

Marilyn Monroe's Last Nudes Featured in New Book

In mid-December, Taschen Books releases what is perhaps the most weighty tribute to **Marilyn Monroe** ever produced: an 18-pound limited-edition art book titled *Norman Mailer, Bert Stern: Marilyn Monroe*. Each book, clocking in at almost two feet tall and wide, is signed by **Bert Stern**, who shot sessions with Monroe on assignment with *Vogue* magazine over the course of two weekends just six weeks before her death in 1962. The intimate portraits, which ranged from nude to fashion shots, are paired with **Norman Mailer's** 1973 biography *Marilyn* in this gorgeously executed book. The \$1,000 book runs to just 1,962 numbered copies (with 250 of those a \$2,500 art edition that comes with one print).

our editor recommends

PHOTOS: The Making of 'My Week With Marilyn'

THR spoke with Stern-- who is also of the subject of an upcoming documentary, *Becoming Bert Stern* --- at the Bel-Air Hotel where his portrait sittings with Monroe took place almost 50 years ago.

ON HOW HE GOT THE NUDE PHOTOS: "That was her idea," says Stern, who had brought a number of transparent scarves as accessories. "She could see they were transparencs so she asked her hairdresser what he thought of doing nudes and he thought that would be a good idea. I didn't know what was going to happen."

ON WHAT MOTIVATED HER TO POSE NUDE: It was "absolutely" calculated says Stern. "She had just had a divorce from **Arthur Miller**, she'd lost the movie *Something's Gotta Give*. I thought it was the only time in her life I could approach her. I had thought of it but I didn't think she would do it."

ON HER RIVAL ELIZABETH TAYLOR: "On my way to photograph Marilyn Monroe I photographed **Elizabeth Taylor**," says Stern. At the time, Monroe was jealous of the huge amount of public attention Taylor was receiving. "Taylor was much more stoic for a portrait subject. Marilyn was a free spirit."

ON MONROE'S BEHAVIOR DURING THE SHOOT: "She didn't talk about her life but she talked. She was combative in a way, confrontational. She asked me: Didn't I want to be a film director? What was my premise? She just made little comments."

ON WHY HE HASN'T READ MAILER'S BOOK: "I read a few pages. I'm not a big reader," admits the often curmudgeonly photographer.

ON MONROE'S UBIQUITY: "She's like part of the world. She's like the weather."

PHOTOS: Hollywood's Lost Letters

ON WHY SHE IS STILL AN ICON: "In the way that Christ represents religion, she represents femininity. The female spirit. She's the girl next door. The American dream girl."

She was just gorgeous. She was everything, Funny, beautiful, very sexy, great body, she was clever, a good model. I didn't expect her to be so naturally beautiful. I had expected her more blown up, heavier, much more fake. She was very real. I took to her right away."

ON WHETHER HE SAW HER END COMING: "No, I had no inclination. I just thought she was a typical beautiful crazy girl but particularly pretty and a lot of fun."

ON HAVING PASSION FOR HIS SUBJECT: "I think I was in love with her before I met her. I would have run away with her. Who wouldn't? If you have a passion, it will do a lot. And I was the right age for those pictures," says Stern, who was around 31 years old at the time. "When the first sitting was over, we were gathering all the photographs together. I figured, well, I didn't get Marilyn but I got the pictures. But it wasn't over because after *Vogue* saw the first pictures they sent me back to do more. It's never over. Marilyn goes on."

Below view an exclusive image from the book:

