

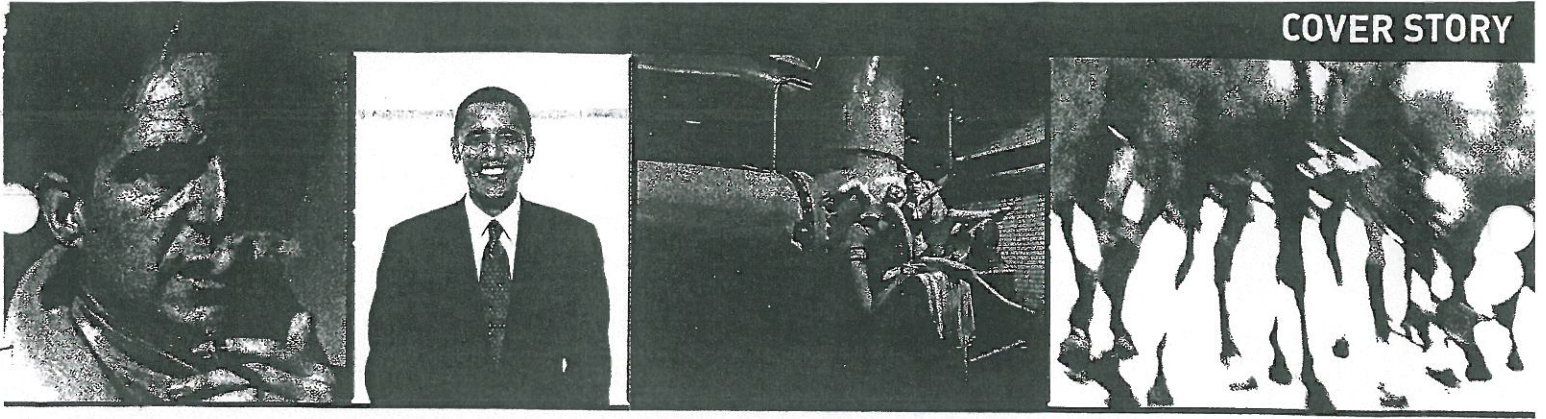
VICTOR SKREBNESKI

"Whenever I do anything, I don't ask for anybody's approval. Which is rare when you think what a photographer has to do when he does advertising; you tend to have 12 people with you in the studio. When I do my work, I just have my assistant and myself and the subject. That's how I work, and that's how it works best for everyone."

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SEDUCING SKREBNESKI





The street sign outside of his studio on Chicago's near-northside neighborhood pretty much says it all: "Skrebneski Way." In the 50 years that Victor Skrebneski has inhabited this location, he has developed his own successful way of doing things, and that has led him to a dazzling career in fashion and advertising photography and celebrity portraiture.

As that street sign would indicate, Victor Skrebneski is a living Chicago legend. Born and raised there, he has created an amazing array of images that are destined to take their place in the history of photography along with the likes of Edward Steichen, George Hurrell, Joseph Karsh, Irving Penn, Richard Avedon and Robert Mapplethorpe.

A self-proclaimed self-taught photographer, but a student of the arts his entire life, Skrebneski began his career at the age of 23 with a fashion assignment from prominent Chicago retailer Marshall Field's. From there, he began shooting for *Glamour*, *Esquire* and *Town and Country* magazines. In 1962 he became the exclusive photographer for Estée Lauder cosmetics, a role he played for the next 27 years.

Aside from the fashion and advertising assignments he was doing at the time, Skrebneski was also creating a name for himself in the world of celebrity portraiture. In 1967, on assignment for Warner Brothers, he created a "publicity shot" of a nude Vanessa Redgrave that became an instant iconic image of the times. That was followed up in the early 70's by his "black turtleneck series" of stark, minimalist portraits of such luminaries as Orson Wells, Bette Davis, Andy Warhol and Truman Capote.

Over the following decades, Skrebneski went on to create an incredibly diverse body of work, from his posters for the Chicago Film Festival to sculptural nudes, to moving portraits, to moody cityscapes of Paris and Chicago. He has also produced a number of photographic books, including a 25th anniversary tribute to Chicago's acclaimed Steppenwolf Theatre in 2000.

His latest self-published book, *Skrebneski Seduced*, is a uniquely assembled collection of his work over the last half century that pays oblique and direct tribute to many of his favorite artists. Skrebneski was exposed to art at an early age, with repeated visits to the Art Institute of Chicago. He eventually enrolled there as a student, and studied the works of great painters and sculptors in their collection. In addition to developing a knowledge of classical painting and sculpture, Skrebneski was drawn to the great styles and themes of the twentieth century: cubism, realism and surrealism. Hence, it should come as no surprise when looking through the titles of some of his more recent work to see homages to the likes of Miró, Picasso, Twombly, Dali, Magritte, Francis Bacon, Giacometti and more. These were the masters that seduced Skrebneski his entire life and still resonate in his work today.

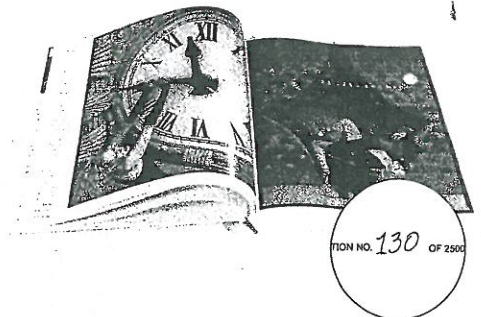
At the age of 78, there is no sign of Skrebneski slowing down. When asked by students how to become successful, his response is simple: "Work, work, work!" It is also interesting to note that the favorite word in his studio is, "NEXT!" And so the seduction continues on Skrebneski Way. ■

Q&A WITH VICTOR SKREBNESKI

YOU USE MOVEMENT AND BLUR YOUR SUBJECT IN A LOT OF YOUR IMAGES. HOW DID THAT STYLE COME ABOUT?

Around 1950, on my first trip to Paris, the first photograph I did were these horses running. I cropped the top, used just the legs and they made beautiful shapes, all blurred and out of focus. I just kept doing that. I'm also a fan of Francis Bacon's work. So that is why you see a lot of blurry stuff.

To learn more about Victor Skrebneski and to view more of his work, go to www.calumetphoto.com/skrebneski.



Victor Skrebneski Book Signing

Calumet is offering a unique opportunity to meet Victor Skrebneski at our Chicago retail location on September 6, between 1 and 3 p.m., where he will be on hand to sell and sign his newest book, *Skrebneski Seduced*.

SKREBNESKI WAS DRAWN TO THE GREAT STYLES AND THEMES OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: CUBISM, REALISM AND SURREALISM.