

bert stern marilyn monroe the last sitting

bert stern marilyn monroe the last sitting represents one of the most iconic photo sessions in the history of photography and celebrity culture. This legendary shoot, conducted by the celebrated photographer Bert Stern, captured Marilyn Monroe in what would become her final professional photographs before her untimely death. The Last Sitting is renowned not only for its stunning visual artistry but also for the intimate glimpse it provides into Monroe's persona during the last months of her life. This article delves into the background of the session, the creative process behind the images, and the cultural impact that these photographs have had over the decades. Additionally, it highlights Bert Stern's approach to capturing Monroe's vulnerability and beauty, making these images a timeless tribute. The following sections explore the origins, execution, and enduring legacy of Bert Stern's Marilyn Monroe The Last Sitting.

- The Background of Bert Stern and Marilyn Monroe
- The Planning and Execution of The Last Sitting
- Artistic Style and Techniques Used in The Last Sitting
- The Photographs and Iconic Images from The Last Sitting
- Cultural Impact and Legacy of The Last Sitting
- Publications and Exhibitions Featuring The Last Sitting

The Background of Bert Stern and Marilyn Monroe

Bert Stern was an influential American photographer and advertising creative director known for his innovative and provocative style. By 1962, Stern had established himself as a sought-after photographer, particularly in the realm of fashion and celebrity portraits. Marilyn Monroe, at that time, was an internationally celebrated actress and cultural icon, though her personal life was marked by struggles and vulnerabilities. The Last Sitting occurred just weeks before Monroe's tragic death on August 5, 1962, making the session historically significant. Stern's reputation for pushing creative boundaries and Monroe's enigmatic allure created the perfect synergy for a photo shoot that would become legendary.

Bert Stern's Career Before The Last Sitting

Before photographing Monroe, Bert Stern had built a career working with major magazines and advertising campaigns. His work was characterized by an ability to blend glamour with emotional depth, often capturing subjects in candid and revealing moments. Stern's approach was considered both innovative and intimate, which made him an ideal photographer to capture the essence of Marilyn Monroe during her last photo session.

Marilyn Monroe's Status in 1962

In 1962, Marilyn Monroe was at a complex point in her career and personal life. Though she remained a beloved figure, her workload had slowed, and she was facing difficulties related to mental health and personal relationships. Despite these challenges, Monroe's appeal and star power were undiminished, which contributed to the significance of The Last Sitting as a record of her final professional moments.

The Planning and Execution of The Last Sitting

The Last Sitting was arranged by Vogue magazine and took place over two days in June 1962 at the Bel Air Hotel in Los Angeles. The shoot was initially intended to produce images for a magazine spread and a series of promotional materials. Bert Stern was given unprecedented access and creative freedom, allowing him to work closely with Monroe to capture a series of intimate and evocative photographs. The session's timing and setting played a critical role in the mood and tone of the images.

The Setting and Duration of the Shoot

The photo session was conducted in a hotel suite at the Bel Air Hotel, chosen for its privacy and controlled environment. The shoot lasted for two days, during which Stern captured over 2,500 images of Monroe. This intensive session was unusual for the era, as it allowed for multiple outfit changes, lighting variations, and spontaneous moments that contributed to the depth of the final collection.

Collaboration Between Stern and Monroe

The collaboration between Bert Stern and Marilyn Monroe was marked by mutual respect and artistic exploration. Stern encouraged Monroe to experiment with different poses and expressions, capturing both her glamorous and vulnerable sides. Monroe's willingness to be candid and open during the shoot allowed Stern to produce photographs that transcended typical celebrity portraits, revealing a more complex and humanized portrayal of the star.

Artistic Style and Techniques Used in The Last Sitting

Bert Stern's photographic style during The Last Sitting combined technical sophistication with emotional resonance. The use of lighting, composition, and innovative techniques contributed to the enduring power of the images. Stern's approach emphasized both the physical beauty and the emotional depth of Monroe, creating a nuanced visual narrative.

Lighting and Composition

Stern utilized soft, diffused lighting to enhance Monroe's features, creating a luminous effect that became a hallmark of the session. The composition often employed close-up shots and

unconventional angles, emphasizing intimacy and immediacy. The interplay of shadows and light added dimension and texture to the photographs, accentuating Monroe's expressions and mood shifts.

