

MAO MAG

KEITH
HARING

OSSIE CLARK

BOB

RICHARDSON

CAMILLA
NICKERSON

KENNETH
FRANCISCO

COSTA

PAUL MORRISSEY

CANDY

PRATT'S PRICE

DAVID SPADA

BABY JANE

HOLZER

HOLLY WOODLAW

MARIPOL

ANNIE FLANDERS

NINA

HAGEN

PATRICK MCMILEAN

MICHAEL

MUSTO

CHRIS VON

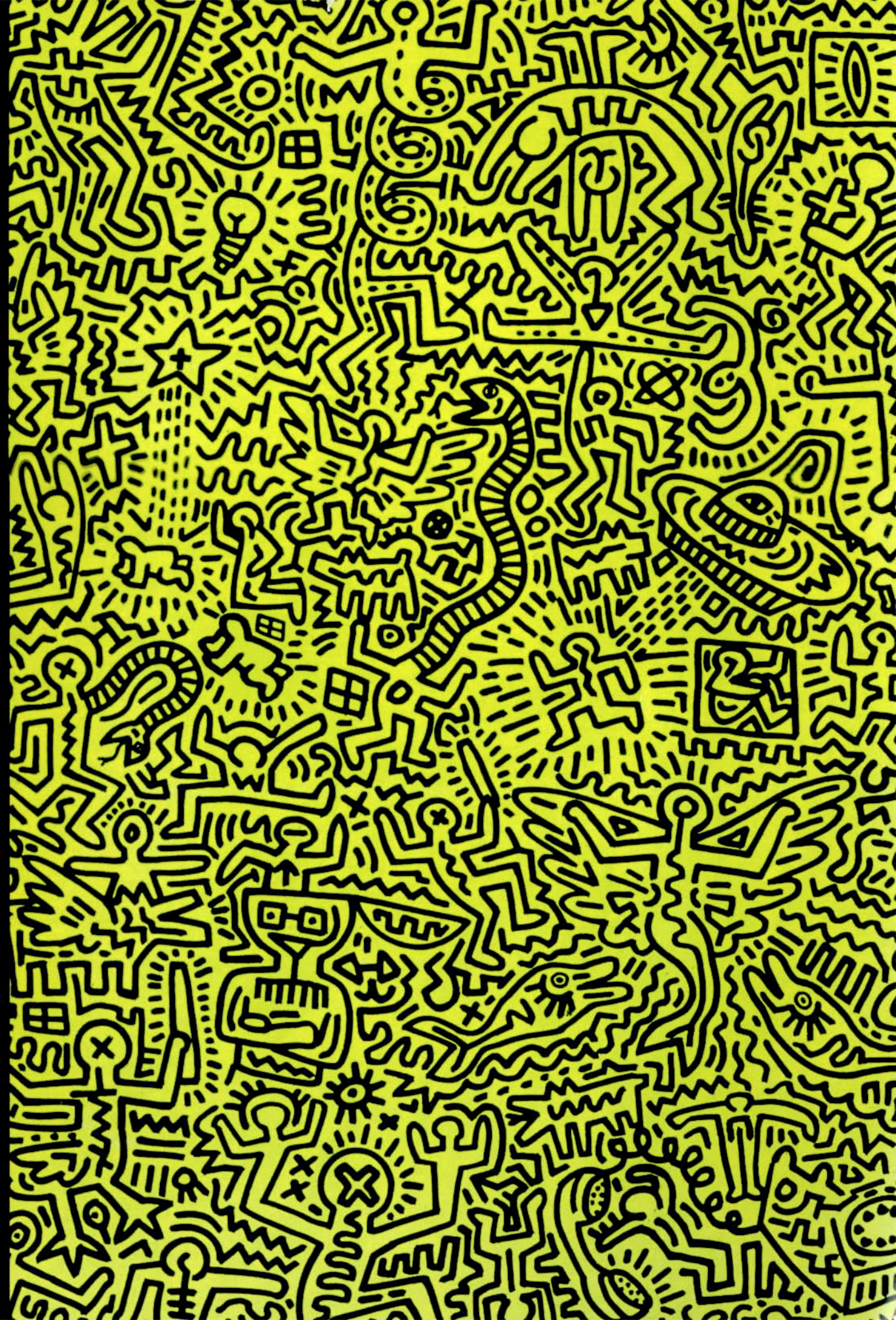
WANGENHEIM

PATRICK KELLY

KENNETH PAUL BLOCK

MARILYN

MONROE



MR. KENNETH

Legendary hair stylist Kenneth Battelle's hairdos are almost as famous as the heads that wore them. From Jackie Kennedy's bouffant, to Marilyn Monroe's white blond mane to Lauren Bacall's sophisticated side part, Kenneth has helped cultivate the image of the world's most notable fashion icons. We were honored and thrilled when he took time off from his still busy schedule to talk to MAO MAG.

MAO MAG: When the operator was connecting us, she asked me for your name and I said "Kenneth" and she said, "Does Kenneth have a last name?" And I was like, "Excuse me, but it's THE Kenneth."

Kenneth: And she said, "Who's that?" (*Laughs*) Because she's probably only 18!

Have you had a busy day today?
Just my usual day. I'm never busy or unbusy. I have the same number of clients everyday. Only about six or eight now, but it's enough.

How does one get on that list? They're just clients that I've had for a long time. I don't take any new clients.

What if someone really prominent, like an Oprah or a Madonna for example, wanted you to do her hair?
I wouldn't be able to do it. I might possibly figure out how to work on the hair cut and then somebody else would do the rest of it. But there's no way. Don't get me wrong; ego is not my motivation for not taking them on. I just can do what I can do.

I heard that originally you had plans to become a psychiatrist. Well, I had hoped to but I had to support my family. When I got out of the service in World War II, I had a limited amount of time on the GI bill, and it would not have covered the amount of time that school took. So I saw an ad one day that said you could earn \$100 a week in six months by going to beauty school.

Was that the first time you thought about becoming a hairstylist? Yes. I never thought about it before. I didn't even know what it was.

And you found that you had a real knack for it.
Well, most of the men were going because they thought they were going to meet girls. And so they didn't pay much attention during classes. But I did. There were marvelous old teachers from the '30s, and the '40s.

