President Kennedy's Birthday Party

MAY 19, 1962
MADISON SQUARE GARDEN

All Star Show

END ARENA

SEC. 112
ROW
SEAT

CONTRIBUTION $25. PER PERSON

New York's Birthday Salute To The President, Inc.

Sponsored by the State and National Democratic Committees and Citizens for Kennedy
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Friday, November 11th – Saturday, November 19th, 2016
Daily 11:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. PST (Daily)

Admission: $25 per person.
100% of the admission proceeds benefit The Downtown Women’s Center

LIVE AND ONLINE AUCTION

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THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 17TH, 2016 - EVENING AUCTION
Property from the Collection of David Gainsborough-Roberts and
Happy Birthday JFK Dress and Related Property
Session I: 6:00 p.m. PST

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 18TH, 2016
Marilyn Monroe Property from the Estate of Lee Strasberg
Session II: 10:00 a.m. PST
Session III: 2:00 p.m. PST

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 19TH, 2016
Déjà Vu: Property from the Life and Career of Marilyn Monroe
Session IV: 10:00 a.m. PST
Session V: 2:00 p.m. PST

Cover Photo: Getty Images

Auction Entry Fee To Attend Live Auction: $100 per person (for registered bidders all three days: November 17th, 18th and 19th). 100% of the registration and admission proceeds benefit The Downtown Women’s Center

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LOT 80
BOB MACKIE
MARILYN MONROE
JFK GOWN SKETCH
BACK ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT:
Dan Nelles, Michael Ries, Vincent Sandoval, Martin J. Nolan, Darren Julien, Mitch Kaba, Daniel Kruse, Michael Doyle, Alex Wisotsky

MIDDLE ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT:
Drew Wood, Megan Mulrooney, Ricardo Limon, Tim Luke, Nate Hebron, Jason Watkins

FRONT ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT:
Hillary Ripps, Gaby Douek, Summer Evans, Isabel Yeo, Jennifer Lorenzi, Adriana Ramos, Darcie Mena, Megan Mahn Miller

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As the former specialist in all things Popular Culture for Christie’s, I have had the unique privilege to get up close and personal with the property of many well-known celebrities, estates and iconic objects. However, no experience could even come close to presenting The Personal Property of Marilyn Monroe in 1999.

When you spend months in a contained space with items from a person’s life, you achieve a connection both physical and spiritual. As I sorted through the objects and personal items that collectively were Marilyn Monroe, a picture of who she REALLY was came into view. I began to see Marilyn the complete person – the smart woman – the passionate artist – the contemporary art muse - the icon that had the power to remain a legend to this day.

It was during my last week that I noticed a box in the corner of the warehouse that I had overlooked. After sifting through thousands of objects and personal things, I was certain that I had reviewed everything of interest and importance. As I tore open the top of the box and undid the reams of tissue paper, it appeared empty as the box was so lightweight. Much to my shock and amazement, I saw a glint of rhinestone and tissue-paper-thin nude fabric, realizing it was the one and only Jean Louis designed dress Marilyn wore at Madison Square Garden on May 19, 1962 when she sang Happy Birthday to President Kennedy.

I have been honored to present many iconic objects at auction including the car from Casablanca, The Maltese Falcon and even a carriage from The Wizard of Oz. But nothing, absolutely nothing, had prepared me for the visceral reaction this dress would cause around the world. Tens upon tens of thousands attended public viewings and I received letters from fans around the world wanting to know more about it.

On the night of October 27, 1999, I stood on the stage as the lights dimmed in the filled-to-capacity main gallery at Christie’s in New York. As the soundtrack of Marilyn singing from that magical night at Madison Square Garden began to play, a hush fell over the crowd. The curtains pulled back slowly to reveal the glittering dress on a revolving pedestal, showcasing the hand-stitches that were still intact from when Jean Louis sewed in onto Marilyn’s body some thirty-seven years prior. All you could hear were gasps and quiet respect. When the hammer came down, there was wild applause and pandemonium.

Luckily for me, I have been able to spend time with this dress over these last seventeen years. I can think of no other iconic object – anywhere — that stands at the intersection of pop culture, politics, fashion, Hollywood and 1960s history.

