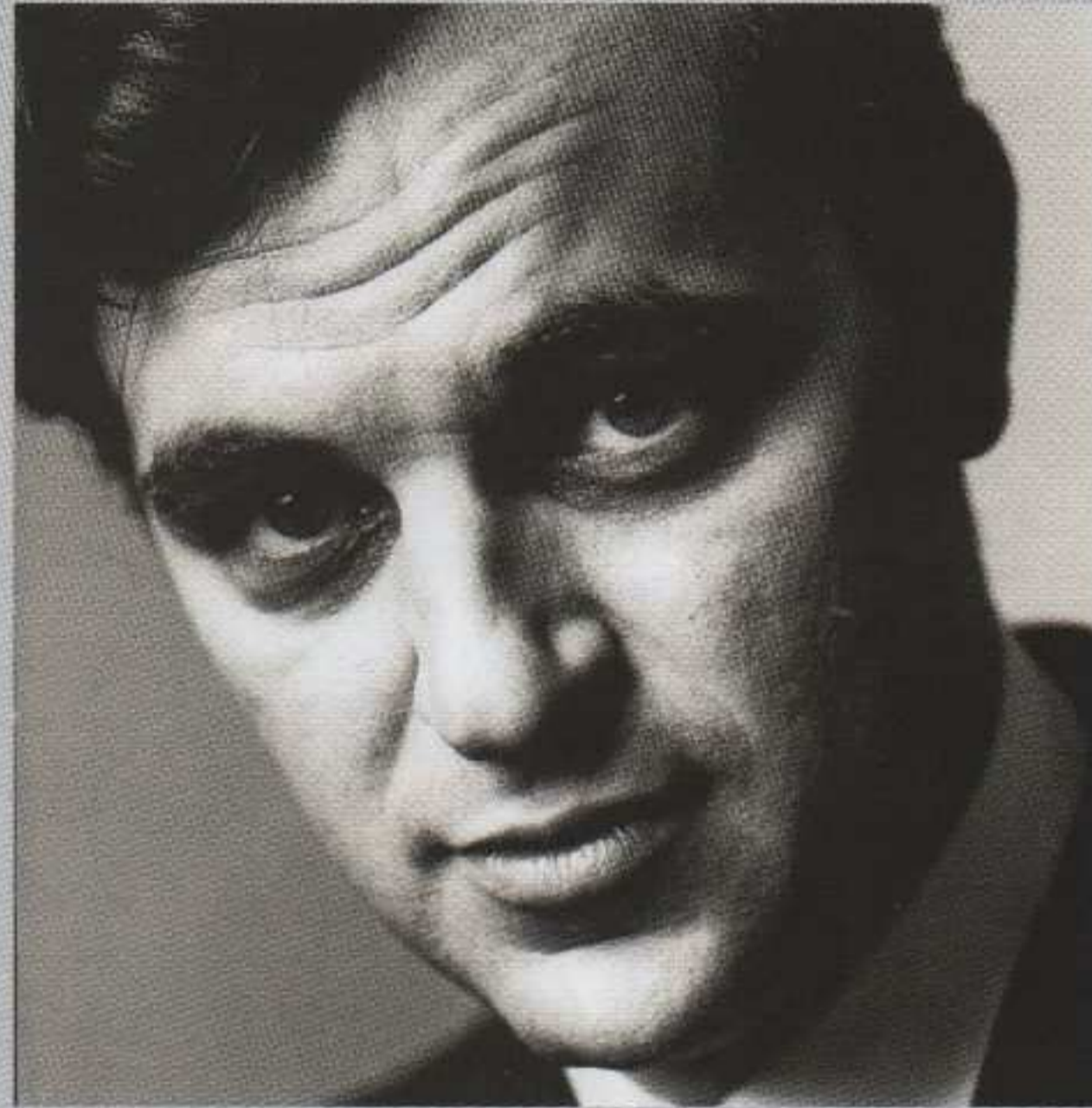


RETROSPECTIVE

CAPTURING SOULS



Legendary
photographer
Bert Stern
answers Deepa
Rajan's queries
on his illustrious
career and
Marilyn Monroe
ahead of an
exhibition hosted
by JAMM this
month

Bert Stern was born in 1929 in Brooklyn, New York. Self-taught in photography, he began his career as assistant in the art department of

Look magazine in 1946. Hugely successful in the worlds of fashion and advertising photography, he operated in the late 1960s a studio from which he created countless award-winning ads, editorial features, magazine covers, films and portraits. In all of Stern's works one can recognize the remarkable graphic simplicity of his photographic art, as well as his extraordinary rapport with his subjects.

