

Bruce Weber

Early Men

25 June - 16 August 2025

The photographer and filmmaker Bruce Weber became internationally renowned through his advertising campaigns for Calvin Klein, Ralph Lauren and Versace during the 1980s and early 1990s. Born in 1946 and raised in rural Pennsylvania, Bruce Weber moved to New York City in the late 1960s. After a brief stint as a model, he followed the advice of Richard Avedon and Diane Arbus and studied photography at the New School for Social Research under Lisette Model. Of this experience Weber writes, "Lisette gave me the courage to stand my ground and push my work in different directions. My entire life in photography has felt like a continuation of Lisette's class and the lessons I learned there."

Weber's early career followed a path similar to many aspiring photographers of his era - assignments for independent magazines like *Soho Weekly News* and *After Dark*, along with occasional work for small clothing brands and department store catalogues. He received one of his most important early editorial assignments for GQ Magazine in 1974, facilitated by the legendary art directors Harry Coulianos and Donald Sterzin. At the dawn of the disco era, Coulianos and Sterzin were pioneering a more sculptural, sexualized image of the *New Man* on the pages of GQ - one that emphasized athleticism, grooming and an adventurous lifestyle. It was this symbiotic collaboration between Sterzin and Weber that set a new standard for the photographic representation of men in magazines, the advertising landscape and visual culture in general. Notably, Weber and Sterzin rarely relied on New York modeling agencies for their shoots. Instead, they conducted their own casting, often recruiting from universities and sports clubs. Their long-time collaboration with one of the era's most iconic models, Jeff Aquilon, began after a chance meeting at Pepperdine University in Malibu, where Aquilon was captain of the water polo team.

Bruce Weber's exhibition *Early Men* presents photographs from this foundational period in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Most of these images are being shown for the first time outside the context of the editorials in which they were originally published. The focal point of the exhibition is comprised of a group of photographs Weber took during two sittings at the Los Angeles home of the American film director George Cukor. Weber first visited the legendary filmmaker for a GQ portrait commission with the journalist Christopher Petkanas in 1977. On Cukor's invitation, Weber returned the following year with Jeff Aquilon, who appears in photographs taken in Cukor's garden and pool. For the occasion of the exhibition, Bruce Weber has written a text reflecting on these visits with Cukor and the director's unique role in the cultural and social life of mid-century Los Angeles.

The exhibition is conceived in collaboration with Nathaniel Kilcer, Jacob King and Heji Shin.