Nancy Valentino
Happy Birthday
Mr. President
PROGRAM FROM PRESIDENT KENNEDY’S 1962 BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

A program from the fundraising gala titled “Happy Birthday Mr. President” that took place at Madison Square Garden in New York City on May 19, 1962. The event featured Marilyn Monroe’s now legendary performance of the song “Happy Birthday” to the president in her form-fitting Jean Louis gown. The program lists the other performers that night and is being sold together with Frieda Hull’s ticket from the performance. The ticket cost $10, is numbered 827, and is listed as General Admission and additionally stamped “Standing Room” with right side of ticket torn off.

Program, 10 1/2 by 8 1/4 inches

PROVENANCE From the Estate of Frieda Hull

$1,000-2,000
Dated February 2, 1962, this vinyl covered, wire bound checkbook was for Marilyn Monroe’s personal account at Irving Trust Company in New York City, labeled “MM Personal” on the cover. The checkbook covers Monroe’s New York expenses from February 2 through August 31, 1962, check numbers 2102 through 2251, and offers a fascinating look at her expenses during the final year of her life.


The final check from this checkbook written while Monroe was alive was to Hattie Stephenson, Monroe’s East Coast housekeeper, on August 3, 1962. Checkbook activity resumed on August 10 and continued through August 31, 1962, with payments made to Stephenson and Hedda Rosten.

Several Marilyn Monroe signed checks are included, some actually written in Monroe’s own hand, with her signature having been ripped from the check so it could not be cashed. However, in some cases the remnants of Monroe’s signature are still present, as the complete signature was not torn away from the check.

7 1/2 by 8 3/4 inches

PROVENANCE From the Estate of Lee Strasberg

$8,000-10,000
MARILYN MONROE COMPLETE 1962 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

An extraordinarily detailed record of Monroe’s financial transactions via prepared report statements reflecting the activities in Monroe’s bank accounts at City National Bank and Irving Trust Company from January 1, 1962, to August 3, 1962, 99 pages total. The monthly statement reports include all “withholds,” receipts, and disbursements broken down by type of expense for each account. Of particular interest is the state of Monroe’s accounts at the time of her death, including a balance of $1,337.53 in her City National Bank account on August 1, 1962, with an overdraft of $4,208.34 in the same account on August 3, 1962. The Irving Trust Account shows a balance of $1,472.41 on August 1, 1962, and a balance of $111.71 on August 3, 1962.

The January 1962 statement includes a charge for “Household-Miscellaneous/ Jan. 30 Southdown Kennel - N.Y./ “Maf” board - 8/3 to 12/17 $330.00” and income from Some Like It Hot reported as $100,000.00 and from The Misfits as $150,000.00 against which Monroe paid a total of $45,000.00 in federal taxes. The March 1962 statement lists a total of $2,459.43 in beauty expenses, including hairdressing, cosmeticians, skin treatments, hair coloring, manicures and supplies. The May 1962 statement has a separate expense category titled “New York Birthday Salute to the President” with expenses listed as “May 18 New York’s Birthday Salute to the President $5,000.00/ May 16 Hazel Washington - come to NY for above - business maid, plane fare, expenses, salary $1,000.00.” The same statement lists a $300 deposit with Western Costume Company and the June 1962 statement lists a payment of $1,140.33 to Western Costume Company as “balance on gown.” Payments made to Dr. Ralph Greenson during the period of these statements total $8,450. The statements also show a great number of meals coded as “Entertainment” at Chip’s Steak House and La Scala.

The statements are accompanied by a file copy of a typed, unsigned letter, dated September 6, 1962, from Monroe’s secretary, Cherie Redmond, who prepared the statements, to secretary Inez Melson, who requested the statements. Together with five additional pages prepared by Redmond listing all outstanding checks drawn on both accounts as well as those not honored by the bank as of August 15, 1962. The lot includes another file copy of a typed, unsigned letter from Melson to attorney Aaron R. Frosch dated September 11, 1962, that accompanied the same monthly statements sent by Melson for purposes of preparing Monroe’s final tax filings and for probate purposes. This two-page letter discusses measures taken to maintain the security of Monroe’s Brentwood, California, property on Helena Drive and is accompanied by a seven-page report prepared by Melson giving greater detail regarding all of the outstanding checks and bills due with explanations of each payment, including what it was for and to whom it was made.

PROVENANCE From the Estate of Lee Strasberg

$3,000-5,000
MARILYN MONROE MAGAZINES

A January 16, 1962, special issue of LOOK magazine featuring content about “The Next 25 Years” with predictions by John F. Kennedy, Dr. Martin Luther King and others. Together with a March 1961 issue of Esquire magazine featuring an eight-page cover article on Marilyn Monroe, Arthur Miller, John Huston and the film The Misfits. A full-page ad for this issue of Esquire, as it appeared in the February 24, 1961, copy of the New York Times, is also present, tucked inside the magazine. The ad used a quotation from the feature article that criticized Monroe for being too high maintenance and out of control.

