

THE ARCHITECT'S EYE

# Remembering Willy Rizzo's Iconic Photography and Design

Remembering the iconic work and alluring influence of the design world legend



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What do Le Corbusier, Jack Nicholson, Salvador Dalí, Marlene Dietrich, Sir Winston Churchill, Marilyn Monroe, Federico Fellini, Jane Fonda, Pablo Picasso, and Yves Saint Laurent have in common? Willy Rizzo.

Born in Naples in 1928, Rizzo was a photographer, furniture designer, raconteur, and icon. Through his camera lens he documented the last half of the 20th century in a way no one else could. Rizzo's magical ability to tell a story with an image resulted in commissions to photograph towering political figures, including Churchill, and to document seminal historical moments such as the Nuremberg trials.



Rizzo's wife, Dominique (left), and daughter Camilla. Photo: Lee F. Mindel

Yet he was also perhaps the only person capable of inducing a smile to appear on the face of Coco Chanel. He convinced the French designer that her couture was most impressive when modeled by her actual customer, the ultrachic youth of Parisian society, not by the catwalk's latest It girl. Many of his iconic fashion portraits are currently on display in the exhibit "Les Instants Chanel," at Studio Willy Rizzo in Paris, until May 15, which will then travel to São Paulo and Los Angeles.





Several weeks ago I had been scheduled to visit him in Paris (as I had done on several previous occasions) for a personal tour of the Chanel exhibition. His sudden passing prevented that meeting, but his elegant and gracious wife of 35 years, Dominique, met with me in the bustling gallery on the Rive Gauche. With a palpable sense of sadness we marveled at each photograph in the exhibit, then got to work choosing some of his timeless furniture to integrate into several of my current architectural projects.

Thank you, Willy. You will always be *La Dolce Vita*.