



Smithsonian



exhibition prospectus

ELVIS AT 21



Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service

Elvis at 21

Just another photographic exhibition? No, this one is remarkably different. Imagine the enclosed print at full size. More than three feet in each direction and printed on porous watercolor paper that soaks up every detail; these images bring Elvis to life in a rarely seen, truly tangible format.

Alfred Wertheimer's images, taken of a young Elvis in 1956, are telling works of art—portraits that are as dramatic and introspective as *any* captured at *anytime*. And for this exhibition, master printer David Adamson has made the pictures even more compelling, produced as 37 x 42" digital pigment prints that radiate a palpable richness and depth. Nothing goes unnoticed.

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Description

Quietly at first, and then inexorably, Elvis Presley altered the beat of everyday life.

Alfred Wertheimer's photographs of Elvis Presley on the brink of stardom in 1956 are a national treasure- a unique visual record of an iconic performer at the flashpoint of his fame. Accompanying Elvis on the road, in concert, recording, and at home, Wertheimer documented Presley's meteoric rise in the year he catapulted from anonymity to superstardom.

"Apart from Elvis's own recordings from this period," says music historian Chris Murray, "Wertheimer's photographs are the most compelling vintage document . . ." of this rock 'n' roll luminary. Presented by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service and sponsored by The History Channel, *Elvis at 21* is an extraordinary record of how two storytellers came together, of a young singer on the verge of fame and fortune crossing paths with a twenty-six-year-old photographer who prized the documenting modernity of the camera.

On the larger scene, this moment in the postwar era was transformative: Elvis's electrifying presence on the national stage energized the emerging youth culture and helped create a new consumer market fueled by radio, recordings, and motion pictures. His enormous popularity also helped catalyze a revolution in the entertainment industry, paving the way for rhythm and blues, gospel, and rock onto the mainstream stage.

Forty large-format Wertheimer photographs chronicle the journey of Presley's dazzling emergence in this pivotal year. The narrative begins with a March appearance on the Dorsey Brothers live television show, where Elvis's gyroscopic performance sent a jolt through postwar America. The new visual medium became a key player in Elvis's heat-seeking stardom, and his appearances on popular national television programs- those of Milton Berle, Steve Allen, and ultimately Ed Sullivan- fueled a momentum that became a mania. The frenzied reaction of the television audiences not only fed his fame, but broadcast a "way to behave" that motivated anxious crowds as his fame mounted. By the end of the year, police were a regular part of the scene, forming a barrier between Elvis and the surging crowds that wanted to touch him.

Wertheimer's photographs capture the groundswell that ultimately engulfed Elvis- starting at a time when Elvis could sit alone at a drugstore lunch counter to the beginning

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of the rest of his life, when he would never again be able to stroll unnoticed down any street anywhere.

In these intimate images, Elvis is almost touchable- an unparalleled example of the symbiotic relationship between the media and celebrity in modern culture.

Elvis at 21, an exhibition developed by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES) and Govinda Gallery, is sponsored nationally by The History Channel.

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Exhibition Specifications

<i>Contents</i>	40 framed, digital, pigment prints (37 x 42" images by master printer David Adamson), text panels, transition photographs on panels, wall text on vinyl, labels		
<i>Participation Fee</i>	\$15,000 per 12-week booking period, plus prorated shipping		
<i>Size</i>	300 running feet		
<i>Weight</i>	1,800-2,000 pounds		
<i>Crates</i>	5-6		
<i>Shipping</i>	Prorated (to be determined)		
<i>Security</i>	High		
<i>Tour begins</i>	December 2009		
<i>Scheduling</i>	Ed Liskey	202.633.3142	liskeye@si.edu
<i>Content/Design</i>	Marquette Folley	202.633.3111	folleym@si.edu

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A Complete Exhibition Package

As a host of *Elvis at 21* you will receive the following:

- Complete curatorial and registrarial information.
- Thorough shipping, handling, and installation instructions.
- Wall-to-wall fine arts insurance coverage under the Smithsonian's policy.
- Ability to link to and from SITES' website.
- Public relations support in the form of digital press releases, images, and logos; and advice on promoting the exhibition and hosting special events.
- Guidelines for local fundraising.
- Educational and programming resources.

