

Here and opposite: Scenes of upper class leisure in Palm Springs, from Robert Doisneau's 1960 assignment for *Fortune* magazine.



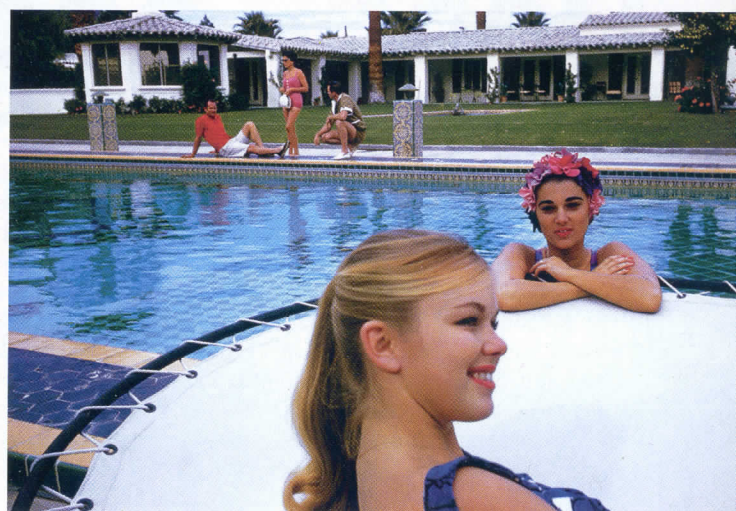
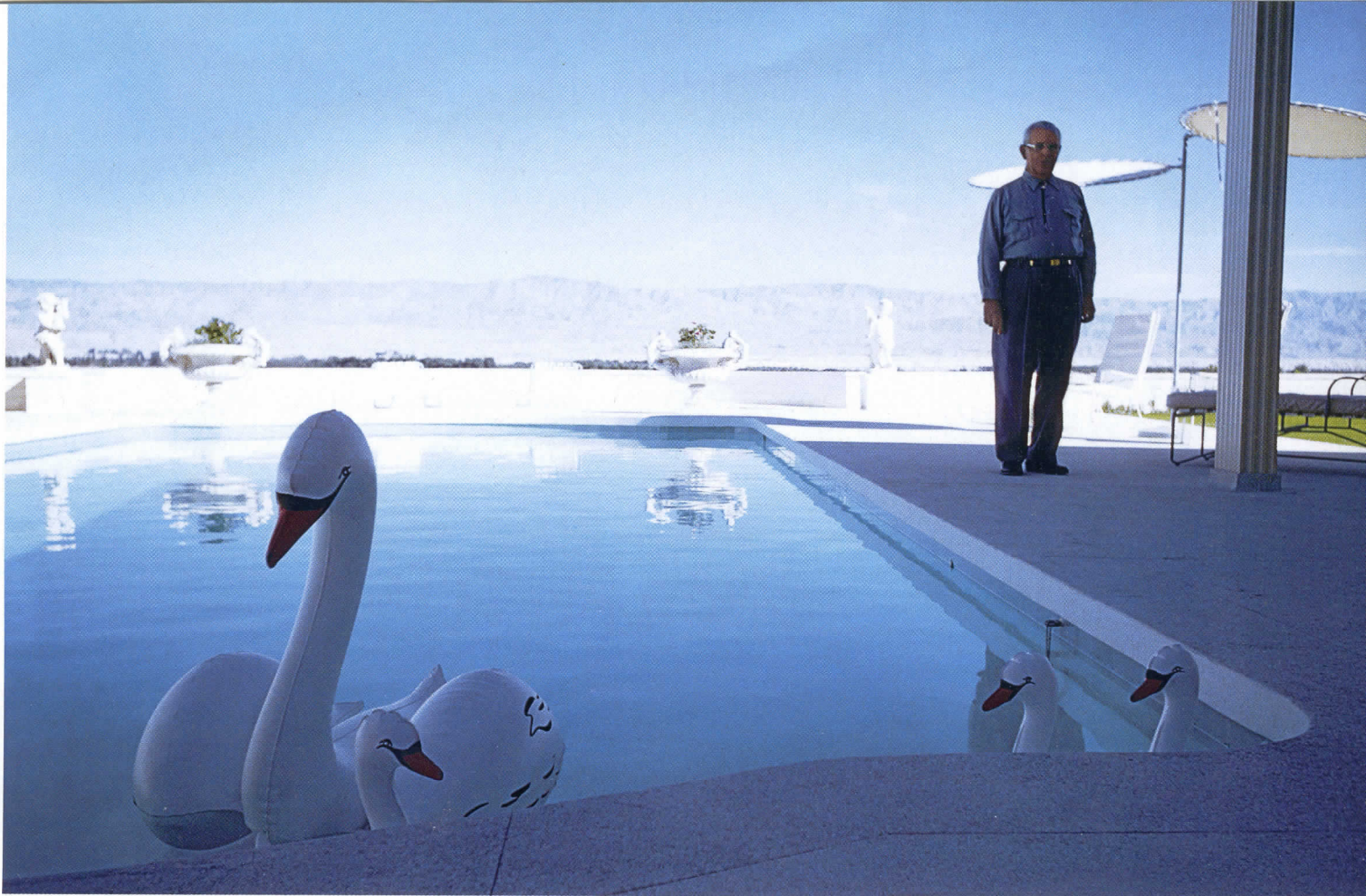
DESERT SOJOURN