Largest, 13 1/4 by 10 1/2 inches

PROVENANCE From the Estate of Lee Strasberg

$500-700
Marilyn Monroe Correspondence with Lester Markel

A series of letters including five unsigned file copies of Marilyn Monroe’s letters to Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Lester Markel of the New York Times, together with five typed, signed letters from Markel on New York Times letterhead. The two had a friendship and an interesting series of communications dated between August 6, 1959, and June 30, 1960, including the now famous letter in which Monroe demonstrates her humor and comprehensive understanding of the politics of their time. On the subject of Fidel Castro, Monroe writes, “Now, Lester, on Castro. You see, Lester, I was brought up to believe in democracy, and when the Cubans finally threw out Battista [sic] with so much bloodshed, the United States doesn’t stand behind them and give them help or support even to develop democracy.” She also discusses possible presidential candidates and offers slogans for their campaigns in the post script: “Nix on Nixon” and “Back to Boston by Xmas - Kennedy.” Two of the five pages of Monroe’s file copies contain three drafts of the same letter that is left unfinished.

8 1/2 by 11 inches

Provenance: From the Estate of Lee Strasberg

$600-800
MARILYN MONROE SIGNED TILE FROM PRESIDENT KENNEDY’S 1962 BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

A pair of celebrity signed ceramic tile displays with inscriptions to event producer Clive David. Each framed display consists of 16 tiles. The top six decorative tiles of each frame combine to read “1962.” The remaining 10 tiles of each display are covered with signatures and inscriptions to David, including an inscription from Marilyn Monroe. Monroe’s inscription reads “To Clive Love & Kisses Marilyn Monroe” and was obtained by David at the Madison Square Garden birthday celebration of John F. Kennedy held on May 19, 1962. Maria Callas’ signature was also obtained at that event. Other signatures include Gloria Swanson, Paulette Goddard, Ray Bolger, Tab Hunter, Hedda Hopper, Una Merkel, Audrey Meadows, Earl Wilson, Ginger Rogers, Olivia de Havilland, Anita Loos, Lucille Ball, Carol Bruce, and Tallulah Bankhead, among others.

Each, 39 by 14 1/2 inches, framed

$8,000-10,000
An 8mm film reel of clips from the May 19, 1962, John F. Kennedy 45th birthday celebration held at Madison Square Garden. The eight-minute film shows clips of the venue, performers, and attendees, including John F. Kennedy; Marilyn Monroe, who appears for approximately 30 seconds; Robert Kennedy; Maria Callas; Henry Fonda; Jack Benny; Peter Lawford, who hosted the event; and Lyndon B. Johnson among others. The film was transferred from its original tin reel to a plastic reel. Accompanied by a DVD of the footage.

Reel, 5 3/4 inches

PROVENANCE Lot 41, "Entertainment Memorabilia," Christie's, New York, Sale number 1391, June 24, 2004

$4,000-6,000
Marilyn Monroe Photographs Sold with Copyright

A group of five color photographs of Marilyn Monroe taken on May 19, 1962, at the birthday gala for President John F. Kennedy at Madison Square Garden in New York City. Three of these images show Monroe singing “Happy Birthday” on stage and are likely the only known color photos taken of Monroe during this performance.

This item sold with copyright but not with copyright documentation. It is the responsibility of the winning bidder to apply for copyright. While the seller confirms that this property is sold with copyright, Julien’s can accept no liability in relation to any matters arising as a result of any imperfection in copyright given.

Largest, 5 by 3 1/2 inches

Provenance From the Estate of Frieda Hull

$5,000-6,000
Dear Bobbybones,

The first thing I want to say is very disappointed that you didn’t call me on your telephone. I didn’t quite get it to work out, and I remember that in a few years you and I don’t seem to do things things that you like having your own telephone for; but at the same time I still think and remember that you would be the one to have any harm in it, especially if it were your Christmas present. You feel you have a need for it and would like to cheer up. I would like to replace it, but it do glad you had one. I wonder if you have any idea of anything else, like something like that? Or let me know.

