

Steve Kahn

The Hollywood Suites (Nudes), 1974-75

14 September - 26 October 2025

"These were "no-exit" situations, entered into without plan, full of anxiety, in the hope of producing some document of the experience that was explicit, visually powerful, yet went beyond what it was." -Steve Kahn

The Hollywood Suites (Nudes) marked the earliest iteration of what became a catalyst for a series of photographic interventions by Steve Kahn at The Villa Constance, a deteriorating 1930s apartment building on Melrose Avenue in Hollywood.

Created between 1974 and 1975, the series developed in parallel with a bondage magazine Kahn produced with sculptor Robert Overby and painter Robert Blue. Though distinct from that project, these images emerged within the turbulence of the early 1970s, an era of recession, oil crisis, and stock market instability, when artists turned toward collaboration and experimentation to generate new forms.

What began with staged photographs of the nude figure soon turned toward the charged atmosphere of the rooms themselves. In subsequent iterations, Interior Studies (1976–77) and Bound Doors (1976), Kahn focused on the anonymous architecture of transient, rent-by-the-hour spaces, where banal familiarity masked a deeper unease. Tape, yarn, and rope appeared not only as restraints interacting with the model's body, but as formal devices binding curtains, obstructing doors, and altering thresholds, underscoring themes of bondage, containment, and estrangement. Through these gestures, Kahn transformed the rooms into sites where intimacy and alienation became indistinguishable.

Steve Kahn (b.1943 Los Angeles, CA., d.2018, Berkeley, CA) was part of an important generation of photographers coming out of Los Angeles in the 1970s that included Robert Heineken, Ilene Segalove, and Lewis Baltz among others. Deconstructing the medium through abstraction, Kahn adopted a conceptual approach to photography, moving beyond pure documentary impulses toward an exploration of how photographs construct and convey meaning. Kahn's work was widely exhibited throughout the 1970s and early 1980s at Gagosian Gallery, Los Angeles, Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Los Angeles, Young/Hoffman Gallery, Chicago, and Yvon Lambert Gallery, Paris. Works from The Hollywood Suites were featured in several important group exhibitions in the 1970s, including The Altered Photograph (1979) at P.S. 1 in New York, and most recently as the subject of a solo exhibition at the de Young Museum, San Francisco, CA (2018).

Kahn is included in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; High Museum of Art, Atlanta; University of New Mexico, Albuquerque; Houston Museum of Fine Arts; Dallas Museum of Art, de Young Museum, San Francisco; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; Power Gallery of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia; De Beyerd Museum, Breda, Holland; Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris, France; Museum of Modern Art, Toulon, France; Musée de La Roche-sur-Yon, France.

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