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Collaborators

Alfred Wertheimer, Photographer

Soon after graduating from Cooper Union's school of art in 1951, Alfred Wertheimer began his career as a photojournalist, publishing his work in such popular magazines as *Life*, *Paris Match*, *Look*, and *Colliers*. When RCA Victor asked him to photograph the label's newest recording artist in 1956, Wertheimer turned the publicity assignment into a unique opportunity to document Elvis Presley. With the sensibility of a reporter and the imagination of a visual artist, Wertheimer observed his subject and environment as no other photographer had done before or after. He photographed Elvis again in 1958 after Elvis was drafted into the U.S. Army. Wertheimer's photographs are in the permanent collections of the Experience Music Project (Seattle, Washington) and the Folkwang Museum (Essen, Germany).

Other subjects captured by his lens include Eleanor Roosevelt, Nina Simone, Dion and the Belmonts, Annette Funichello, Paul Anka, Rip Torn, Daddy Grace, Elizabeth Taylor, Leonard Bernstein, Rabbi Schneerson and the Hassidic Jews of Brooklyn, and the Regis DeBray trial. Moving on from the still image, Wertheimer became a documentary cinematographer working as one of the principle cameramen on the original film *Woodstock*. He also covered the 1960 presidential campaigns of John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon.

David Adamson, Printer

David Adamson is a certified master printer. Considered by many to be the world's highest-quality printmaker, Adamson has been on the digital path since well before 1993 when he purchased his first IRIS printer and became one of the first to convert to all-digital printing. Since then, Adamson Editions has collaborated with some of the best-known and most influential artists of our time, and its prints hang in many private and public collections. David Byrne, William Christenberry, Chuck Close, Robert Frank, Annie Leibovitz, William Wegman, and Robert Rauschenberg are among the artists who have worked with Adamson.

The method is a format defined as "pigment prints" because pigments are used instead of ink, which give the images a richer, more luminous appearance. The actual process can be likened to the darkroom process, with just as much involvement from the artist, who usually comes and works with Adamson at his studio.

Peter Guralnick, Music Critic and Writer

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The exhibition's text was contributed by Peter Guralnick, America's foremost writer of music biography. In a career spanning over 30 years, Guralnick has written extensively about American music and musicians, including the two-volume, award-winning Elvis Presley biography, *Last Train to Memphis* (1994) and *Careless Love* (1997).

Chris Murray, Curator

Chris Murray is founder and director of Washington D.C.'s Govinda Gallery, exhibiting the largest collection of music photography in the world. Murray edited the images and text in *Elvis at 21: New York to Memphis* (2006) and has assisted with curation of objects in the SITES exhibition. Over 30 years, Murray has organized more than 200 exhibitions of many of the nation's leading artists. Since 1995, Murray has featured Wertheimer's work in several exhibitions, including his first major one-person exhibition in 1997 at Govinda Gallery and the exhibition *Artists to Icon: Early Photographs of Elvis, Dylan, and the Beatles* organized in conjunction with the Experience Music Project in 2001. Murray continues to represent and exhibit Wertheimer's photographs. He has also edited a number of books on music and photography, including *Rolling Stones: 40 X 20* (2002) and *Between Midnight & Day: The Last Unpublished Blues Archive* (2003).

Amy Henderson, Curator

Amy Henderson has also assisted in the curation of objects and has been a cultural historian at the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery (NPG) since 1975, specializing in 20th and 21st century music, movie, and theater history, and in the history of American celebrity culture. Her books and exhibitions include *On the Air: Pioneers of American Broadcasting* (1988); *Red, Hot & Blue: A Smithsonian Salute to the American Musical* (1996; SITES toured a version of this exhibition to 28 venues); *Exhibiting Dilemmas: Issues of Representation at the Smithsonian* (1997); the six-part PBS American Masters series *Broadway* (2005); "The Changing Face of Celebrity Culture" (2005); and *KATE: A Centennial Celebration* (current) about Katherine Hepburn.

