Mark Seliger's artsy portrait of J. Lo for *GQ*.

Mark Seliger

How this photographic magician transformed a pop idol into a classical ideal —and gave new meaning to the word statuesque.

Jennifer Lopez may not be an art historian's notion of a classical muse, but Mark Seliger is a photographer, not an art historian. And when Seliger was asked to do a cover story on the pop diva for *GQ* magazine, it occurred to him that her famously ample proportions are more akin to Greek statuary than most of today's toothpick models and actresses. He envisioned J. Lo surrounded by a group of young artists sketching her draped form in a time-worn art-school atelier.

Seliger's team searched New York City for a good location, but nothing they found fit the photographer's mental image. So Seliger ended up hiring a set builder and art director to help him construct the imagined atelier in his own Manhattan studio, complete with art-history references. "We were trying to recreate the feeling of a north-light studio," he says, "but the whole thing was shot with strobe." The four Pygmalions are in fact models (cast for their angular, starving-artist looks) dressed in designer clothing, but Seliger hired a real art student to sculpt a clay torso as a prop for another picture in the story.

Seliger even resorted to classical photographic technology, shooting with an 8x10 Toyo field camera and 360mm Schneider lens (about normal for the format) on Kodak Tri-X. "We wanted a certain dropoff in depth of field that you can only get with large format," he explains.

Seliger also shot the poster for Lopez's Cinderella-story film, *Maid in Manhattan*, and he says that working with her is a pleasure. "Not everyone would agree to this kind of concept," he says. "But she actually helped us plan it." When the time came to shoot, Seliger also made variations in which J. Lo's back was to the camera and she was looking to the side. "Front or back, she has a classic beauty," he says. "I wanted the picture to feel as if the viewer is just another artist in the room." —RUSSELL HART