That pool table you told me about in that Danish hotel sounds great. Did I ever tell you that I can really play pool. I learned when I was about sixteen and it is something that you never forget. I also comment, “I am going to get the book you recommended; is it "Lord of the Flies" or "The Fleas"? I would love to read something really terrifying.”

Most poignantly, Monroe tells Bobby about her new home, “Bobby, I have the best news: I have just completely bought my new house. It is an authentic little Mexican house, but it’s got a gigantic swimming pool, and it looks just like Mexico. You would just love it. I have two guest rooms plus lots of patios, and a big Mexican wall goes all around the place with high Mexican gates (that’s to keep intruders out, in case anybody gets intrusive.) Anyway, I would love - it can be arranged - if you and Janie wanted to stay as long as you wanted to. I will take care of your plane tickets and meet you at the airport. You liked California — well, what I want you and Janie to be as long as you want to. I will take care of your plane tickets and meet you at the airport.”
Monroe is also excited to share other news, "Oh, Bobby, guess what: I had dinner last night with the Attorney-General of the United States, Robert Kennedy, and I asked him what his department was going to do about Civil Rights and some other issues. He's very intelligent, and besides all that, he's got a terrific sense of humor. I think you would like him. Anyway, I had to go to this dinner last night as he was the guest of honor and when they asked him who he wanted to meet, he wanted to meet me. So, I went to the dinner and I sat next to him, and he isn't a bad dancer either." She continues telling Bobby about her conversation and pressing Kennedy to find out what he planned to do about civil rights and that he answered her questions and told her he would send her a letter with all of his plans. He asked her if she had been attending "some kind of meetings" she writes to Bobby, "I laughed and said ‘no, but these are the kind of questions that the youth of America want answers to and want things done about.’ Not that I’m so youthful, but I feel youthful. But he’s an old 36 himself which astounded me because I’m 35. It was a pleasant evening, all in all."

She begins to close, "I haven’t heard from her [Janie] since Christmas. I guess we are all a little sloppy about writing. However, I think we all know what we mean to each other, don’t we. At least I know I love you kids and I want to be your friend and stay in touch. ... I love you and miss you, and, give my love to Janie.

P.S.
My new address is 12505 Fifth Helena Drive, Los Angeles 49, California.

Julien’s Auctions | 29
NORTH OCEAN BOULEVARD
PALM BEACH, FLORIDA

Dear Marilyn -

Mother asked me to write and thank you for your sweet note to Daddy. We really enjoyed it and you were very cute to send it -
MARILYN MONROE RECEIVED LETTER FROM JEAN KENNEDY SMITH
A single sheet of stationery listing an address in Palm Beach, Florida, with autograph notation in blue ink on recto and verso reading in full, "Dear Marilyn - Mother asked me to write and thank you for your sweet note to Daddy - He really enjoyed it and you were very cute to send it. / Understand that you and Bobby are the new item! We all think you should come with him when he comes back east. Again thanks for the note. / Love, Jean Smith." Jean Smith is one of nine children to Rose and Joseph Kennedy and sister to John F. Kennedy, Robert F. Kennedy, Ted Kennedy, Eunice Kennedy Shriver and four other siblings.

7 3/4 by 5 3/4 inches

PROVENANCE From the Estate of Lee Strasberg

$3,000-5,000
That was the first time I had ever been involved in a dress like that. I was the kid in the back room. …Talk about hisztorical. They are still printing images of her in that dress. It was magical. And it was simple, and yet so powerful. You can’t do a better dress than that for Marilyn Monroe to wear. It was the perfect, perfect gown. — Bob Mackie
BOB MACKIE MARILYN MONROE JFK GOWN SKETCH
A Bob Mackie signed mixed media on paper contemporary sketch of Marilyn Monroe in her 1962 Jean Louis designed gown. Mackie has drawn Monroe in the nude illusion gown using his current style of sketching. Mackie’s first job in Hollywood was with Jean Louis. At the time he drew the original sketch, he did not know who the gown was for. The 22 year-old Mackie, under Jean Louis’ direction, spent his days drawing sketches of Marilyn Monroe for her role as Ellen Arden in the unfinished film Something’s Got To Give (20th Century). Mackie recalled that Louis’ French accent was so thick it was difficult to understand his directions.

17 by 11 inches
$4,000-6,000
82

LEROY NEIMAN (AMERICAN, 1921-2012)

“Happy Birthday Mr. President,” serigraph on paper, signed in pencil lower right and numbered 500/600 lower left.

