

Overheard



THOMAS J. GIBBONS

German-born photographer Andre Rau, who started as an assistant to Helmut Newton and became one of the world's most celebrated fashion photographers, was in San Francisco for a recent showing of his work.

The portraits lining the walls of Sorokko Gallery attested to his talent for capturing insightful and powerful celebrity portraits: Catherine Deneuve, Isabella Rossellini, Dennis Hopper, Daniel Auteuil, even Evander Holyfield.

But what are they like in person? "Catherine hates photo shoots. 'I'm not a model, I'm an actress,' is what she says," Rau recalled. "Catherine needs motivation. She needs something to do that's important." Yves Saint Laurent chose her as his muse for a retrospective of 30 years of his clothes, so Rau took her to Marrakesh, where Saint Laurent designed the collection. "She likes the trips; in Paris, she can't relax."

Rossellini likes concepts. "Nowadays, she likes to look grand, because she's aging," he said. "We just shot in New York; the whole thing was about night, glamour and rich. She told me, 'When you're aging, there's nothing left for women except to be rich, elegant and grand.'"

Jennifer Lopez, whom he photographed for Sony, was not the finicky prima donna one might expect. "We started at 8:30 a.m. and finished at 4 a.m. the next day," he said. "She's a real workhorse."

Andre Rau.