ROBERT DOISNEAU'S 1960 COLOR PHOTOGRAPHS OF PALM SPRINGS REVEAL A DRY, WRY SIDE OF THE GREAT FRENCH PHOTOGRAPHER **BY RUSSELL HART**

► A kiss was not a kiss in Palm Springs, but more likely a genteel peck on the cheek, when the great Paris photographer Robert Doisneau traveled there in 1960 to shoot a story for *Fortune* magazine. That perennial desert playground of the rich and famous offered none of the spontaneous, streetside romance for which Doisneau was so well known—the City of Light's ceaseless supply of young couples locked in passionate embraces.

Yet the photographer rose to the challenge

of his unlikely assignment, which gave him the means for his first trip ever to America. His squeamish fascination with the monied culture of Southern California is clear to see in *Robert Doisneau: Palm Springs 1960* (Flammarion, \$35), a collection of some 100 images from the job. A few of the book's photographs are culled from the 23 that originally ran in the *Fortune* story, but most are outtakes from Doisneau's own archive, published here for the first time.



DOISNEAU ABANDONED HIS CUSTOMARY BLACK AND WHITE FOR COLOR.

One shock is that Doisneau abandoned his customary black and white for color, no doubt because the subject's deep blue skies, ever-green grass, and fade-to-pink mountains seemed to demand it. The photographer had no trouble adapting to the new medium nor his unfamiliar surroundings. Shooting with a Rolleiflex, a Hasselblad and a Leica, he spent ten days capturing the surreal decadence of Palm Springs, with images of silver-haired ladies in matching

furs at air-conditioned parties; elderly couples "slowly boring themselves," as Doisneau wrote, over cocktails in their spotless, desert-modern living rooms; transplanted palm trees towering over white-walled Thunderbirds; and cowboy-hatted, horseback-riding businessman playing at dudes, all of it framed by endless rounds of golf. Even Dwight D. Eisenhower, soon to leave the presidency, planned to install himself in Palm Springs to take advantage of its breath-

taking amenities, while Frank Sinatra, Bing Crosby and Bob Hope had all staked claims in its irrigated realm.

The second surprise is that Doisneau's Palm Springs photographs have a modern aesthetic colored with the ironic detachment we've come to expect in images of social elites. Their underlying judgment is completely absent from his heartfelt images of Parisian street life, and also from the black-and-white photographs he made in New York City on his way back to Paris. This stunning, unseen body of work shows Robert Doisneau to be a more sophisticated image maker than we ever imagined. **AP**