

ART SY

From Steve Carell to Jeff Koons, Celebrities Get Their Closeup with Martin Schoeller

Heather Corcoran November 13, 2014



Steve Carell; Van Nuys, CA, 2009

Jeff Koons, rendered in white with golden eyes and a flower crown; a platinum blond Lil' Kim caught off-guard, clad in a tiny pink ruffled bikini; Sean Combs painting his own portrait with nude assistants—these are some of the iconic, cutting, and often candid portraits that German photographer Martin Schoeller has become known for. Gracing the covers and pages of *The New Yorker*, *TIME*, and *Fortune*, among other prominent publications, over the past two decades Schoeller has captured the vitality and significance of his famed sitters. While it may not be possible to capture a person's essence with the click of the camera, Schoeller's images are as close as it gets—and this month, some of his most defining works are considered together in a retrospective exhibition at New York's Hasted Kraeutler.

Titled "Martin Schoeller: Portraits," the exhibition is a photographic record of some of the world's most famous figures, seen as only Schoeller can reveal them. Actor George Clooney (the book's cover star) offers a hint of a smile behind the mask of his own eyes, and athlete Tony Hawk skateboards across his family's kitchen island; each work portrays a story that only a skilled photographer can convey. The show coincides with a major new monograph, *Portraits*, which features a foreword from Jeff Koons.

In order to create these unexpected images of some of the most photographed people in the world, Schoeller takes image after image until he catches his subjects off guard, revealing aspect of themselves not usually seen. He seeks out those universally identifiable moments that convey meaning beyond class and culture. While the artist is probably best known for his in-your-face medium-format portraits, lit so the eyes sparkle just so, the exhibition looks toward different aspects of the photographer's practice, with portraits of all different types, from stark to staged, with many taken for magazines. Together they form a portrait of their own, one of a photographer with a sense of humor and deep sensitivity to those indescribable, impossible-to-capture things that make us human.