

STALEY ♦ WISE GALLERY

Press Release

Becoming Marilyn

June 18 - August 21, 2026

So much has already been said about Marilyn Monroe. After a deprived and unhappy early life as Norma Jeane Mortenson, Marilyn began her slow rise in Hollywood thanks to her agent and lover Johnny Hyde. At the time of her death at age 36, Marilyn had reached the height of celebrity and stardom - a position that has miraculously continued beyond her death.

The role of the photographer has been crucial to the rise of Marilyn Monroe. As her friend and photographer Sam Shaw once said, "The camera loved Marilyn and Marilyn loved the camera." The importance of photography to the maintenance of her legend has been demonstrated by multiple museums and gallery exhibitions celebrating her 100th birthday this year.

From her years as an unknown starlet all the way through the heights of her fame, Marilyn remained a magnet to photographers who have been drawn to photograph her as no other person has been photographed. She came alive for the camera and seemingly never tired of posing, demonstrating a sexuality that was obvious yet acceptable.

This exhibition follows the teenage Norma Jeane on the beach as photographed by her friend Andre de Dienes through her iconic VOGUE sitting photographed by Bert Stern only a few weeks before her death. In between, the exhibition includes images by Milton Greene, Philippe Halsman, Cecil Beaton, Richard Avedon, Sam Shaw, Elliott Erwitt, and Lawrence Schiller, among others – some instantly recognizable and some rarely-seen.

The exhibition also highlights the influence that Marilyn's image has had on the culture at large. Frank Powolny's photograph of Marilyn was used by Andy Warhol in his silkscreens in 1967. In 2003, David LaChapelle reinterpreted Warhol's own portrait with transgender performance artist Amanda Lepore. Patrick Demarchelier's 1990 photograph of Madonna, carefully groomed and styled as Marilyn, reflects her lasting influence as an embodiment of feminine beauty.

Press images available upon request.

Opening Reception

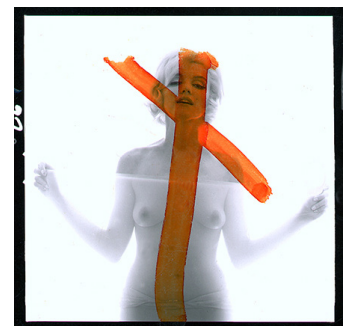
June 18, 2026 (6-8pm)



Milton Greene
Marilyn Monroe,
Ballerina Sitting, 1954
© Milton Greene / MHG Collective LLC



André de Dienes
Marilyn Monroe
(A Study in Sadness), c. 1955
© André De Dienes / MUUS Collection



Bert Stern
Marilyn Monroe:
"The Last Sitting®" (Crucifix II), 1962
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