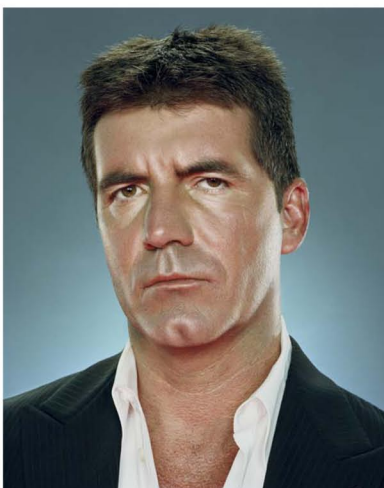
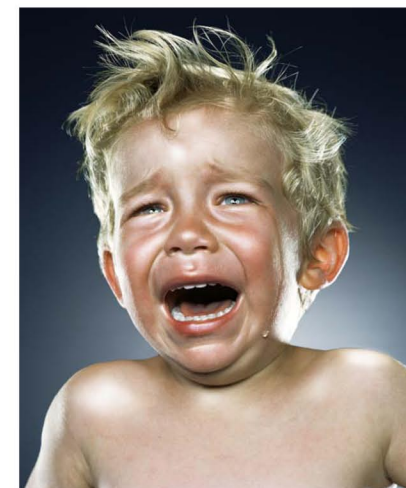
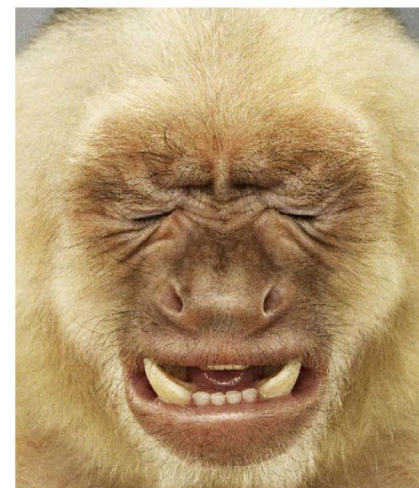




Greenberg's "Lost," a portrait of a golden rhesus macaque, and a portrait of teary Gwen Stefani.



"Anxious," featuring a Celebes macaque, and a photo of "American Idol" judge Simon Cowell.



"Wince," a photograph of a white-fronted capuchin, and a portrait of a crying baby from Greenberg's "End Times."



Some people see photos like "The Hatchling" and suspect monkey business, but Jill Greenberg says, "The pictures are pretty straight. . . . Any primatologist would look at that and not think, 'What did you do to that face?'"

Wide Angle

Simon Cowell, Meet Simian Scowl

Photographer Jill Greenberg Goes Deep Into the Hollywood Jungle

By RACHEL BECKMAN
Washington Post Staff Writer

It's all about the glow. A Jill Greenberg portrait — whether it's of Lindsay Lohan or a lemur, Moby or a meerkat — shines.

Greenberg's photos look dewy, almost metallic. A layperson might think she dunks people in a vat of Victoria's Secret body shimmer. But Greenberg achieves her signature style through lighting and digital touch-ups. (The name of Greenberg's Web site is "Manipulator," a wink at her reputation as the Photoshop queen.)

"A lot of people use the word hyper-real," she says on the phone from her Los Angeles photography studio. "They're portraits and they're personal but there's a little twist going on. An edge."

Greenberg, 40, shoots celebrity portraits (Clint Eastwood, Gwen Stefani, Jon Stewart among others) and has expanded her client list to all kinds of mammals, becoming one of the entertainment industry's go-to animal photographers.

She is shooting a new marketing campaign for Animal Planet and her lamb photos is in February GQ. Eleven large-scale works from her book "Monkey Portraits" are on view at the National Academy of Sciences, her first solo show in the District. Next up? A book of bear photos.

Her main manipulation of the monkey and ape portraits is in the eyes: She whitens the whites and enhances the colors of the irises. She recalls how a white-faced baby capuchin named Chitta acted "skittish and crazy" during her shoot, which soon became more a game of chase than a photo-sitting. Eventually, Greenberg snapped Chitta's picture while the monkey was hanging upside down from her trainer's arm. In the post-Photoshop image, "The Hatchling," Chitta is right side up and her trainer's arm is not in the frame.

"The pictures are pretty straight," she says. "It's not like I've changed anything to make it not true. So they can stand up. Any primatologist would look at that and not think, 'What did you do to that face?'"

J.D. Talasek, director of cultural programs at NAS, first saw Greenberg's monkey portraits, which are about four feet square, at the New York gallery ClampArt. (A selection of the photos went on view last fall at NAS's Keck Center on Fifth Street NW and moved to 2100 C St. NW earlier this month.)

