

## New Portraits by Chantal Joffe at the Jewish Museum

By RANDY KENNEDY APRIL 25, 2015



Chantal Joffe's "Betty Friedan" at the Jewish Museum.  
Chantal Joffe

Susan Sontag wrote that “the painter constructs, the photographer discloses.” But the work of photography-based painters like Chantal Joffe (her early interest in nudes led her to paint mostly from pictures in pornographic magazines) has always existed somewhere in between, a fictive nonfiction. Starting Friday, the Jewish Museum will present [34 new portraits](#) by Ms. Joffe of Jewish women of the 20th century whose contributions to art, literature and politics have interested her. The redoubtable group includes Sontag, as well as Diane Arbus, Gertrude Stein and Claude Cahun, the Surrealist shape-shifter whose photographic self-portraits as a man, amid many other guises, prefigured

Cindy Sherman by decades. Ms. Joffe made the portraits after immersing herself not only in pictures of the women but also in what they wrote and made, striving for depictions charged with her own imagining of what her heroes would have looked like at various stages of their lives. (Through Oct. 18, 1109 Fifth Avenue, 212-423-3200, [thejewishmuseum.org](http://thejewishmuseum.org).)