

marilyn monroe bert stern the last sitting

Marilyn Monroe Bert Stern The Last Sitting is a pivotal moment in the history of photography and celebrity culture. Captured in 1962, this iconic series of photographs represents the final collaboration between the legendary actress and photographer Bert Stern, symbolizing both the vulnerability and the allure of Monroe as she faced the twilight of her life. This article delves into the background of this monumental shoot, its artistic significance, and its lasting impact on both Monroe's legacy and the world of photography.

Background of Marilyn Monroe and Bert Stern

The Rise of Marilyn Monroe

Marilyn Monroe was born Norma Jeane Mortenson on June 1, 1926, in Los Angeles, California. She rose to fame in the 1950s as a major sex symbol and one of Hollywood's most beloved actresses. Monroe's unique blend of beauty, talent, and vulnerability captivated audiences, making her an enduring icon. Some key points about her rise include:

1. Early Career: Monroe began her career as a model before transitioning to acting, appearing in films such as "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes" and "Some Like It Hot."
2. Personal Struggles: Behind her glamorous persona, Monroe faced numerous personal challenges, including tumultuous relationships and mental health issues.
3. Cultural Symbol: By the 1960s, Monroe had become a symbol of femininity and desire, representing both the allure and the tragedy of Hollywood fame.

Bert Stern: The Photographer

Bert Stern was an American photographer known for his work in fashion and advertising. Born on October 24, 1929, Stern's career flourished during the mid-20th century, capturing some of the most iconic images of celebrities and cultural figures. Notable aspects of his career include:

1. Innovative Techniques: Stern was known for his experimental and avant-garde photography techniques, often using color and composition to create striking visual narratives.
2. Celebrity Collaborations: He worked with numerous celebrities, but his collaboration with Monroe remains the most famous, highlighting his ability to evoke emotion through his lens.
3. Legacy: Stern's work is celebrated for its artistic quality and its ability to capture the essence of his subjects, making him a prominent figure in the world of photography.

The Last Sitting: A Unique Collaboration

The Context of the Shoot

"The Last Sitting" was shot over three days in June 1962 at the Bel Air Hotel in Los Angeles. This session was unique for several reasons:

- Monroe's State of Mind: At the time of the shoot, Monroe was battling personal demons, including her struggles with mental health and substance abuse. This vulnerability is palpable in the images.
- Finality: The shoot was not only a professional collaboration but also a poignant farewell to the actress's life and career. Monroe died just a few weeks after the session, making these images some of the last ever taken of her.

The Artistic Process

Stern carefully crafted the atmosphere of the shoot, allowing Monroe to express herself freely. Several elements contributed to the artistic process:

1. Intimacy: The environment was designed to be comfortable and intimate, allowing Monroe to let her guard down and reveal her true self.
2. Wardrobe and Styling: Monroe wore a series of outfits, ranging from glamorous gowns to more casual attire, reflecting her multifaceted personality.
3. Emotion and Expression: Stern encouraged Monroe to express a range of emotions, capturing moments of joy, sadness, and introspection.

Key Images from The Last Sitting

"The Last Sitting" includes several iconic images that have become emblematic of both Monroe's persona and the art of photography. Here are some notable shots:

1. The Iconic Lingerie Image: One of the most famous photos features Monroe in a delicate white lingerie set, exuding both sensuality and vulnerability.
2. The Black and White Portrait: A striking black and white portrait captures Monroe's gaze, reflecting her inner turmoil and beauty.
3. The Series of Nudes: Stern also photographed Monroe in a series of nude poses, which, while provocative, reveal her comfort in her own skin and her desire to be seen authentically.

The Legacy of The Last Sitting

Impact on Marilyn Monroe's Legacy

"The Last Sitting" has significantly influenced how we perceive Marilyn Monroe, both as an actress and as a cultural icon. Key aspects of this legacy include:

- Humanizing the Icon: The images from this shoot portray Monroe as a complex individual rather than just a glamorous star, highlighting her vulnerability and humanity.
- Cultural Reflection: These photographs reflect the societal expectations of women in the 1960s, showcasing Monroe's struggle against the pressures of fame and beauty.

Influence on Photography and Art

Bert Stern's work in "The Last Sitting" has left a lasting impact on the field of photography:

1. Breaking Boundaries: The series blurred the lines between commercial photography and fine art, influencing future generations of photographers to explore deeper emotional narratives.
2. The Concept of Vulnerability: Stern's ability to capture vulnerability in his subjects has inspired many artists to convey personal stories through their work.
3. Iconic Status: The images have been widely reproduced and referenced in various forms of media, solidifying their status as iconic representations of Monroe and the allure of celebrity.

Conclusion: A Lasting Impression

Marilyn Monroe Bert Stern The Last Sitting stands as a poignant testament to the complexities of fame, beauty, and the human experience. This collaboration not only marked the end of Monroe's life but also captured the essence of a woman who, despite her celebrity status, grappled with profound struggles. The images from this shoot continue to resonate, reminding us of the delicate balance between public persona and private reality. Through Bert Stern's lens, we are given a glimpse into the soul of one of the 20th century's most iconic figures, ensuring that her legacy endures long after her untimely departure.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is 'The Last Sitting' by Bert Stern?

'The Last Sitting' is a series of iconic photographs taken by Bert Stern of Marilyn Monroe in July 1962, shortly before her death. The shoot captures Monroe in various poses and states of undress, showcasing her as both a glamorous star and a vulnerable individual.

Why is 'The Last Sitting' considered significant in photography?

It is significant because it presents an intimate and candid portrayal of Marilyn Monroe, reflecting her complex persona. The series is often viewed as a poignant representation of her struggles with fame and personal demons.

How did Bert Stern's style influence 'The Last Sitting'?

Bert Stern's style is characterized by a blend of commercial and fine art photography, utilizing soft lighting and a sense of spontaneity. This approach allowed him to capture Monroe in a natural and relaxed manner, contributing to the emotional depth of the images.

What themes are explored in 'The Last Sitting'?

The themes explored include vulnerability, the duality of celebrity, and the fleeting nature of beauty and life. The photographs convey a sense of intimacy and sorrow, reflecting Monroe's struggles with her identity and fame.

How did Marilyn Monroe feel about the photo shoot with Bert Stern?

Marilyn Monroe reportedly felt comfortable and at ease during the shoot, allowing for a genuine connection with Stern. However, it also revealed her insecurities and need for validation, which adds a layer of complexity to the images.

What impact did 'The Last Sitting' have on Marilyn Monroe's legacy?

The series has become an integral part of Marilyn Monroe's legacy, symbolizing her tragic life and the pressures of being a Hollywood icon. It continues to be referenced in discussions about celebrity culture and the portrayal of women in media.

Where can one view 'The Last Sitting' photographs?

The photographs from 'The Last Sitting' have been exhibited in various galleries and museums worldwide. They are also available in published books and online collections dedicated to Monroe's life and work.

How has 'The Last Sitting' influenced contemporary photography?

It has influenced contemporary photography by encouraging a more personal and emotional approach to portraiture, inspiring photographers to explore the deeper narratives behind their subjects rather than merely capturing their external beauty.

What is the historical context of 'The Last Sitting'?

The shoot took place just six weeks before Monroe's death in August 1962, adding a layer of poignancy to the images. This historical context has led to discussions about the pressures of fame and the tragic narratives surrounding Hollywood stars.

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