Warren Perry, Researcher

Warren Perry, the third member of the curatorial team, is a researcher for the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery's Catalog of American Portraits. He is a native of Memphis, Tennessee, and holds graduate degrees in medieval literature and creative writing from the University of Memphis and in drama from the Catholic University of America. Warren has written one-man shows on Walt Whitman and Lyndon B. Johnson for NPG education and his award-winning play *The Sitters* was recently published in *The Best of the Strawberry One Acts*

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Registrarial Requirements

This exhibition is designated **High Security** and is offered only to those institutions able to meet the Smithsonian's requirements. High security is required for exhibitions containing objects that are of special cultural significance, highly valuable, sensitive to light or climatic changes in humidity and temperature, or of an especially fragile nature. Facility reports for exhibitors must be reviewed and approved by both the Smithsonian and the exhibition lender. This exhibition has special concerns to ensure the proper display and protection of objects displayed outside of cases.

The 40 photographs in the exhibition are contemporary digital pigment prints. Although the photographs are of recent vintage, they can be damaged by direct sunlight and inappropriate climate and light levels. Adhering to the requirements below will help us keep the exhibition in good order for your display, other exhibitors, and posterity.

Failure to provide security equal to or greater than that required for a particular exhibition may be considered negligence and may result in your liability for loss or damages. SITES registrarial staff is happy to answer any questions about security requirements.

The following conditions must be met for this exhibition:

Space

- Limited-access, gallery(ies) of sufficient area and wall space to accommodate the exhibition. An open mall, hallway, or lounge area is not acceptable.
- Locked, environmentally stable interior exhibition storage and staging areas.
- Smoking, eating, and drinking are prohibited in exhibition, staging and storage spaces.
- Empty crates must be stored in secured, pest-free, and temperature-controlled storage. No part of the exhibition may be stored, crated or moved off-premises without prior authorization by SITES.

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Protection

- Guards or other trained personnel, whose sole duty is the supervision of the exhibition, must be present in sufficient numbers to assure the safety of the exhibition while open to the public. Guards or other trained personnel must also be present during truck off-loading, unpacking, installation, takedown and packing as well as the actual display of the exhibition.
- During night and non-public hours, the exhibition must be secured by guards or and alarm system. The exhibition must be locked and secured during closing hours. Security must be maintained during hours when the exhibition is closed to the public, including either periodic checks of the exhibition space by guard personnel or adequately monitored electronic surveillance to detect motion, heat and smoke.
- Functioning fire prevention systems and fire protection devices according to local ordinances must be available in the exhibition, staging and storage areas. Fire protection is subject to SITES' approval.
- The framed objects come with security hardware which the venue must use.
- Photography is not permitted in the exhibition.

Environmental Controls

- It is extremely important for light levels, temperature, and relative humidity to be controlled at specified levels while sensitive objects are on display.
- The exhibition space, staging, and storage areas must have temperature and humidity controls to guarantee an environment of 45 to 55% relative humidity and 68-72 degrees Fahrenheit, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Light damage is irreversible, and the following levels must be maintained: The maximum allowable light level has not been set for the photographs, but is anticipated to be in the range of 10-15 foot-candles. No direct sunlight must reach the photographs or text panels. All light must be filtered for UV.
- The venue must have recording hygrothermographs in the exhibition, staging and object storage spaces.

Collections Management

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- Handling of objects, if not actually by a conservator, registrar, or curator, must be by preparator, exhibition technician, or other professional staff trained in handling museum objects.
- The photographs and exhibition text panels need to be left in their crates 24 hours before unpacking.
- The exhibition is accompanied by a cumulative condition report book with entries for each object as well as the exhibition text panels
- A member of the venue's professional collections management or conservation staff must check the exhibition once daily.
- Do not remove the photographs from the frames or the hanging devices from the frames without prior permission from the SITES Registrar.
- The exhibition is anticipated to be shipped to each venue in a tractor trailer and will contain exhibit crates weighing up to 300 pounds each. Venues will need to have the facility and staff or the ability to hire skilled personnel for crate delivery and movement.

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