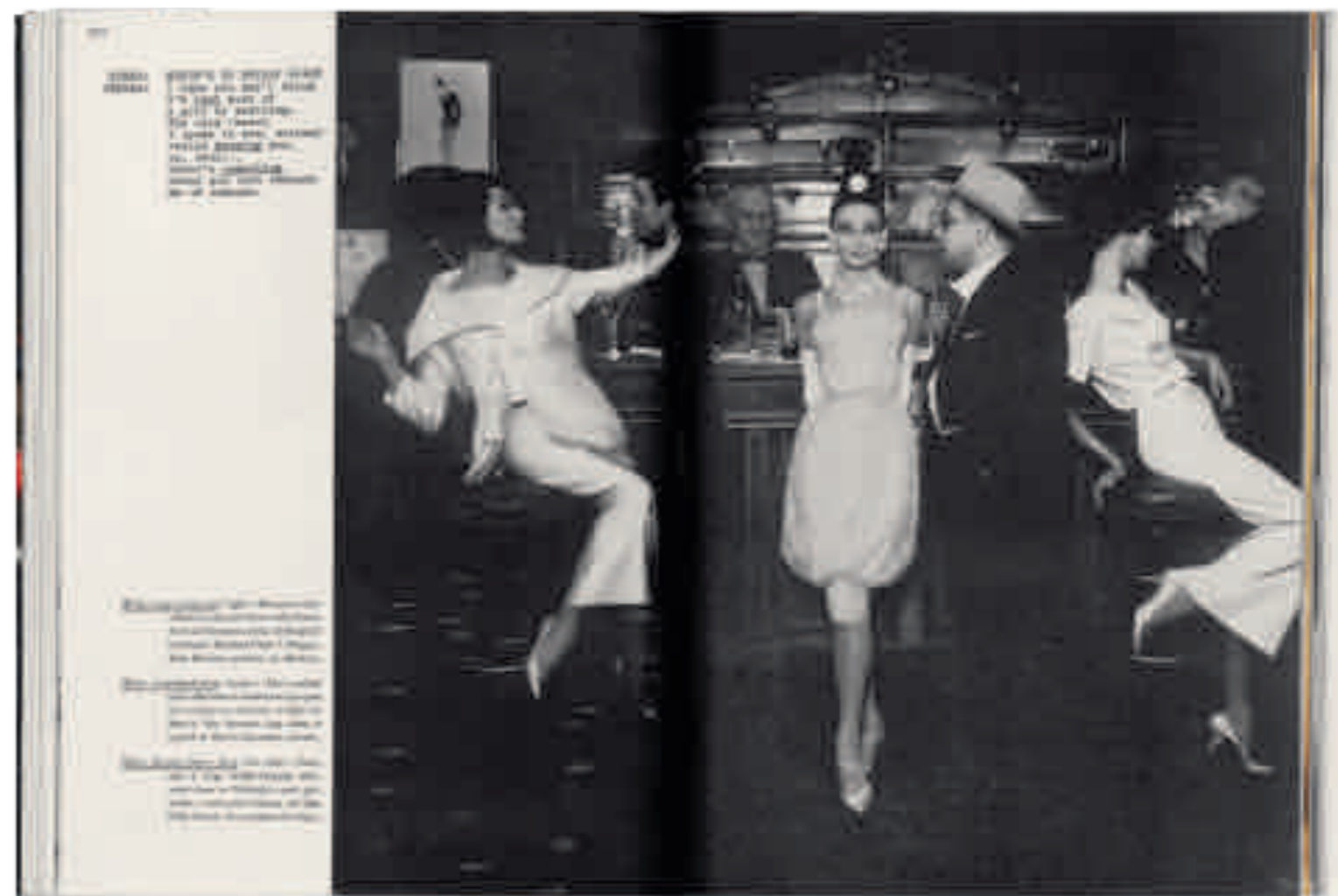
As the 1950s unfolded, the illusion became reality – Paris reclaimed its status as the City of Light; prosperity flooded back, and Avedon returned with Snow each year to photograph the new collections. By the time *Funny Face* was released, the film must have evoked a bittersweet nostalgia in those who inspired it. Although Hepburn's star was in the ascent – she was by then one of the world's most famous actresses – as was Vreeland's as a leading arbiter of style, Avedon and Doe were getting divorced, while Snow was on the brink of retirement from the magazine she loved. But perhaps that's the enduring pull of the film – and of Avedon's photographs: the sadness that hides beneath the surface of so much beauty. □

Left: details from the opening credits of *Funny Face*, designed by Avedon. Opposite, clockwise from top: Hepburn in Avedon's 'Paris Pursuit' shoot from the September 1959 issue of *Bazaar*. Avedon in his Paris studio, 1948. Promotional material for the film

appearance in the *Bazaar*. Now he is off to Mexico, with a Rolleiflex over his shoulder and a dozen *Bazaar* dresses on his lap.'

