

P.04 COVER **STORY**

## Marilyn Monroe: **The Pop Art Queen**

"I knew I belonged to the public and to the world," Marilyn wrote, "not because I was talented or even beautiful but because I had never belonged to anything or anyone else." Text: Tammy Ho



■ Simon Claridge, "Monroe", Giclee on board, Image provided by GoMA([www.gomahk.com](http://www.gomahk.com))



■ Lee Wasler, "Marilyn Monroe", 2009, Acrylic and wood on canvas, Image provided by Sundaram Tagore Galleries

Marilyn Monroe, with emblematic ruby red lips, significant black eyeliner and trademark white-blond hair, became the Pop Art Queen — often celebrated as a symbol of female sexuality but sometimes used to condemn society's commercialization of sex.

Being as the "Sexiest Woman of the Century" by People magazine, Marilyn Monroe's impact in the course of her brief entertainment career was so great that her image remains one of the most potent and poignant of our time, combining waiflike innocence with glittering eroticism, worldliness with profound vulnerability.

Some see her as the public saw her - sensual, half-open mouth, dreaming eyes, heavy, always just-covered breasts. To others, she is the subject of fantasy, an emblem of pure sex, the embodiment of the wholesome American Dream or the victim of iconic pop culture and mass media. It is the work

of these artists that combined to become a true testament to her global impact.

Marilyn's career corresponded to an era in American Art when artists began to explore the potential of popular imagery for expression. This exploration would culminate in the pop-art movement in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Pop artists were inspired by the power of the mass media and advertising to generate images and emblems that quickly settle into our culture as commonly shared experiences. They were fascinated with the manner in which popular images could immediately suggest a product or communicate an idea. Some of these artists, including Andy Warhol, Richard Hamilton, Mel Ramos, and Roy Lichtenstein, took familiar popular images out of their original contexts and transformed them into fine art, elevating them to the level of abstract ideas. In effect, the artists blurred the line between pop culture and fine art.



■ Eve Arnold, "A Private Moment", 1955, Photo, Image provided by GoMA

Andy Warhol may have contributed more to Marilyn Monroe's myth than Hollywood and the glossy magazines put together. Commercial movies and their public relations campaigns merely made her into a sex symbol and the prototype of the dumb blonde. She suffered under this image, as her various biographies, both fictitious and authentic, have since made clear.



■ Andy Warhol, "Marilyn Monroe", 1967, Print, Source from internet



■ Douglas Kirkland, "One night with Marilyn", 1961. Photo, Source from internet



■ Willem de Kooning, Marilyn Monroe", 1953, Print, Source from internet

Contemporary artists continued to explore different concepts in representing Marilyn in our times. The Warhol style of Marilyn continued in the 21st century by British artist Simon Claridge who created "The Diamond Dust Collection - Monroe". It is a response to Warhol's use of glittery surface as a commentary on modern life, and its obsession with glamour, illusion and extravagance.

Though her life ended far too soon, the world's fascination with Marilyn Monroe's



■ Antonio de Felipe, "En el Jardín de Hollywood", 2003, Print, Source from internet



■ Milton Greene, "Marilyn Monroe, 'Ballerina' Sitting in Tutu", 1954, Photo, Source from internet

magnetic appeal and much publicized private life has continued to thrive over time. She was one of the most photographed women in history. Her image was captured by the most celebrated photographers of her day including Eve Arnold <sup>ABP12</sup>, Milton H. Greene, Douglas Kirkland and Bert Stern. The photos endure partly as artifacts — as the last visible evidence of the living woman. But the pictures are also remarkable for the raw truths they seem to reveal.

"I am an artificial product," Marilyn declared in a 1960 interview for Marie Claire magazine. And even more tellingly, "I must drag Marilyn Monroe around with me like an albatross" No less than the artists who have appropriated her image, Marilyn herself was an invention of the Hollywood studios. But undeniably - and perhaps most important of all - her image and legend have the power to move us in ways that cannot be intellectualized. On a visceral level, she is a remarkably powerful part of modern culture.



■ Mimmo Rotella, "Marilyn", 1963, Print, Source from rogallery.com



■ Peter Blake, "Marilyn", 1990s, Print, Source from internet

As a pioneer of beauty and glamour, what are Marilyn's favorites?

**Chanel No.5**

When asked in 1954 what she wore on bed at night, Marilyn Monroe answered,



■ Classic Chanel no.5 poster featuring Marilyn Monroe

Nothing but a few drops of Chanel No.5

**Ferragamo Italian Shoes**

Court shoe, 1958-59  
Upper in brown crocodile.  
Stiletto heel. The model was created for Marilyn Monroe.



**Emilio Pucci Clothing**



- 1 Marilyn's Pucci dresses up for auction at Julien's.
- 2 One of her favorite dresses designed by Jax.