38 by 34 inches, sight; 56 by 52 inches, overall

$8,000-10,000
JOHN F. KENNEDY 1962 BIRTHDAY GALA TICKET
A ticket to the May 19, 1962 Birthday Party Gala held for President John F. Kennedy at Madison Square Garden.
The ticket is marked for section 112, with a suggested contribution of $25.

$3,000-5,000
MARILYN MONROE JFK DRESS

A Jean Louis designed illusion gown worn by Marilyn Monroe at Madison Square Garden in New York City on May 19, 1962, at a Democratic fundraiser and 45th birthday celebration for President John F. Kennedy.

Early in 1962, Monroe asked famed Hollywood costume designer Jean Louis to create a dress “that only Marilyn Monroe could wear.” The nude soufflé chiffon gown, perfectly matching Monroe’s skin tone, was embellished with hand-sewn round crystals, carefully placed since the dress was created with no underlining layer. Monroe wore no undergarments that night, instead relying on Louis’ masterful swirls of crystals in precisely the right places. Under the stage lights of Madison Square Garden, the fabric of the dress appeared to melt away, leaving only twinkling rays of light from the crystals reflected by the spotlight covering Monroe. The gown was designed as a sleeveless column dress with a scoop neck and open back with clear zipper, covered by hook and eye tab closure and a small train at the back hem. Despite the zipper and closures, the gown was so form-fitting that Louis later disclosed that Monroe had to be sewn into the back closure. His hand stitching is still evident beneath the lower back hook and eye tabs. Since 1999, the dress has been displayed on a custom conservator mannequin.

In this dress, Monroe sang her unique version of “Happy Birthday” to President Kennedy and a crowd of 15,000 well-wishers. Some have posited that Monroe’s delayed appearance on stage and her breathless performance can be attributed to getting lost and racing to the stage as Peter Lawford joked about Monroe’s penchant for never being on time.

The effect of her performance was far reaching – not only for Monroe but also for American 1960s culture. Monroe’s seductive serenade remains a crossroads of Hollywood and political touch points more than 54 years later. Part of the appeal may be the intrigue: Were Monroe and Kennedy having an affair? Did she just stand up in front of 15,000 people and sing him that song that way? The performance has taken on a life of its own, outside the context of the gala. While Monroe’s performance is instantly recognizable and the most memorable of the night, it was one of many that night that included Jack Benny, Ella Fitzgerald, Henry Fonda and Maria Callas. However, it is Monroe singing in this dress that is remembered. It has come to epitomize who Marilyn was in popular culture, including the lyrics she wrote herself for the evening:

Happy Birthday to you
Happy Birthday to you
Happy Birthday Mr. President
Happy Birthday to you
Thanks Mr. President
For all the things you’ve done
The battles that you’ve won
The way you deal with U.S. Steel
And our problems by the ton
We thank you so much
Everybody! Happy Birthday!

As an enormous birthday cake was wheeled onstage, President Kennedy commented on Monroe’s performance, joking, “I can now retire from politics after having had ‘Happy Birthday’ sung to me in such a sweet, wholesome way.”

On that special evening, Monroe could not have known that she would live fewer than three months. Perhaps she thought another future performance would replace this as the moment that would epitomize her and her life. Sadly, John F. Kennedy was assassinated eighteen months later, and if tragedy had not intervened, this may not have been the singular iconic moment we associate with Monroe and Kennedy.

Although Monroe could not have known that this performance would be the last image of her remembered by so many following her untimely death; she expended a great deal of effort and money to bring this moment to life. Monroe’s financial statements from this period reveal a great deal about the extraordinary amount of money she put behind her performance. Her May 1962 financial statements list a special expense category titled “New York Birthday Salute to the President” with a $5,000 expense, Monroe’s ticket/donation made to attend the event. Expenses also include $1,000 listed as pertaining to the birthday gala for her maid, Hazel Washington, to accompany Monroe to New York. The expense is coded as “business maid, plane fare, salary.” Her last checkbook also records a check paid to Mary Irvine for makeup for “special appearance at Madison Square Garden.” Monroe’s financial statements also list a $300 deposit paid to Western Costume Company to create this gown with matching shoes in May and a payment for the remaining balance of $1,140.33 in June 1962. There were no doubt other expenses involved in Monroe’s appearance, but the ticket to the event, dress, and the expenses listed above total more than $7,000 in 1962, which with inflation would equate to $60,000 in 2016.