Mexico was a success and other foreign assignments followed, but none of them would prove as important or as enduring a location as Paris. Snow first took Avedon to the capital with her in August 1947, where she asked him to shoot Christian Dior's New Look in the city streets. (Snow was an early champion of Dior – she remembered him from the days when he illustrated for *Bazaar* in the 1930s, and was responsible for naming the designer's radical new collection – 'It's quite a revolution, dear Christian! Your dresses have such a new look!') Avedon was accompanied by his new wife Dorcas Nowell; a shy, academic young woman who he transformed into a model and nicknamed 'Doe', because of her dark, fawn-like eyes. He took a picture of Doe at the Gare du Nord – her chiselled yet delicate features and dark hair marking her as the inspiration for Audrey Hepburn's character Jo Stockton. (Hepburn had appeared in shoots for *Bazaar* since the early 1950s, so she was already a friend of the magazine.)

The reality of post-war Paris was grim – food, fuel and textiles were in scant supply – but Avedon began creating a dream city, as seen through the rose-tinted gaze of an American tourist. Snow told him: 'Do you realise what *Harper's Bazaar* and your work mean to the economy of France? We have to recreate a sense of an illusory Paris.' And he did. Models posed in cafés and in train stations, sporting the New Look. The harsh truth seeps through in places – the grass growing between the cobblestones, the

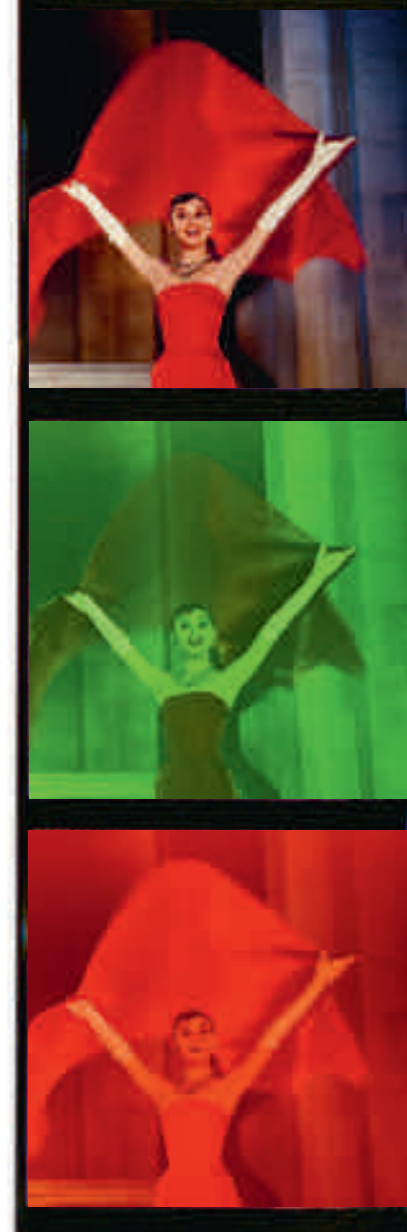
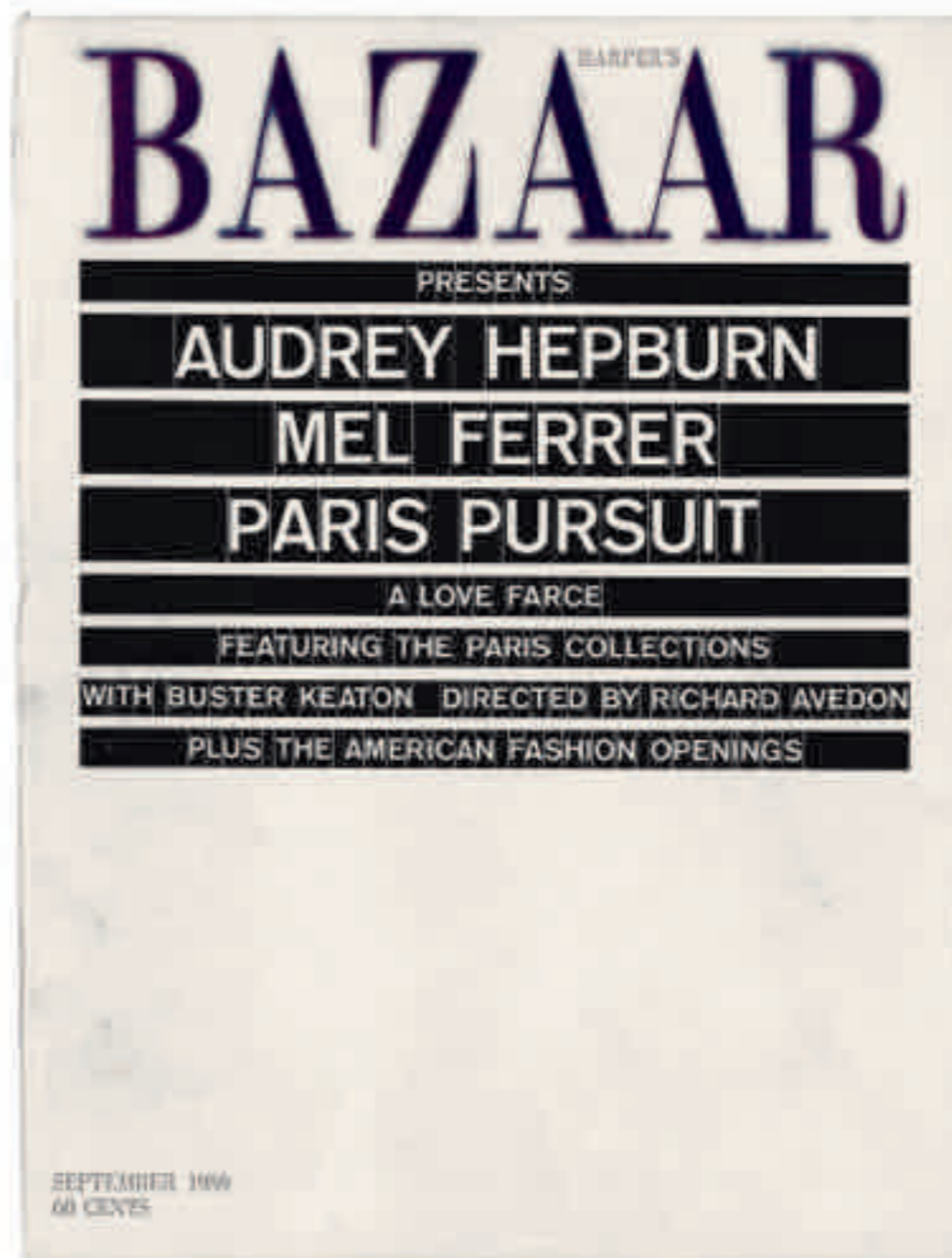


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Audrey Hepburn on the set of 'Funny Face', 1956, by Avedon

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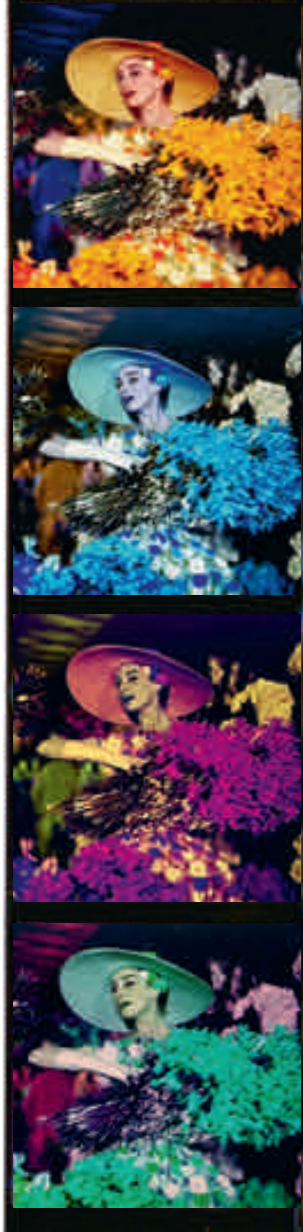


Clockwise from left: the cover of the September 1959 issue of Bazaar. Film stills by Avedon. The opening credits, designed by Avedon



'Avedon's France: Old World, New Look' by Robert Rubin and Marianne Le Galliard, published on 7 March





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Above and opposite, top left: film stills by Avedon. Opposite, clockwise from top right: Audrey Hepburn, Mel Ferrer and Buster Keaton in 'Paris Pursuit' for Harper's Bazaar, Paris, August 1959. Audrey on set, Fontaine de Latone, Versailles, August 1956. Fred Astaire and Audrey Hepburn on the set of 'Funny Face', Paris, August, 1956, all photographed by Avedon