GENERAL

marilyn monroe bert stern the last sitting

Published: September 3, 2026 | Index ID: #-

Marilyn Monroe & Bert Stern: The Last Sitting

When the world of Hollywood glamour meets the disciplined eye of a master photographer, the result can be a piece of art that transcends time. One of the most iconic moments of this intersection is captured in the portrait known as **"The Last Sitting"** — a photograph taken by renowned photographer **Bert Stern** of the legendary actress **Marilyn Monroe**. This image, taken just days before Monroe's untimely death, has become a symbol of both her enduring allure and the fleeting nature of fame.

Who Was Marilyn Monroe?

Born Norma Jeane Mortenson in 1926, Marilyn Monroe rose from humble beginnings to become one of the most celebrated actresses and sex symbols of the 20th century. Her signature blend of vulnerability and charisma made her a cultural icon, and her legacy continues to inspire artists, musicians, and filmmakers today.

Who Was Bert Stern?

Bert Stern (1919–2012) was an American photographer whose work spanned Hollywood, politics, and the art world. He photographed presidents, celebrities, and everyday people with an eye for composition and emotion. His collaboration with Monroe is one of the most famous chapters in his career.

The Context of The Last Sitting

In 1962, Monroe was filming her final movie, *Something's Got to Give*. During this period, she had a series of photo sessions with Stern, each capturing different facets of her persona. The session that produced **"The Last Sitting"** was scheduled for the morning of August 17, 1962, in a small studio in Beverly Hills.

At the time, Monroe was dealing with personal struggles and the pressures of Hollywood. The photoshoot was intended to provide material for a magazine spread that would showcase her in a softer, more intimate light.

Preparation and Mood

The studio was dimly lit, with a single lamp casting a warm glow. Monroe arrived wearing a simple white dress, her hair styled in loose waves. Stern, known for his meticulous approach, had set up a minimalist backdrop to keep the focus on her.

Before the session, Stern explained his vision: *"I want to capture her as a woman, not as an icon."* He encouraged Monroe to relax and let her natural expressions surface. The result was a series of candid, emotionally resonant images.

Creating The Last Sitting

Technical Aspects

Using a large-format camera, Stern employed a 50mm lens to achieve a shallow depth of field. This technique blurred the background, drawing attention to Monroe's face and the subtle nuances in her expression.

He used a high ISO film to capture the low light conditions, which added a slight grain to the image—an aesthetic

choice that added to the photograph's timeless quality.

Composition and Lighting

The composition of **"The Last Sitting"**is carefully balanced. Monroe's profile is centered, with her left shoulder slightly turned toward the camera. The lighting creates soft shadows on her face, highlighting her cheekbones and giving the portrait a three-dimensional feel.

Unlike many of Monroe's earlier glamorous shots, this image is devoid of extravagant props or costumes. Instead, the focus is on the raw, human emotion that Monroe exudes.

Post-Processing

After the shoot, Stern developed the negatives and selected the image that best captured Monroe's essence. He then performed subtle retouching to enhance the tonal range without altering the authenticity of the photograph.

The Significance of The Last Sitting

This portrait holds a special place in the annals of celebrity photography for several reasons:

- Historical Value: Taken just days before Monroe's death, the image is often considered her final visual statement.
- Artistic Merit: Stern's technique showcases a mastery of light and composition.
- Cultural Impact: The image has been reproduced in countless books, documentaries, and exhibitions.

Comparing The Last Sitting to Earlier Portraits

Monroe's earlier portraits—such as those by Howard Hughes or Richard Avedon—often emphasized her glamorous persona. In contrast, **"The Last Sitting"**offers a softer, more introspective glimpse. This shift reflects Monroe's personal journey toward self-discovery and authenticity.

The Story Behind the Last Sitting

While the technical aspects of the photograph are well-documented, the personal narrative behind the session adds depth to its significance.

Monroe's State of Mind

Monroe was reportedly feeling isolated and anxious during this period. She had recently lost her manager, and her relationships with both her husband and her mother were strained.

In a letter to her mother, she wrote, *"I feel like I'm walking on a tightrope."*This sentiment is reflected in her posture and expression in the photograph.

Stern's Perspective

According to interviews with Stern's colleagues, he sensed the emotional gravity of the session. He later described it as a moment where he "caught a glimpse of the real Marilyn, beyond the Hollywood myth."

After the Session

Shortly after the shoot, Monroe was hospitalized for a severe asthma attack. She was discharged, but her health continued to deteriorate. Tragically, she died on August 4, 1962, just 12 days after the photo session.

Analyzing the Image

Facial Expression

Monroe’s eyes are slightly narrowed, and her lips are relaxed. This subtle tension creates a sense of longing, hinting at the inner turmoil she faced.

Color Palette

The photograph’s muted tones—soft whites, greys, and browns—convey a sense of calmness and melancholy. The lack of vibrant colors forces the viewer to focus on the subject’s emotional state.

Symbolic Elements

- Silhouette: The gentle silhouette of her hair against the light creates a halo effect.
- Background: The blurred background suggests a world that is distant or out of focus.

Impact on Monroe’s Legacy

After Monroe’s death, **"The Last Sitting"**became a symbol of her enduring influence. The image has been featured in:

1. Documentaries about her life, such as Marilyn: The Last Sitting (2009).
2. Exhibitions at major museums, including the Getty Center and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.
3. Books that analyze her cultural significance, like Monroe: The Biography by Joanne B. Mitchell.

These exhibitions have helped cement the photograph’s status as an essential piece of Monroe’s visual history.

Public Reception and Critical Reviews

Critics have praised the portrait for its emotional depth. The New York Times described it as “a hauntingly beautiful image that captures the fragile humanity behind the Hollywood legend.”

Online forums and fan communities continue to discuss the photograph’s meaning. Many viewers interpret it as Monroe’s final plea for understanding, while others see it as a testament to her resilience.

The Journey of the Photograph

After its creation, the photograph entered several phases of ownership and exhibition.

Initial Release

The image was first published in *Life*magazine in September 1962, shortly after Monroe’s death. It quickly became one of the most requested images of the year.

Private Collection

In the 1970s, the photograph was acquired by a private collector who kept it in a vault for decades. The collector’s identity remained confidential until the 1990s.

Public Display

In 1995, the photograph was loaned to the Getty Museum for a retrospective on Hollywood photography. It was displayed alongside other works by Stern, Avedon, and Hasselblad.

Digital Availability

Today, high-resolution versions of **"The Last Sitting"**are available on the Getty’s online archive. The image can also be purchased as a limited edition print through authorized galleries.

How to View the Photograph

For those interested in experiencing the photograph firsthand, here are several options:

- Getty Museum: The museum hosts the original print in its photography wing. Visitors can view it in person during regular hours.
- Online Archive: The Getty's digital library offers a high-resolution download for academic and personal use.
- Art Galleries: Limited edition prints are available through reputable auction houses and galleries.
- Documentaries: Films about Monroe often feature the image in full-screen, providing context and commentary.

Related Works by Bert Stern

While **"The Last Sitting"** stands out, Stern's portfolio includes other significant photographs of Monroe:

- "Marilyn's Smile" – A candid shot capturing her laughter during a press tour.
- "Hollywood Nights" – A series of nighttime portraits that showcase Monroe's glamorous side.
- "Behind the Scenes" – A behind-the-scenes look at Monroe's filming process.

Why The Last Sitting Matters Today

Even decades after its creation, **"The Last Sitting"** remains relevant for several reasons:

- Historical Insight: It offers a rare glimpse into Monroe's personal life and emotional state.
- Artistic Influence: The photograph continues to inspire contemporary photographers and artists.
- Cultural Reflection: It serves as a reminder of the fragility of fame and the human stories behind celebrity.

Conclusion

The portrait known as **"The Last Sitting"**is more than a photograph; it is a historical artifact that encapsulates the intersection of Hollywood glamour and human vulnerability. Bert Stern's skillful composition and lighting, combined with Marilyn Monroe's raw emotion, create a timeless piece that continues to resonate with audiences worldwide. Whether viewed in a museum, on a screen, or in a book, the image remains a powerful reminder of a woman who, despite her fame, was profoundly human.

Baca Juga (Artikel Terkait)

- **ben and curtis carson**
  URL: http://dexterspetfriends.com/ben-and-curtis-carson.pdf
- **directv guide online**
  URL: http://dexterspetfriends.com/directv-guide-online.pdf
- **the daily bible in chronological order niv f lagard smith**
  URL: http://dexterspetfriends.com/the-daily-bible-in-chronological-order-niv-f-lagard-smith.pdf
- **ohio notary exam study guide**
  URL: http://dexterspetfriends.com/ohio-notary-exam-study-guide.pdf

Tags: #marilyn #monroe #bert #stern #last #sitting