Use of Black and White and Color Photography

The Last Sitting included both black and white and color photographs, showcasing Stern's versatility. The black and white images emphasize contrast and form, while the color photos highlight Monroe's iconic blonde hair and fair complexion. This combination enriched the visual variety and allowed different emotional tones to emerge throughout the collection.

The Photographs and Iconic Images from The Last Sitting

The images from Bert Stern's Marilyn Monroe The Last Sitting session have become some of the most recognizable and reproduced photographs in popular culture. Many of these images capture Monroe's playful, seductive, and contemplative moments, reflecting a range of emotions and facets of her personality. Some photographs are noted for their raw vulnerability, while others highlight her status as a glamorous star.

Notable Images and Poses

- The famous image of Monroe lying on a bed with a sheer white dress, exuding both innocence and sensuality.
- Close-up portraits featuring Monroe's signature smile juxtaposed with moments of introspection.
- Playful shots with Monroe playing with her hair or laughing, revealing her lighter side.
- Artfully nude photographs that balance eroticism with elegance, challenging norms of the time.

The Emotional Range Captured

Bert Stern succeeded in capturing the complexity of Marilyn Monroe's character through a wide emotional spectrum. The photographs reveal moments of joy, melancholy, confidence, and vulnerability, providing a multifaceted portrait rather than a single, static image of celebrity glamour. This emotional depth is a key reason why The Last Sitting remains impactful decades later.

Cultural Impact and Legacy of The Last Sitting

The Last Sitting has had a profound influence on both photography and the enduring legacy of Marilyn Monroe. The session redefined celebrity portraiture by showcasing a more intimate and humanized depiction of a star. Additionally, the images have been widely studied, exhibited, and referenced in popular culture. They represent a poignant reminder of Monroe's life and the fleeting nature of fame.

Influence on Celebrity Photography

Bert Stern's approach during The Last Sitting helped pave the way for more candid and personal celebrity photography. Photographers began to explore beyond staged glamour shots, aiming to capture the true essence and personality of their subjects. This shift contributed to a broader understanding of celebrities as complex individuals rather than untouchable icons.

The Role in Marilyn Monroe's Iconography

The images from The Last Sitting have become integral to Marilyn Monroe's visual legacy. They are frequently cited in retrospectives, biographies, and documentaries as some of the last authentic representations of the actress. The photographs continue to evoke both admiration and empathy, reinforcing Monroe's status as a cultural and tragic figure.

Publications and Exhibitions Featuring The Last Sitting

Since 1982, The Last Sitting photographs have been published and exhibited worldwide, allowing broad audiences to experience this historic session. Various books and photo collections have showcased Bert Stern's work, often accompanied by essays that contextualize the significance of the images. Exhibitions have been held in major museums and galleries, cementing the session's place in art and culture.

Books and Photo Collections

Several notable publications have presented The Last Sitting images, including comprehensive photo books that document the entire session. These books often include behind-the-scenes commentary, technical details, and reflections on Monroe's life and career, providing readers with an in-depth understanding of the shoot and its lasting importance.

Exhibitions and Public Displays

The Last Sitting has been featured in numerous exhibitions around the world, often as part of larger retrospectives on Bert Stern or Marilyn Monroe. These exhibitions highlight the artistic and historical value of the photographs, attracting visitors interested in photography, celebrity culture, and 20th-century history. The presentation of these images in public galleries has contributed to ongoing appreciation and critical analysis.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who was Bert Stern in relation to Marilyn Monroe's 'The Last Sitting'?

Bert Stern was a renowned photographer who conducted the iconic photo shoot known as 'The Last Sitting' with Marilyn Monroe in 1962, just weeks before her death.

What is 'The Last Sitting' by Bert Stern?

'The Last Sitting' is a famous series of photographs taken by Bert Stern of Marilyn Monroe during a three-day shoot for Vogue magazine in 1962, which became one of the most celebrated photo sessions in fashion and celebrity history.

When was 'The Last Sitting' with Marilyn Monroe conducted?

