

Complete Last Sitting The Bert Stern Marilyn Monroe



Complete Last Sitting: The Bert Stern Marilyn Monroe is a captivating photographic series that not only immortalizes one of Hollywood's most iconic figures but also captures the essence of a fleeting moment in time. Created by renowned photographer Bert Stern in 1962, this collection is widely regarded as a poignant tribute to Marilyn Monroe's beauty, vulnerability, and the complexities of her life. In this article, we will delve into the background of this extraordinary work, analyze its significance, and explore the lasting impact it has had on both art and popular culture.

The Background of Bert Stern and Marilyn Monroe's Collaboration

Bert Stern, an influential American photographer, rose to fame in the 1950s and 1960s. He was known for his ability to capture the spirit of his subjects, particularly in the realm of fashion and celebrity photography. His work with Marilyn Monroe is perhaps his most famous, leading to the creation of "The Complete Last Sitting."

Setting the Scene

In June 1962, just a few weeks before her untimely death, Marilyn Monroe sat for a series of photographs with Bert Stern at the Bel-Air Hotel in Los Angeles. This was not just another photoshoot; it marked the last time Monroe would be photographed in a professional setting. The sessions were characterized by an intimate atmosphere, allowing Monroe to express herself freely, which resulted in some of the most striking images ever taken of her.

The Concept Behind The Complete Last Sitting

Stern's vision for "The Complete Last Sitting" went beyond traditional portraiture. He aimed to capture Monroe as she truly was—flawed, beautiful, and deeply human. The photoshoot was designed to document both her external beauty and her internal struggles, making it a powerful commentary on fame and the toll it takes on individuals.

The Photographic Series: An Overview

"The Complete Last Sitting" consists of over 2,500 images captured during three separate sessions. However, it is the fifty-seven selected photographs that have gained widespread acclaim. These images are a blend of glamour and vulnerability, showcasing Monroe's multifaceted personality.

Key Themes in the Photographs

1. **Vulnerability:** Many of the images highlight Monroe's fragility, showcasing her emotional depth. The juxtaposition of her glamorous persona with her evident insecurities provides a raw look into her life.
2. **Intimacy:** The photographs often feel personal and candid, as though the viewer is privy to an intimate moment shared between Monroe and Stern. This closeness enhances the emotional weight of the images.
3. **Glamour:** Despite the underlying themes of vulnerability, the images also celebrate Monroe's status as a sex symbol. Her beauty is undeniable, and Stern captures it with sensitivity and artistry.

The Impact of The Complete Last Sitting

"The Complete Last Sitting" has had a profound influence on both the fields of photography and pop culture. The images not only serve as a testament to Monroe's legacy but also reflect societal attitudes towards female beauty and celebrity.

Monroe's Legacy in Art and Culture

1. **Iconic Status:** Marilyn Monroe has remained an enduring symbol of beauty and femininity. The images from "The Complete Last Sitting" have only solidified her status as a cultural icon.
2. **Artistic Influence:** Many contemporary photographers cite Stern's work with Monroe as a significant influence on their own practices. The emotional depth captured in these images has encouraged a more nuanced approach to celebrity photography.
3. **Cinematic Inspiration:** The photographs have inspired various films and documentaries that explore Monroe's life, including the exploration of her struggles with fame and identity.

The Role of Photography in Capturing Celebrity Culture

Stern's work with Monroe exemplifies how photography can shape public perception of celebrities. The portrayal of Monroe in "The Complete Last Sitting" serves as a dual lens through which we view her—both as an idol and a person.

Analyzing Specific Images from The Complete Last Sitting

While the entire series is significant, a few specific images stand out for their emotional resonance and artistic merit.

Iconic Portraits

1. **The Black and White Close-Up:** One of the most famous images from the series is a close-up of Monroe's face, showcasing her striking features and thoughtful expression. This photograph encapsulates the essence of her beauty while hinting at her internal struggles.
2. **The Lying Pose:** Another memorable shot depicts Monroe lying on a bed, a look of introspection on her face. This image highlights her vulnerability and invites viewers to reflect on the weight of her celebrity.
3. **The Playful Shots:** Some of the images capture Monroe laughing and playing, revealing a side of her that contrasts sharply with her more serious poses. These playful moments remind us that there was joy amidst the challenges she

faced.

The Enduring Legacy of Bert Stern's Work

Bert Stern passed away in 2013, but his contribution to the world of photography endures through works like "The Complete Last Sitting." His ability to capture the complexities of human emotion has left an indelible mark on both the art world and popular culture.

Preservation and Exhibition

The photographs from "The Complete Last Sitting" have been preserved and exhibited in various galleries around the world, allowing new generations to appreciate Stern's artistry and Monroe's legacy. They continue to be a subject of study for photographers, historians, and art enthusiasts alike.

Conclusion

In summary, the **Complete Last Sitting: The Bert Stern Marilyn Monroe** is more than just a series of photographs; it is a poignant exploration of a life filled with beauty, complexity, and tragedy. Through his lens, Bert Stern captured not only the external allure of Marilyn Monroe but also the internal battles she faced. The legacy of this collection continues to resonate, reminding us of the delicate balance between fame and vulnerability. As we reflect on these powerful images, we gain insight into the life of an icon who remains a compelling figure in the annals of history.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is 'Complete Last Sitting' by Bert Stern?

The 'Complete Last Sitting' is a collection of photographs taken by Bert Stern of Marilyn Monroe during a final photo shoot in 1962, shortly before her death.

Why is Bert Stern's 'Complete Last Sitting' significant?

It is significant because it captures the last professional images of Marilyn Monroe, providing a poignant glimpse into her life and persona shortly before her untimely death.

How did Bert Stern's photography style influence the portrayal of Marilyn Monroe?

Stern's style, characterized by a candid and intimate approach, highlighted Monroe's vulnerability and complexity, shifting the public's perception of her from merely a glamorous icon to a more nuanced figure.

What themes are explored in 'Complete Last Sitting'?

The themes of beauty, mortality, vulnerability, and the duality of public and private personas are explored throughout the series, reflecting Monroe's struggles and her iconic status.

Where can one view Bert Stern's 'Complete Last Sitting' photographs?

The photographs can be viewed in various exhibitions, photography books, and online galleries, with some pieces also part of permanent collections in art museums.

What was the context of the photo shoot for 'Complete Last Sitting'?

The photo shoot took place in June 1962 at a hotel in Los Angeles, during a time when Monroe was experiencing personal turmoil, which is evident in the emotional depth of the images.

How did Bert Stern's relationship with Marilyn Monroe impact the shoot?

Stern had a collaborative and respectful relationship with Monroe, which allowed for a more relaxed atmosphere during the shoot, resulting in authentic and intimate photographs.

What was the public's reaction to the release of 'Complete Last Sitting'?

The public reaction was mixed; while many praised the artistic quality and emotional resonance of the photographs, others were concerned about the portrayal of Monroe's fragility and struggles.

Are there any documentaries or films about Bert Stern's 'Complete Last Sitting'?

Yes, several documentaries and films, including 'Bert Stern: Original Mad Man' and various retrospectives on Monroe, feature discussions about the significance of the 'Complete Last Sitting' series.

What legacy has 'Complete Last Sitting' left on pop culture and photography?

The legacy of 'Complete Last Sitting' has influenced both pop culture and photography by reinforcing the idea of the artist's role in capturing the complexity of their subjects, particularly in the context of celebrity and vulnerability.

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