## reviews: new york

# Bert Stern

#### Staley-Wise

Bert Stern's unabashed love of women pervades his iconic photographs of some of the 20th-century's most glamorous actresses, models, and ballerinas. A dashing



Bert Stern, Jean Shrimpton, 1963, archival pigment print with hand-applied jewels, framed, 37" x 37". Staley-Wise.

figure himself, he became one of the first photographers to receive almost as much press as his subjects. Stern operated a studio in the late '60s not unlike Andy Warhol's Factory, and shot ads, editorial features, magazine covers, films, and portraits, creating a body of work now considered classic.

Famed for his poignant "last sitting" photographs of Marilyn Monroe, shot six weeks before her death in 1962, as well as for portraits of Elizabeth Taylor, Audrey Hepburn, and Twiggy, he was able to draw attention to his subjects' beauty through a deft use of understated lighting and highly considered compositions.

Decades later, his images provide a glorious record of a less cynical time. Among the 25 works in this show was a shot of a sultry Taylor taken for Vogue in 1961, with her eyes heavily mascaraed, her mouth a perfect bow, and her look imperious. By contrast, there was another, of a gleeful Audrey Hepburn frolicking in a long, slim dress, hair wound ornately on her head.

For pure compositional flair, Stern's 1967 photograph of André Courrèges taken for Vogue proved unforgettable. It shows four models clad in the designer's shiny two-piece bathing suits, with each woman's legs and head positioned a little differently and their faces hidden. It resembles a frieze. But the sexiest shots of all were the ones he took of actress Sue Lyon for Look magazine in 1960, promoting the 1962 film Lolito. Wearing red.

heart-shaped sunglasses and sucking a red lollipop, she is the personification of a nymphet, and the rapport between subject and photographer is palpable.

-Valerie Gladstone

# Celia Gerard

## Sears-Peyton

Celia Gerard's mixed-media works on paper are large and arresting, and this show included six of them, three black on white and three white on black. Each is an abstract meditation on geometry and also a kind of imaginary landscape with an implied hori-

zon and multiple vanishing points. In all the works, triangle shapes predominate, often rising up like mountains, sometimes overlapping at skewed angles. They send the eye careening. With its fragmented surface, Up in Smoke (2007) seems to pay tribute to Cubism and Constructivism. Charcoal and graphite lines carefully ruled over layers of off-white gouache suggest crystals—or architecture gone berserk. There are ladderlike patterns and tetrahedrons and slabs jutting up like the concrete floors of half-collapsed buildings. Region of Unlikeness (2010) uses similar shapes to a more Minimalist effect. Sharp angles poke up like ice splinters in a polar land-scape where everything shimmers with reflected light and frost.

Gerard's white-on-black works lead us into a night where ghostly glass structures loom like memories of dreams. Raven (East), 2009, is crowded with transparent pyramids, wedges, and inky origami-like shapes, but, in a few spots, the hard-edged geometry is bisected by curvilinear forms, suggesting lips or little lost birds.

Block Star (2009–10) and Notte 3
(2010) seem to have been mapped out with a protractor and T square. The paintings' jagged polygons and ubiquitous triangles animate the artist's private universe, together with concentric circles, biomorphic afterthoughts, and the occasional sphere. Might there be a breast, a mouth, or an internal organ among the geometric constructs? In a world of points and planes, each curve implies something human. —Mona Molarsky



Celia Gerard, Notte 3, 2010, mixed media on paper, 50" x 65". Sears-Peyton.