Did you immediately start working for a Manhattan salon? No. At first, I worked in Syracuse, where I came from, for two years at the Starlet Beauty Bar. Isn't that a wonderful name? Across from the Greyhound bus terminal.

Which you would stare at and think, "One day, I'm going to get on that Greyhound bus." Yes! One day I'm getting on one of those buses, and I'm out of here!

Your first job in Manhattan was at Helena Rubenstein. What I found really interesting is that you were one of the few stylists that would style the heads of magazine editors and models for free in return for magazine credit.
That's because the other people in the salon wouldn't do those jobs or if they did, they would not do their best because they weren't going to get paid for it. I was too stupid to understand that, which was very fortunate for me. I still have many of those models and editors as clients.

You then got the cover of *Glamour* magazine.
That's silly, it was just my hand! But it was the first time a male hand got the cover of *Glamour*!

You're probably too humble to agree with me but do you feel that you helped make the hair stylist an important force in the fashion industry? Well, I don't know that I helped. If I did, it certainly was not something I set out to do. I'm just who I am and always have been. I wear a suit, and a shirt, and a tie to work. I still do. And I always had very strong ideas about how a salon should be, even if it wasn't mine. Because of the era I came from, I always thought that I was in a service business. And therefore, I'm a servant. I never thought of myself as a great artist, or that I should be treated as such. However, I did try to give some credibility and some style to an industry that could be a bit tawdry at times.

Did you prefer working with clients in the salon or working on magazine sittings?

MONROE IMAGES COURTESY OF DAVID WILLS COLLECTION.
VOGUE IMAGES COURTESY OF GALLAGHER'S ARCHIVES

IMAGE ©2005 MILTON H. GREENE ARCHIVES, INC. WWW.ARCHIVESMHC.COM





PHOTO: MILTON H. GREENE

I loved to go to sittings. But again, we didn't get paid for sittings. We did it for credit. Which was wonderful for me and helped me make a name. But it didn't bring in the shekles so I worked at Lily Dache and also managed the salon. So I did more salon work than I did editorial work, although I loved the editorial work.