'The Last Sitting' was conducted over three days in June 1962, shortly before Marilyn Monroe's death in August of the same year.

Why is 'The Last Sitting' considered significant in Marilyn Monroe's career?

It is significant because it captured intimate and candid images of Monroe near the end of her life, offering a powerful and poignant glimpse of the iconic star that contrasted with her glamorous public persona.

What publication featured Bert Stern's 'The Last Sitting' photographs?

The photographs were originally commissioned for Vogue magazine, and later published in book form titled 'The Last Sitting'.

How did Bert Stern's approach in 'The Last Sitting' differ from other Marilyn Monroe photo shoots?

Bert Stern's approach was more personal and experimental, using multiple cameras, props, and varied lighting to capture a diverse range of expressions and moods, revealing Monroe's vulnerability and complexity.

Are the photographs from 'The Last Sitting' still influential today?

Yes, the images remain highly influential in photography and pop culture, symbolizing beauty, fame, and tragedy, and continue to inspire artists, photographers, and fans worldwide.

What equipment did Bert Stern use during 'The Last Sitting'?

Bert Stern used multiple cameras during the shoot, including a Rolleiflex and a 35mm camera, allowing him to capture hundreds of images from different angles and styles.

Did Marilyn Monroe have any input or control over 'The Last Sitting' photo shoot?

While Monroe was cooperative and engaged during the shoot, the creative direction was largely driven by Bert Stern and Vogue editors, though Monroe's personality and emotion heavily influenced the final images.

Has 'The Last Sitting' been exhibited or published recently?

Yes, 'The Last Sitting' photographs continue to be exhibited in galleries and museums and have been republished in various editions, maintaining their cultural and artistic relevance.

Additional Resources

1. *Bert Stern: The Last Sitting - Marilyn Monroe*

This book showcases the iconic photographs taken by Bert Stern during Marilyn Monroe's final photo session in 1962. It provides an intimate glimpse into Monroe's personality and vulnerability, captured just weeks before her untimely death. The collection is celebrated for its raw beauty and artistic innovation.

2. *Marilyn Monroe: The Biography*

A comprehensive biography that explores the life and career of Marilyn Monroe, delving into her rise to fame, personal struggles, and lasting cultural impact. This book provides context to the era in which Bert Stern took his famous photographs, offering readers a deeper understanding of Monroe's complex persona.

3. *The Art of Bert Stern: Capturing Iconic Moments*

This volume focuses on Bert Stern's photographic style and his contributions to fashion and portrait photography. It highlights his legendary work with celebrities, including the unforgettable session with Marilyn Monroe, revealing his creative process and artistic vision.

4. *Marilyn Monroe: Fragments*

A collection of Marilyn Monroe's personal writings, letters, and photographs, this book offers an intimate look at the actress beyond her public image. It complements the visual narrative of "The Last Sitting" by providing insight into her thoughts and emotions during that period.

5. *Hollywood Icons: The Photographers Behind the Fame*

Exploring the relationship between photographers and their celebrity subjects, this book includes a detailed chapter on Bert Stern and his collaboration with Marilyn Monroe. It discusses how photography shapes public perception and immortalizes Hollywood legends.

6. *The Last Sitting: Behind the Camera with Bert Stern*

This book provides a behind-the-scenes account of the famous Marilyn Monroe photo shoot, including interviews with Bert Stern and those involved. It sheds light on the challenges and

emotional weight of capturing such an iconic figure in her final days.

7. Marilyn Monroe's Style and Legacy

Focusing on Monroe's influence on fashion and popular culture, this book examines her enduring style and the visual legacy preserved in images like those from Bert Stern's session. It traces how her look continues to inspire designers and artists worldwide.

8. Masters of Celebrity Photography

A survey of renowned photographers who have shaped celebrity imagery, featuring Bert Stern's work with Marilyn Monroe as a pivotal moment in photographic history. The book discusses techniques, stories, and the cultural significance of their portraits.

9. Remembering Marilyn: Photographs and Memories

Combining photographs from various artists with personal anecdotes and historical context, this book pays tribute to Marilyn Monroe's life and enduring mystique. It prominently features images from "The Last Sitting," highlighting their emotional depth and artistic merit.

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