

David Studwell celebrity portrait exhibition at Highgate’s North and South Gallery

 **PUBLISHED:** 01:00 09 June 2017 | [Bridget Galton](#)



Brigitte Bardot by David Studwell

David Studwell has sold his nostalgic works celebrating the glamour and dark side of fame to Kate Moss and George Michael’s cousin



The last time David Studwell was exhibiting in Highgate, local resident Kate Moss wandered in and bought four pieces.

Now he’s showing 15 silk screen prints of celebrities including Brigitte Bardot, Marilyn Monroe and Audrey Hepburn at the same venue.

“We’re a group of artists who have been running regular pop up shows in this gallery,” he says. “Last November Kate Moss was walking past and randomly came in. She made a beeline for my work, she loved it and bought two Bob Dylan pieces a Bardot and a David Bowie. She was quite chatty and relaxed and asked about how they are made – she’s an avid art collector and when she talks about what she likes it sounds like my stuff is right up her street.”

Later George Michael’s cousin Alex Georgiou walked in and bought a Jimi Hendrix piece that he later gave to famous producer Nile Rodgers. Studwell, who trained at Central St Martin’s and works from a studio in Kensal Rise, admits he’s “almost obsessed” by celebrity.

“The majority of my work is quite nostalgic, it harks back to the golden age of Hollywood and bygone eras like the sixties.

“But it’s not just the obvious glamour but also the darker side of celebrity - the mug shots that show a different side to the people we put on pedestals.”

Studwell’s Bowie and Jagger mugshots in the exhibition are based on genuine police archive images that arose from drug busts in the 60s and 70s.

“They are all real mug shots, Bowie was with Iggy Pop in a hotel in New York State in 1976 when they were raided, and Jagger was smoking cannabis with Keith Richards. You think of those times as liberal and free but they really weren’t.”

Studwell first manipulates the image, adding colour, tints or changing the pixel size to “give it a fresh feel”.

“I take images from the past and bring them into the present.”

He then transfers the image onto a silk screen, building up layers of coloured ink while printing onto paper. His fixation with what he calls “real film stars” “legends” like Steve McQueen and Paul Newman, spring from a pre-reality TV, pre-Instagram era when celebrities retained their mystery.

“Celebrity has lost it’s meaning now. I’m hard pushed to think of a modern icon who has endured like Bardot.”

What about Moss herself, who has maintained her enigma and career over several decades?

“Yes she has endured, there are some fantastic pictures of her that I’d like to do.”

Until June 11th June at the North and South Gallery, 82 Highgate High Street.