I read that women who tried to copy your looks from magazines always got it wrong. They used too much hairspray and made the hairdos very stiff whereas your original idea was to have massive amounts of hair that was very loose and free with very little hairspray involved. I would always reduce it after I made it as exaggerated as possible, because real people cannot walk out on the street as a page from a magazine. They can't go home to "him" or sit down to dinner as a page from a magazine.

How important was Jackie Kennedy to your career?
Extraordinarily so. Remember, you'll be alive when I'm dead, and in my obituary, she will be there along with Marilyn. I know it. There was once a reporter who discovered that I was doing Mrs. Kennedy at the same time I was doing Marilyn and she would not leave me alone about it! I don't know what she thought I was going to tell her.

Did that ever get complicated for you?
Never for me, because I keep my mouth shut. And they knew it. And I knew it. And that's all there is to it.

How did you start working with Marilyn Monroe?
Norman Norell sent Marilyn to me because her hair was burned from the bleaching. It took me about a year, but we got it to be very beautiful.

I've seen an Eve Arnold photograph of Marilyn and you together and she looked very happy with you.
That's the only photograph I have with any client. Marilyn was wonderful. She was a very special lady.

You created my favorite hairstyle of all time, which was Marilyn's do when she sang Happy Birthday to JFK at Madison Square Garden.
She looked gorgeous. Funnily enough, if you see pictures of her that night when she's getting into her car at her apartment and arriving at Madison Square Garden, that's my hairdo. There was a union hairdresser there who re-combed and teased her hair more. I preferred it beforehand, but when you're at a huge place like Madison Square Garden, you need huge hair.

You have worked with so many fashion icons. Who are some of your favorites?
Oh dear. Well, I loved Marilyn. She was very human. Not everybody is. I liked Babe Paley. Slim Keith was a hoot. Pamela Harriman and Jeanie Shrimpton were wonderful. I like Lisa Fonssagrives a lot and I especially loved Kay Kendall.

Although you had this very well known clientele, you chose to stay away from the limelight yourself. Why?
Yes, I did and I can tell you exactly how and when. I went

IMAGE: ©2005 MILTON H. GREENE ARCHIVES, INC. WWW.ARCHIVESMHG.COM

to a dinner party on Onassis' yacht, with Drew Hines. And the next day in the paper it said "Tickle Queen Drew Hines is accompanied to Ari Onassis' yacht by her hairdresser Kenneth." And I was so embarrassed by that. I said right then and there, that's the end of this. I'm not going anywhere. I'd turn it all down.

You opened your own salon in 1962. What made your salon different?
I wanted it to be extraordinarily comfortable and spoiling. I wanted people to enjoy every minute that they were there. I wanted us to be on time instead of keeping people waiting. Just all kinds of very simple, little human things that other salons forget to do at times.

I even read that you have certain amenities for wives and mistresses or people who didn't care for each other.
Yes, I put them on different floors. Absolutely. It was an awful lot of work at times but making gossip happen never amused me. I've had hairdressers who start to tell me the most extraordinary tales, and I just walk away. Gossip does not interest me. I like to make my opinion based on how someone treats me.

Do you see a difference between the Hollywood style of today as opposed to the Hollywood of the 40's, 50's, and 60's?
When I look at the younger group of celebrities, I don't understand their desire to look the same. I think the fashion stylist is the worm in that apple. Hollywood style used to have individuality. All of the stars from those days had their own look.

So what keeps hair exciting for you?
Hair is a living thing. I like when somebody sits down in the chair and they're not particularly happy or they wished they looked better. By the time they leave, they do. And that's very satisfying.

IMAGE RIGHT: ©2006 MILTON H. GREENE ARCHIVES, INC. WWW.ARCHIVESMHG.COM



Kenneth with Judy Garland

