



# STAR ★ POWER

The Dayton Art Institute  
showcases the life of  
Marilyn Monroe.

By LINDA FEAGLER



Bernard of Hollywood's  
"Marilyn Collage" (opposite).  
Milton H. Greene's "Marilyn 'ballerina'  
sitting in a tutu" (above).





"MGM Marilyn Goldwyn Monroe" (above) created by Antonio de Felipe. Bert Stern's "Here's to You from the Last Sitting" (right).



She may have radiated sex appeal that no other woman of her time could match, but Marilyn Monroe was no bimbo.

"She wasn't manufactured by Hollywood; Marilyn created her own legend," says Laine Snyder, assistant curator at the Dayton Art Institute.

From April 28 through June 24, the museum explores the many facets of "Marilyn Monroe: Life as a Legend," by presenting familiar photos and film clips, along with fresh renderings by artists dedicated to honoring the icon, who continues to charm and captivate despite her death 44 years ago.

"She was deliberate in many of her decisions about how she wanted to be portrayed," says Snyder, "which included the clothing she wore, her gait and the way she transformed her face and hair color." Tom Kelley's 1949 series of "Red Velvet" photos

of Monroe — which created quite a sensation four years later when one was published as *Playboy* magazine's first centerfold — is perhaps the most famous artifact on exhibit. Monroe, who up until that time had portrayed a wholesome ingenue posing for such magazines as *Family Circle* and *Yank*, reinvented her image at the photo shoot.

"Kelley positioned her against a sumptuous red velvet background so there's a very lush quality to the photographs which was just as provocative as the photos themselves, when you

consider the majority of people's sexual mores were a little bit more conservative back then," Snyder says. ("I had nothing on but the radio," Monroe often recalled about the modeling session.)

Monroe would go on to transform herself countless times to suit the audience she was playing to.

"She always felt like the Marilyn icon, the status of being Marilyn Monroe, was somewhat of an albatross — and she used that word albatross — that she carried around with her. There was a part of

her who really wanted to be taken seriously as an actress," Snyder says.

Monroe's movie-star glamour, so evident in Sam Shaw's famous posed shots of the actress standing over a subway grate for 1955's film "The Seven Year Itch," gave way to images of vulnerability and loneliness captured on camera by Ernst Haas and Eve Arnold five years later when she was

making "The Misfits." (Both images are in the exhibit.)

Monroe inspired artists to portray her in a wide variety of media. Andy Warhol's pop-art likeness — reproduced through the years on items ranging from clothing to coffee mugs to tote bags — presents a vibrancy that has transcended time. Christian Blau, on the other hand, examines the dark side of celebrity in "Overexposure," a collage he created in 2003 that juxtaposes an image of Monroe when she was fresh-faced Norma Jeane Baker with a photo

taken after her death.

"Blau's work is an extremely compelling, almost overwhelming work," Snyder says. "It confronts the idea that we're not just looking at Marilyn as a commodity, but as a real person. Her tragic life seems to be really encapsulated — all the hope in the one image, and all the despair and ultimately her death in another." ■

## MORE ON MARILYN

The Dayton Art Institute is presenting a variety of programs to complement "Marilyn Monroe: Life as a Legend." For information about these and other events, call 937/223-5277.

"Marilyn: Forever Blonde," a one-woman show presented by Sunny Thompson, recounts the actress' life in her own words. Performances are Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday at 2 p.m. and Friday at 8 p.m.

May 5, 12 and 19 and June 2, 9 and 16, 9:30 a.m.–noon: "Striking Poses" offers artists an opportunity to paint a nude model in a 1950s setting with a variety of materials.

May 5, 1–4 p.m.: "Mixing It Up: Pop Art and Photography," gives participants a chance to create a mixed-media painting with silk screening, photo transfer, collage and acrylic paint.

## THE DAYTON ART INSTITUTE

### Location:

456 Belmonte Park North,  
937/223-5277, [www.daytonartinstitute.org](http://www.daytonartinstitute.org)

### Hours:

Daily 10 a.m.–4 p.m.,  
Thur.–Fri. 10 a.m.–8 p.m.

### Show admission:

Adults \$14, seniors and  
students \$12, children 7–18 \$7