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## Marilyn Monroe

June 1, 2016



The legendary starlet Marilyn Monroe was born 90 years ago on June 1, 1926. The actress has never faded from the spotlight in all the years since her tragic death on Aug. 5, 1962.

A new exhibition "André de Dienes: Marilyn and California Girls," opening June 9, 2016 at the Steven Kasher Gallery showcases images that provide us with a unique glimpse of the young Marilyn, taken by the first professional photographer to have worked with her, who also became one of her first lovers.

In 1945, when de Dienes first met Monroe, she was just an aspiring 19-year-old model and actress named Norma Jeanne Baker, who had recently separated from her husband James Dougherty. Her youthful innocence shines through in the early photos. Seen as a series, the transformation in her later years to a glamorous and troubled star is on full display.

The Transylvania-born photographer called the 19-year-old a "miracle" and a "sexy looking angel" when Emile Snively's Blue Book Model Agency sent over the eager Baker for a project of artistic nudes. He has said that he was "completely lovestruck." Though he didn't take any nudes of Baker, he did invite her on

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a five-week trip to photograph her. She was paid all of \$200. Soon after in 1946, Baker become known as Marilyn Monroe.

By 1949, de Dienes saw Monroe transformed into a "magnificent, elegant young woman." She was now the blond bombshell that the world knew. He still sought out the more casual, carefree woman for his photography, though, and took her out to the beach in Long Island for a similar shoot to the one he did in Malibu.

De Dienes published a memoir titled "Marilyn Mon Amour" in 1985 and a monumental monograph titled "Marilyn" in 2002.

André de Dienes who died in 1985, was known not just for his photographs of Marilyn Monroe, but others in Hollywood as well, including Marlon Brando and Elizabeth Taylor.

Monroe initiated her last photography session with de Dienes, calling him late one night in 1953 because she couldn't sleep. She proposed that the two meet to take pictures somewhere in a dark valley in Beverly Hills.

Without a flash or professional lighting, he lit Marilyn's face with the headlight of his car. She posed sad and lonely.

This was the first time that de Dienes came face to face with the dark side of Monroe. The photographer stayed in touch with the starlet until her death in 1962, but never photographed her again.

"André de Dienes: Marilyn and California Girls," which features more than 50 prints of Marilyn Monroe as well as the photographer's series of California nudes, will be on view June 9-July 30, 2016 at the Steven Kasher Gallery