Stern went on to photograph for Vogue, and married dancer Allegra Kent. He has directed the documentary film *Jazz on a Summer's Day*, in addition to creating the still photography for Stanley Kubrick's film version of *Lolita*. He has photographed Audrey Hepburn, Elizabeth Taylor, Madonna, Kylie Minogue, and Drew Barrymore, among others, in addition to his work for advertising and travel publications. Stern's photography has been exhibited all over the world, including Tokyo, London, and New York and now Dubai.

Stern's best is of course His now legendary photographs of Marilyn Monroe. In late June 1962, Stern took almost 2,600 photographs of the American star over three daily sessions at the Bel-Air Hotel in Los Angeles for the popular Vogue magazine; this photo shoot later became known as *The Last Sitting* because just six weeks later, Monroe was found dead.

Stern's photographs carry a rare sensual and human vibrancy. Never before had the star allowed a photographer such intimate access, and Stern's camera captures a revealing portrait of Marilyn the person – a fragile, lonely, flawed woman who would die tragically a few weeks later.

In an exclusive interview to signature the legendary photographer talks about photography, Marilyn Monroe and more....

Why photography? What inspired you to pursue a career behind the camera?

"What inspired me was a photograph in Vogue magazine around 1948 taken by Irving Penn. It was a still life of jewellery and a shoe."

Henri Cartier-Bresson once said that in photography, the smallest thing can be a great subject. The little, human detail can become a Leitmotiv. What would you say is your leitmotiv and why?

"I don't necessarily have a leitmotiv. I enjoy shooting people, women and men. Also, I am



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fascinated by triangles. I loved shooting at the pyramids in Egypt. There is so much in the world that is beautiful, finding things to take pictures of is easy."

Your professional life has followed the immense changes in global culture. How has your profession changed with it, and is it easier or more difficult now to get into such a career?

"Now, it is a digital world, and I find that easier. Before, we had to deal with chemicals to make the photos. I do not know if that makes it easier to get into this career? Some people are movie stars, and some sell hot dogs on the street. It is what they do."

Marilyn Monroe is an icon of western culture, an evocative personality. How was it like capturing this enigma?

"It was very exciting to photograph Marilyn. She was a great subject to work with. She was great, sexy, beautiful and funny- the perfect all American girl. I loved her. In front of the camera, Marilyn transformed into a chameleon, fully immersing herself into whatever role she was meant to play, be it a classic movie star dressed in a lavish fur coat, a pure, virginal character

sheathed in an immaculate white veil or a true sex symbol wearing nothing but pearls or diamond necklaces, silk scarves or roses."

"How do you think your upcoming exhibition will be received in Dubai, and what made you choose JAMM to bring it to the region?

My agent in the Middle East, Alia Abdel-Rahman (founder, A.A.R. Fine Art Advisory), chose JAMM. She has worked with them before and convinced me they were the right fit. I hope the show goes well and is well received in Dubai."

Has the power of a still image lessened as media has increasingly become about motion pictures?

"I think video has become very important and part of the landscape. Yes, the still image has lessened in power."

What photograph would you like to have taken, and why?

"I loved the portrait of Greta Garbo, taken by Edward Steichen for Vanity Fair. It was such a great photograph of her."



FAST FIVE

Subject looking into the camera or away?

Into the camera

Subject Posed or candid?

Candid

Would you rather photograph a person or a place?

Person

Digital or film?

Film

Black and white or colour?

Either

Photoshop or natural?

Natural



THE EVENT

JAMM, an independent art advisory, will host an exhibition of Bert Stern's photographs of Marilyn Monroe, which will open on March 18, 2013 at the JAMM art gallery located in Al Quoz, Dubai.

The exhibition will feature twelve unique archival prints on paper and on canvas enhanced with crystals and jewels, which add new depth and energy to these iconic portraits of America's most famous actress.

"We are extremely pleased to present this small selection of Bert Stern's unique prints of Marilyn Monroe from the series The Last Sitting. They are arguably the most celebrated, instantly recognizable images ever captured of Marilyn, who embodied – and still embodies – a certain ideal of feminine beauty, and whose image, 50 years after her tragic death, still influences contemporary style and fashion.

"Bert Stern's images are iconic and what makes them special, besides the fact that they are the very last pictures ever taken of Marilyn, is the palpable intimacy and the complicity shared between the photographer and the model; in these pictures, Marilyn looks completely unfettered, approachable and more real.

"The hand-applied Swarovski crystals and jewels add an extra dimension and light to the photographs, rendering each print unique", said Sheikha Lulu M. Al Sabah, Founder and Director of JAMM Art.

The exhibition will also mark the launch of the new JAMM art gallery, situated in close proximity to Al-Serkal Avenue home to a number of Dubai's leading contemporary art galleries.

The Bert Stern exhibition will run from Mar. 18 – Apr. 18, 2013 at JAMM Art Gallery, Street 8, Warehouse 11, Building 19, Al-Quoz 1, close to Al-Serkal Avenue. You can log on to www.jamm-art.org for more information.