Talasek was drawn to the artistically enhanced photos' anthropomorphic quality. The titles of the photographs — such as "Regal," "Anxious" and "Haughty" — emphasize the humanness of the images. In "Mala Centerfold," a baboon lies on her side in a Playboy-ready pose that she learned from her trainer.

He says Greenberg's animal work shows "how we're programmed in our minds to look at certain gestures, expressions and postures and how we project our own feelings onto that," Talasek says. "It's happening in our own mind." In fact, when you look at Greenberg's body of work, it's easy to see the parallels between certain human and animal photos; her portraits can make for intriguing diptychs.

Of the 30 or so primate portrait sittings, the larger, more intelligent animals such as chimpanzees and orangutans make faces at her, though she was careful to edit out the "cheesy chimp faces" because they are too expected, she says.



Jill Greenberg

Photographer

HER LIFE Born in 1967 in Montreal and grew up in a suburb of Detroit. Graduated from the Rhode Island School of Design in 1989 with a degree in photography. The daughter of an ophthalmologist and a travel agent, she is married to movie producer Robert Green and has two children, Violet, 4, and Zed, 2.

ARTISTIC INFLUENCES Painters Salvador Dali and Francis Bacon.

CLIENTS Philip Morris, Procter and Gamble, Target, Microsoft, Paramount Pictures, HBO, L'Oréal, MTV, Interscope Records, Wired, Time and others.

BIZARRE FAME MOMENT When she saw herself listed on someone's MySpace page under the category "I'd Like to Meet" . . . along with Jim Morrison and Hannibal Lecter. Says Greenberg: "Okay, one of them is dead, one is fictitious, and one is a nice, normal person who lives in L.A. with two little kids!"

ON PHOTOGRAPHY "I've developed a look for my work. . . . Honestly, I think that's what's interesting about photography. It isn't necessarily a document of reality. The photographer imprints their personality on the picture. You only say what you want to say."

— Rachel Beckman

Though Greenberg says she didn't go into the monkey shoots with any preconceived ideas of what emotions she wanted from her simian subjects, that wasn't the case with a 2006 series called "End Times," of 2- and 3-year-old children crying.

Most of them were showbiz kids accompanied by their parents, who knew that their children were going to be crying for the 15-minute sitting. Greenberg got them to bawl by having her assistant or the children's parents give them lollipops and then snatch them away.

One of the photos, which she took right after President Bush's reelection, is titled "Four More Years," to suggest that the child is pained over politics. The series title, "End Times," is also intended as a political statement.

Months after the photos debuted in New York City, a blogger wrote about Greenberg's lollipop method. He said it was child abuse. Other media picked up the story, and before she knew it, she was on "Good Morning America" explaining herself to Diane Sawyer.

"It ended up being a good thing for me," she says. "It's making me famous, which I guess is good. I wanted them to be powerful, provocative images. I didn't foresee the level of nonsense that came along."

Sometimes, Greenberg says, the toddlers would "cry for no reason. I mean, take your kids to the Sears portrait studio and they cry. Is that child abuse? They don't want to be there in a silly Sunday outfit. . . . It made me reflect, though. 'Wait a minute, did I do something wrong?'"

Greenberg included her own children, now ages 2 and 4, in the series.

Her parallel career paths of celebrity shooter and animal photographer collided last week at a Los Angeles Times photo shoot of actor Casey Affleck. She says Affleck, a vegan, had some questions about the treatment of animals she photographs. There was no PETA-style smackdown; the Oscar nominee and Greenberg just had a "mellow conversation." (She wouldn't reveal any Hollywood gossip except to say that actor Philip Seymour Hoffman likes her bear portraits.)

Most of Greenberg's animals are celebrities in their own right, with portfolios that include greeting cards, commercials, appearances on late-night shows and in such movies as "Bruce Almighty" and "The Jungle Book." A capuchin named Katie played Ross's pet monkey, Marcel, on "Friends."

Greenberg figures that if scientist Jane Goodall doesn't have a problem with her work, then she's off the hook. Goodall wrote an article in October 2006 in London's Daily Mail about the "remarkable" monkey portraits.

"Study the faces of the great apes in these portraits and you will see just how closely related we are," Goodall wrote. "Look into the eyes of these glorious beings, read their wrinkles, examine their expressions. You will find wisdom, innocence, humour, even moodiness. They are more human than you ever thought."

Jill Greenberg: Monkey Portraits at the National Academy of Sciences, 2100 C St. NW, Upstairs Gallery. Through April 1. Free. Gallery hours Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.; closed on holidays. Be prepared to present a photo ID. 202-334-2436.

See more of Jill Greenberg's work in a photo gallery at washingtontpost.com/museums.