These costs do not begin to take into account the cost Monroe paid professionally for her appearance. At the time she was filming Something’s Got To Give, and Twentieth Century Fox executives would not give Monroe permission to leave filming to attend the event. According to some sources, the employees on the crew were aware, in advance, that Monroe was traveling from Los Angeles to perform at the celebration. Whatever miscommunication or machinations there were behind the absence, it became another strike against the actress on an already contentious film set. Monroe’s unauthorized departure was used against her as she was ultimately fired from the film.

The performance that night in May also had an impact on Monroe’s personal life. Monroe biographer Lois Banner, in her book Marilyn: The Passion and the Paradox (New York: Bloomsbury, 2012), asserts that Monroe told the event planners that she would replace this as the moment that would epitomize her and her life. Sadly, it was Monroe’s death in 1962 that inspired Warhol to create the “Marilyn Diptych” among more than 20 silkscreen paintings of her, all based on the publicity photograph from her 1953 film Niagara, plucking her from pop culture, forever immortalized as art.

The performance that night in May also had an impact on Monroe’s personal life. Monroe biographer Lois Banner, in her book Marilyn: The Passion and the Paradox (New York: Bloomsbury, 2012), asserts that Monroe told the event planners that she would dress discreetly. When viewed under normal lighting, the dress did appear modest, but under the glare of the Madison Square Garden stage lights, the Jean Louis creation magically transformed into a sparkling second skin. The dress and the song were too much for the political dynasty, and according to Banner, that evening ended whatever relationship Monroe and John F. Kennedy shared and severed her from the rest of the Kennedy family. The magic and myth of Marilyn Monroe as legend was certainly sealed that evening in May 1962, made permanent by her mysterious death a short time later. The fact that she remains a contemporary role model and muse all these decades later is extraordinary and a feat achieved by few. Ten years after her death, Elton John and Bernie Taupin penned “Candle in the Wind” about Monroe, repurposing the lyrics twenty-four years later for the funeral of Princess Diana. From Andy Warhol to Cindy Sherman to Richard Avedon and Bert Stern, the art and photography world has always taken Marilyn Monroe seriously. In fact, it was Monroe’s death in 1962 that inspired Warhol to create the “Marilyn Diptych” among more than 20 silkscreen paintings of her, all based on the publicity photograph from her 1953 film Niagara, plucking her from pop culture, forever immortalized as art.


Special Registration is required to bid on this lot. Please contact Julien’s Auctions at info@juliensauctions.com if you would like to bid.

$2,000,000-3,000,000
Jean Louis

The gown was designed by French-born Hollywood designer Jean Louis. Louis began his career in America working for fashion entrepreneur Hattie Carnegie prior to establishing himself as head designer at Columbia Pictures in 1943. While at Columbia, Louis was the only designer at the time given full film credit. For more than four decades, he designed film costumes and personal wardrobe for socialites and many of Hollywood’s leading ladies, including Irene Dunne, Claudette Colbert, Joan Crawford, Judy Garland, Doris Day, Kim Novak, Ginger Rogers, Betty Grable, Lana Turner, Loretta Young, and Rita Hayworth. Louis was nominated for 14 Academy Awards and won one for the 1956 film The Solid Gold Cadillac. In 1946, he designed the iconic strapless black gown worn by Hayworth while she sang “Put the Blame on Mame” in Gilda.

In 1953, Louis designed costumes for Salome. This may have been the first time he employed nude illusion in his design. For the film, Hayworth was outfitted in a body stocking as she danced beneath veils. He became known for the illusion dress when, also in 1953, he designed Marlene Dietrich’s gown for her Las Vegas stage show. Dietrich had worn this style of dress before, made by other designers, but under Louis’ hand, the illusion dress became an art. Dietrich nicknamed his designs “beads and skin” dresses. According to a 1987 People magazine article, Dietrich’s Las Vegas stage dress took six months to fit with Dietrich flying to Los Angeles from New York on weekends as she requested crystals be strategically moved up and down around the dress.

In the early 1960s, Louis opened a salon in Beverly Hills and continued to work on films on a freelance basis. He provided a portion of Monroe’s wardrobe for The Misfits and was the costume designer for Monroe’s slimmer figure in her final unfinished film, Something’s Got To Give. One of Louis’ greatest talents was that he did not let his dresses upstage the women wearing them. The illusions he created allowed those women to shine in their best light.
WHERE MARILYN MEETS ELVIS...

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