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HOW
KATE
TOOK
OVER
THE ART
WORLD

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THE ART OF KATE

Kate Moss: supermodel, style icon and now artists' muse. *Stylist* explores the art world's most enigmatic inspiration

Once upon a time, the most widely depicted female in art was the Virgin Mary. Religion was worshipped by the masses and the popularity of its female figurehead was reflected in the number of artists who considered her their muse. From tapestries to sculptures to oil paintings, her image was recreated countless times. However, the 21st century has seen a new religion come to dominate Western society: celebrity. And pitched at the forefront of our new celebrity culture is Kate Moss. Her image is beamed from more advertising campaigns and magazines covers than any other. So it's only natural that the art world has latched on to the cultural significance of Kate Moss and made her the art muse for the 21st century.

Kate Moss may not be immediately synonymous with art; we instinctively think model, not muse. Over the past two decades however, the list of artists who have based pieces on Moss across the spectrum of disciplines is lengthy. There's Takashi Murakami, street artist Pen 1 and Gary Hume, who portrayed her as an abstract. Stella Vine, Paul Normansell and Sandra Shashoua have all painted or collaged her image (in the case of Normansell, as many as 10 times) from pictures they've found in magazines. Banksy's screen-print of Moss was sold in 2008 for £96,000, three times what it was estimated. Her image has even opened an exhibition at the

Metropolitan Museum Of Art in New York. In fact, there's so much Moss art out there, she's not even aware of much of its existence. In an interview in American magazine *Harper's Bazaar* she admitted, "Jay Jopling of The White Cube gallery told me that there are so many things that artists have done I haven't seen most of them. It's a bit scary."

So why does she hold so much fascination for an artist? "Kate Moss is very enigmatic," believes art expert and star of Sky Arts 2's forthcoming *Auction*

"Artists can project their own thoughts and feelings onto her"

series Meredith Etherington-Smith. "She hardly says anything, so artists can project their own feelings and thoughts onto this symbolic image." Interestingly, another appealing aspect of Moss is the challenge of producing an original image of someone whose face has been captured millions of times before. Plus there's her popularity: "Artists use Kate because she's common currency," says Simon Grant, editor of *Tate Etc* magazine.

Moss isn't the first high-profile figure who

has proven a captivating muse for the art world. For centuries the mood of society has been captured by individuals' images imprinted in history. During the 1800s, Elizabeth Siddal was the muse of the century, sitting for numerous paintings and drawings for the Pre-Raphaelites, including, most famously, Millais' *Ophelia* which made her the most famous face of her generation. More recently Andy Warhol looked to Marilyn Monroe as his muse, yet she wasn't painted by anyone else notable. "Marilyn Monroe would be the nearest to Kate but she wasn't painted by anyone other than Warhol. She died in 1962 and there wasn't this massive focus on celebrity then like there is now," agrees Etherington-Smith.

The current fascination with Moss symbolises a huge clash between the worlds of art, fashion and celebrity but it's not surprising when you consider that art has always reflected what is going on in the world. Indeed, celebrity influence on art in relation to religion's previous dominance was illustrated brilliantly by the Spanish painter Lluís Barba's reworking of Hieronymus Bosch's *The Garden Of Earthly Delights*. What once showed the creation, earth and hell is now replaced with celebrities. He argues that Kate Moss "is as important to art history as Andy Warhol." Many might consider this comparison extreme, but judging by the number of artists who have worked with her, there's no denying Kate has become a work of art...



• **KATE MOSS, PHOTOGRAPHED BY CORINNE DAY, 2007**

Captured here by the late Corinne Day who first shot Moss when she was 14, these nine headshots are part of the permanent collection at the National Portrait Gallery. They show Kate animatedly discussing 'a serious subject'. Kate's reaction to the piece? "I've got crooked teeth... a wonky nose."

THE ART INSPIRED BY KATE MOSS



• **NAKED PORTRAIT 2002 BY LUCIAN FREUD, OIL ON CANVAS**

After a rare interview in which Moss stated that one of her ambitions was to be painted by Lucian Freud, he asked her to sit for him. "Being painted by Lucian Freud is always important and he captures the essence of her sexuality and aura," explains Rosenthal. "Lucian paints his family, ordinary people, and so Kate here is quite ordinary. He paints her as a woman, not a model."


• **KATE MOSS, A SCREEN-PRINT ON PAPER, BY BANKSY, 2005**

"Banksy is referencing someone else's work of art, which in turn was referencing someone else's photograph. I actually think Warhol did it better," says Etherington-Smith about this limited edition pastiche of Andy Warhol's iconic portraits of Marilyn Monroe by the elusive street artist. Still, it sold for three times its predicted price at auction in 2008 for £96,000.

• **SIREN GOLD SCULPTURE BY MARC QUINN, 2008**

"She is a contemporary version of the Sphinx. A mystery," said Marc Quinn in 2008 when his gold sculpture was unveiled. The 50kg, solid 18-carat, lifesize statue of the model in a yoga position was created by life casts (although someone else did the actual pose). "Marc's also done marble sculptures of Kate and what I find interesting is that he seems to be referencing an Indian goddess," says Etherington-Smith.

• **KATE, BY SANDRA SHASHOU, 2008, OIL ON CANVAS AND NEWSPAPER**

"The photograph in the newspaper of Kate's cocaine snorting allegations inspired me to start doing newspaper article portraits," admits painter Sandra Shashou whose picture of Kate Moss is part of her British Icons series which also includes the Queen and Diana, Princess of Wales. "The piece is like a bullet-point biography of her life; you read about her so it's a narrative and simultaneously you see the painted image, which is her portrait." 





● **KATE MOSS 7 BY PAUL NORMANSELL, 2007, GLOSS PAINT ON ALUMINIUM**

Paul Normansell has painted Kate Moss 10 times over the last nine years. Working from photographs – or in this instance a Rimmel advert – he builds up his portraits from dots. “She’s very versatile and looks different in every image I find; she’s not like any other model out there. She’s seen as the cutting edge of fashion, so as a muse she appeals to a wide range of people,” says Normansell.

● **HOLY WATER CANNOT HELP YOU NOW BY STELLA VINE, 2005, ACRYLIC ON CANVAS**

Artist Stella Vine has said she feels Moss was treated unfairly by the press during the cocaine allegations. “I find that a bit suspect,” says Simon Grant, editor of Tate Etc. “People like painting beautiful things but they don’t necessarily mean anything.”

● **KATE (MODEL BEHAVIOUR) BY PEN 1, 2010**

“Kate Moss has epitomised London cool for years but with her Topshop tie-in, her brand upped and moved to the West End, which has always been about mass consumption. It doesn’t embody cool in any way, so I wanted to put her back among the cool people where she belongs,” reveals anonymous graffiti and street artist Pen 1 (short for Public Enemy Number 1) who stencilled this mock-up mug shot on a Shoreditch building earlier this year.

NEXT WEEK! STYLIST INTERVIEWS KATE MOSS

In a rare interview next week, Kate tells *Stylist* about her first love, her daughter Lila and her transition from model to businesswoman. Pick up a copy on 1 December

