

MEDIA RELEASE

22 October 2013

NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

Elvis set to enter the building

The National Portrait Gallery's summer exhibition *Elvis at 21, Photographs by Alfred Wertheimer*, chronicles Elvis's dazzling emergence in 1956. Accompanying Elvis on the road, in concert, recording and at home, freelance photojournalist Alfred Wertheimer documented Presley's meteoric rise in the year he catapulted from anonymity to superstardom. The National Portrait Gallery will present the exhibition to Canberra audiences from 7 December 2013 to 10 March 2014.

Wertheimer was hired to shoot promotional images of a recently-signed, 21-year-old recording artist, Elvis Presley. His instinct to 'tag along' with the artist after the assignment was richly rewarded - the resulting photographs show Elvis before he became one of the most exciting performers of his time. *Elvis at 21: Photographs by Alfred Wertheimer* presents 56 striking images that make Elvis' road to fame palpable.

Developed collaboratively by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES), the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery (USA) and the Govinda Gallery, *Elvis at 21* is sponsored nationally by HISTORY™.

Wertheimer had unparalleled access to Elvis on the road, backstage, in concert, in the recording studio and at home in Memphis. The portraits document a rare moment before Elvis became an icon; before security and money built walls between him and his fans. Wertheimer was in the New York City recording studio on the historic day Elvis recorded 'Don't Be Cruel' and 'Hound Dog'. He also joined Elvis after the recording session as he travelled home to Memphis by train. One image shows Elvis as just part of the crowd surrounding a lunch vendor on a train platform during a brief stop on the 27-hour trip. This anonymity was short-lived. The photographs of a concert on his return to Memphis show a young man who now had to have a police escort to get through the crowd of fans between his car and the stadium.

'Henri Cartier-Bresson was known for photographing the decisive moment, that moment when everything falls into place,' said Wertheimer. 'But I was more interested in the moments just before or just after the decisive moment.'

Elvis at 21: Photographs by Alfred Wertheimer is supported by the Centenary of Canberra, an initiative of the ACT Government.

Elvis at 21: Photographs by Alfred Wertheimer from 7 December 2013 to 10 March 2014

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PRESENTING PARTNERS

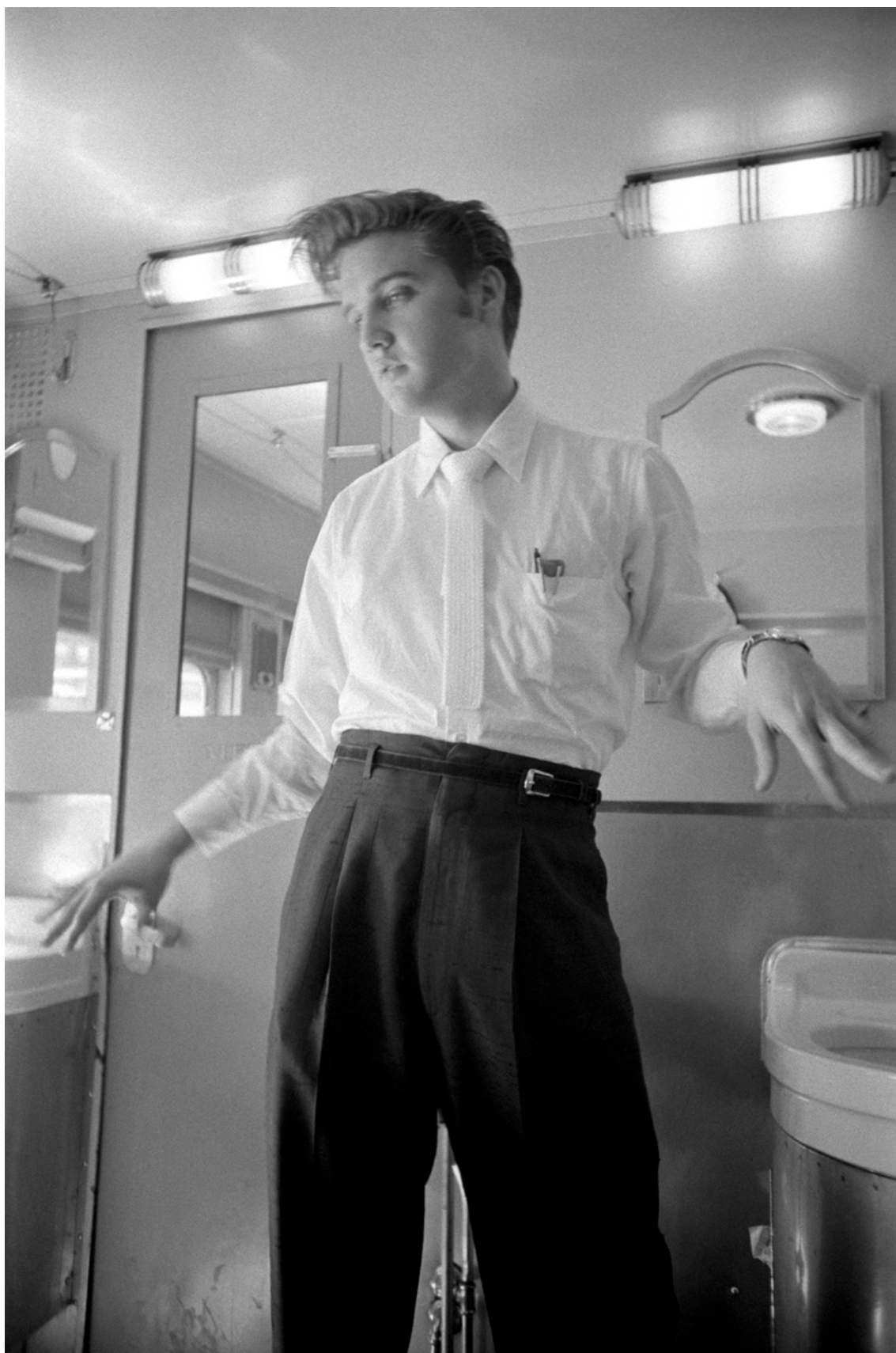


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NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

Washroom, no towels, Southern Railroad, July 4 1956
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7 December 2013 to 10 March 2014

King Edward Terrace, Canberra
portrait.gov.au