

Marilyn mania at the Glenbow

If you're a fan of everyone's favourite muse, this show's for you

VISUAL ARTS >>REVIEW

**MARYLIN MONROE:
LIFE AS A LEGEND**

Until February 22
Glenbow Museum

ANITA ATHAVALÉ

If you have watched films or television, or listened to the music of Elton John, you have heard of Marilyn Monroe. Considered one of the greatest movie stars of all time, Monroe has been imitated and worshipped as a pop culture phenomenon since the height of her career in the mid 1950s. Born Norma Jeane Mortenson in 1926, she was discovered at a young age, modelled as a pin-up, dyed her hair blond and changed her name. In a handful of years, Norma Jeane grew to become the sensation that was Marilyn Monroe. She lived a glamorous but tragically short life, but Monroe still has an enormous number of fans whose devoted reverence hasn't weakened a bit in the 46 years since her death.

Lucky for me, and countless other fans, the Glenbow Museum has just opened a Monroe exhibition: *Marilyn Monroe: Life as a Legend*. It is an impressive collection of visual art inspired by Monroe, on loan from Artoma of Germany. The accompanying collection, *Some Like it Haute: The Costumes of Marilyn Monroe*, is a Canadian exclusive displaying costumes worn by the actress, as well as photographs spanning her career. There are famous works of art and photos on display in



Douglas Kirkland, *One Night with Marilyn (3)*, 1961/2003, Inkjet print, © Douglas Kirkland. Part of the exhibition at Glenbow

this exhibition (Warhol anyone?), and the Glenbow does a good job honouring her.

Some Like it Haute is both intriguing and melancholy. I love the censorship-defying sequined dress from *Some Like it Hot* EXPLAIN. Images of Monroe in each costume allow the garments to come to life. It's amazing to visualize Monroe wearing the dresses, acting in them and sweating in them. The portraits surrounding the dresses encompass Monroe's life in front of the camera, starting with photos taken in her late teens, just after she was discovered. The series

ends with photos of a tired, disoriented-looking Monroe posing on a lawn chair in her final years.

In the *Life as a Legend* wing of the exhibition, I was immediately affected by the depth of the artworks. Although some of the Monroe-inspired pieces are sweet and celebratory, Sarah Schumann's 1962 collage is dark and grieving. It depicts a seeping black cloud emerging from Monroe's face, cradled in what looks like the heartland of America. The disquieting mood portrays Monroe's controversial death and her enslavement to American icon status. Artist

Volker Hildebrandt's *Marilyn Monroe Diamonds* is a large monochromatic acrylic painting, which only reveals Monroe in focus from a distance of four metres. Up close, Monroe's face, done in thick short paint strokes, is indistinguishable. Hildebrandt is reminding us that as much as we adore Monroe, we can only appreciate her from afar.

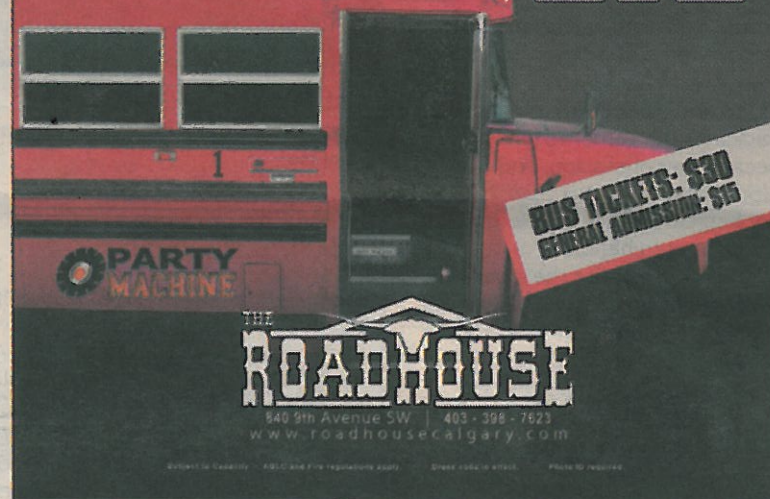
Peter Basch's simple photograph of Marilyn Monroe taken at The Actor's Studio in 1956 is striking. It is surreal to view a simple snapshot of someone as polished and glamorous as

Monroe, looking off at someone out of frame. Smiling and more relaxed than the public version of herself, she shows some very human lines and freckles. Just seeing this one candid photo of Monroe is worth a visit to the exhibition.

There is something undeniably affecting in the way Monroe has inspired the artists, photographers and designers whose work is on display at the Glenbow. She was just a woman, but one who still intrigues us.

>> Visit www.ffwdweekly.com to comment on this story.

DECEMBER 31, 2008
new years
EVE



Savour the Art

Now open
for Lunch

New Chef just
arrived from Japan

towa
sushi

2116-4th Street SW
www.towasushi.com

www.sushiboat.ca

Monty's
Crab Shack & Grill

Monty's is an experience in itself, offering superb cuisine that features our famous King Crab as well as a wide selection of fresh seafood, succulent AAA Alberta Beef aged 28 days, and pasta dishes that will please everyone's appetite.

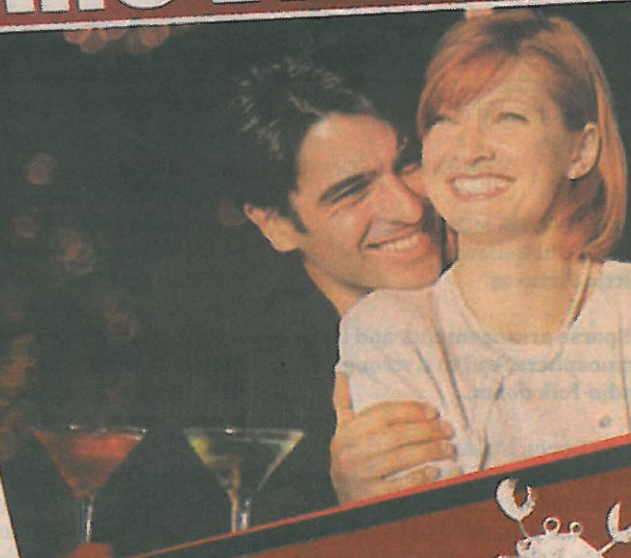
NEW YEARS EVE

An exclusive
3 course meal
for \$45

OR

Dinner for two and
one night stay in our
guest room for \$200

Doors open at 4:00 pm
Reservations call: 403-276-2636



Hours of operation Daily 7am-10pm

4804 Edmonton Trail NE, Calgary AB • 403-276-3391
(On the corner of McKnight Blvd. & Edmonton Trail, Located in the Quality Hotel)