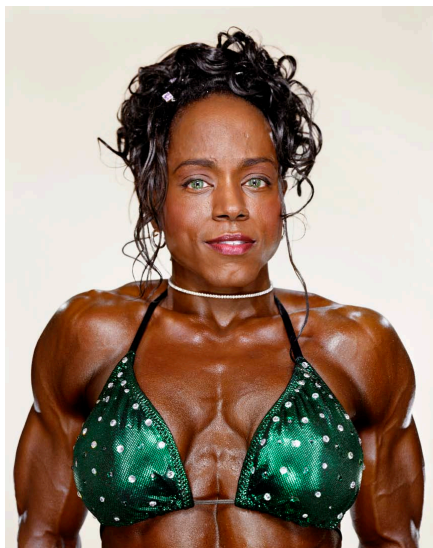


Martin Schoeller: Female Bodybuilders at Ace Gallery Beverly Hills



Kim Harris, 2003



Stephanie Kessler, 2007



Dayana Cadeau, 2008

Ace Gallery Beverly Hills presents the world premiere of *Female Body Builders* by Martin Schoeller. Monumental in size, measuring 90" in height, these heroic artworks comment on society's fascination and quest for super-sizing. As Schoeller states, "These women mirror our modern cultural hunger for size and aggression, and attention it at any cost. We are in the age of Bigness. Bigger televisions, bigger automobiles, bigger wars, bigger people. While many people push their physical limits, these women go all out, risking their lives for an ideal of female masculinity. Their insatiable appetite to embody it all may reflect our own lust for more, maybe more than we are willing to admit. These women are not uncomfortable with the way they look, it is our discomfort we feel."

Schoeller is well known for his *Close Up* photographs, a decade of portraits ranging from super-iconic celebrities—including actors, musicians, politicians, athletes, and artists—to unknown subjects such as hunter-gatherer tribes—the Piraha people of South America and the Hadza in Tanzania—as well as meth addicts, Iraqi war veterans, and foster children. In 2003, he began simultaneously creating a new body of work, a series of over 60 portraits of female bodybuilders. Traveling to major annual bodybuilding competitions, such as the Arnold Classic in Columbus, Ohio and Ms. Olympia in Las Vegas, Schoeller engaged his subjects, including world champions, at their peak training condition.

Without decreasing the extreme intensity and intimacy of his earlier work, Schoeller physically takes a step backwards and increases the scope by including the subject's torso, an important aspect of the pursuit of bodybuilding and the identity of the sitter. In addition, he continues to incorporate a minimalist aesthetic using a neutral background, a mostly straight-on non-pose, no apparent facial expression, and intentionally lights his subjects so as to produce his trademark reflections in the eyes.

Once again, Schoeller captures the human essence of the individual.

He comments, "In my other work, specifically in the book and exhibition *Close Up*, I have tried to show people in an intimate light that allows the viewer to closely examine the personal physical details of faces. In this way, famous people become scrutinized and un-famous people elevated, into a democratic collection that plays with preconceived notions of who people are. With *Body Builders*, I am trying to show the vulnerability that I see and feel in the subjects when I am with them, to get to the complex emotions behind a mask of extreme physical expression."

Born in 1968, Martin Schoeller grew up in Germany and was deeply influenced by August Sander's countless portraits of the poor, the working class and the bourgeoisie as well as by Bernd and Hilla Becher. Schoeller worked as an assistant for Annie Leibovitz from 1993 to 1996. He advanced as a freelance photographer producing portraits of people he met on the street. Schoeller's work has appeared in *Rolling Stone*, *GQ*, *Esquire*, *Entertainment Weekly*, and *W*, among others. Schoeller joined Richard Avedon as contributing portrait photographer at *The New Yorker* in 1999. Schoeller's book *Close Up* was published in 2005 by teNeues. His portraits are exhibited and collected internationally, including several solo exhibitions in Europe and the US and the permanent collection of the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

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