



# Modern Day Pinup

By Jessica Gordon

For those tired of the mainstream boudoir shot, a new photography sub-genre has emerged, allowing everyday women to go retro.

The classic pinup—which many of us remember sneaking peeks of in our grandfathers' colorfully illustrated magazines—began as early as 1890 as a way to entertain soldiers and sailors who literally “pinned up” images of flirty, voluptuous women on the walls of their barracks.

But in the past seven or eight years, everyday women want to see themselves in the same way. Inspired by classic 1940s and 50s pinups such as Bettie Page and Jean Harlow, and now Dita Von Teese and Christina Hendricks, women are purchasing packages to be made over in vintage costumes with false eyelashes and pin curls, and then photographed for their partners (or just for themselves). A growing sub-genre of the traditional boudoir or glamour portrait has evolved into the pinup shot.

“Pinups have always been about control, and about constructing a theatrical sexuality, but one that could only go so far in revealing anything that couldn't be ‘pinned up’ in polite company,” says Maria Elena Buszek, author of *Pin-Up Grrrls: Feminism, Sexuality and Popular Culture* and associate professor of art history at the University

of Colorado, Denver. “These classic pinups seem like ‘the realest’ kind of sexual imagery of women because of the range of body types one sees. The fact that in their heyday, classic pinups were expected to be big and curvy is also appealing to women. Pinup history seems to provide them with models for, on the one hand, being their sexual selves in a very authentic way, even as, on the other, it's completely about the tease, the costumes, the ironic and knowing expressions...that's a very exciting, dynamic paradox.”

We spoke with three photographers who have not only embraced this trend, but have also turned it into a business.

## Celeste Giuliano

Celeste Giuliano Pinup Photography  
[www.lunarlightstudios.com](http://www.lunarlightstudios.com)

Philadelphia-based portraitist Celeste Giuliano is perhaps best recognized for her work in photographing in the iconic “Pinups for Pitbulls” calendar for the past two years, not to mention the 88-page special edition issue of *Retro Lovely* maga-



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zine devoted to her work in December 2011. Well-known within the pinup genre, Giuliano came to the subject after being inspired by her grandfather's extensive collection of calendars. "When I was in college, I rediscovered his collection and I was inspired," Giuliano says. "I worked for a weekly newspaper as a photographer and photo editor through college and I really wanted to get into fashion and editorial work, but how do you get into that when you [first] graduate? I had interned, but I figured I needed to build my own portfolio."

In search of models, Giuliano contacted the local radio station (then Y100), which hosted a "Philly's Hottest Contest." "I contacted them in 2004, and said I was trying to build a portfolio and thought [their contest] would fit with pinups," she explains. "It was everyday people who were entering, and I could offer the winner a photo shoot. That's how I started." From there, Giuliano's popularity snowballed; *The Philadelphia Inquirer* did an article about her work, as did the local CBS TV affiliate and several Web sites. She opened her studio in 2005, while continuing to work at the newspaper until 2007, when her business grew enough that her studio would sustain her income full time.

Since then, she has transformed about 2,000 clients into pinups, and shoots 6 to 10 portraits a week, ranging in price from \$350 to \$1,000. Clients have flown in from as far as Europe to pose in her home-adjacent studio, and her work has been published internationally. "It's such a difference from when I started [in 2004]," Giuliano says. "I said 'pinup' and people looked at me and said, 'is that porn?' I was even kicked out of my first studio because people thought I was shooting porn!"

Giuliano—who points to *Mad Men* as one pop culture influence adding to the genre's current popularity—typically has a consultation with clients a month prior to the shoot to discuss their ideas and costume choices. The day of the shoot, Giuliano's hairstylist and makeup artist are on hand to complete each client's look. Half-day packages include two themes/sets/outfits of the subject's choice, professional hair and makeup done in-studio, the pre-shoot consultation, a "huge" selection of vintage-styled wardrobe, lingerie, shoes, hosiery and props, 40 to 60 proofs of the

best selected images in a private online gallery, three fully retouched and airbrushed images and Web versions of final ordered images for online or e-mail use.

There are "women who come in and say, 'I want to look like I'm sitting in a martini glass' or 'I want to be a retro-style 1930s magician,'" the photographer says. "Where else can you get that done? They can come in with an idea they could never be in everyday life, and we'll build a set, find costumes and cater to it. I think it's pretty amazing."

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