

By **David Tusing**,
Deputy tabloid! Editor

Photographs, those wishy-washy new-age guys will tell you, can steal your soul. If that's true, celebrated American photographer Bert Stern's loot must be the most covetable. Having photographed everyone from Audrey Hepburn, Elizabeth Taylor and Madonna to Kylie Minogue and, well, Lindsay Lohan, in his career spanning 60 years, his is a resume few can match.

But perhaps Stern's most prized work is a collection called *The Last Sitting*, part of which arrives in Dubai on March 18 at the Jamm art gallery. Taken from a collection of almost 2,600 photographs Stern took of Marilyn Monroe for *Vogue* just six weeks before her tragic death in 1962, the pictures reveal an intimate and fragile side of the legend that the world is not quite ready to forget.

"Marilyn Monroe was great. She was sexy, beautiful and funny — the perfect all-American girl. I loved her," said Stern, who was given unprecedented access by the star for three days at the Bel-Air Hotel in Los Angeles. "I am very excited to be having a show for the first time in Dubai."

The exhibition features 12 archival prints on paper and on canvas enhanced with gemstones, pearls, Swarovski crystals and gold and silver flakes, and featuring Monroe in all her glory: the classic movie star dressed in fur, a pure character sheathed in a white veil or a sex symbol wearing nothing but pearls or diamond necklaces. Stern is a self-taught photographer who began his career as assistant in the art department of *Look* magazine in 1946, quickly making a name in fashion and advertising photography. Now 85, he is unable to travel to the Dubai exhibition but spoke to tabloid! by email.

How does it feel to have your work shown in Dubai?

I am very happy about it. These are very special

•Celebrated photographer reveals an intimate and fragile side of actress in Dubai exhibition

DON'T MISS IT

The Bert Stern exhibition runs until April 18 at Jamm Art Gallery, Hasa Road, Street 8, Warehouse 11, Al Quoz 1, close to Al Serkal Avenue. Visit jamm-art.org or call 04-328516. The gallery is open Saturday to Thursday, 11am to 7pm.



Stern's take on Monroe

Photos by Getty Images



Stern's photographs of Marilyn Monroe feature the star in all her glory.

pieces. My studio, my agent, and the gallery have worked very hard and I wish them luck.

With technology being what it is today, what do you think of the way photography as a profession has evolved?

Now, it is a digital world, and I find that easier. Before, we had to deal with chemicals to make the photos.

Do you think your work has evolved over the years? How?

I don't know, a question for the reviewers, not me. I don't enjoy looking back or self-review.

Do you still take pictures?

I do not enjoy taking pictures as much anymore.

Who have you always wanted to photograph but not had the chance to yet?

I would say nobody.

How does a photographer like yourself make an icon like Monroe trust him?

Much of it is a non-verbal kind of relationship. It's not really something that we talk about. It's a connection you make with something or somebody.

Any regrets about the time you spent with her? Any shot or moment you would have liked to capture?

No

When you were shooting her, did you ever think Monroe's reputation would live this long and spread this far?

She was already iconic in my eyes.

Where else has this exhibition travelled? And where else would you like to take it?

These pieces are special. I have only allowed a few public shows in New York and one in Toronto.

How do you spend your time these days?

It changes all the time. There is always something to do, the phone is always ringing.