

AN AMERICAN SOUND

February 4 – March 13, 2010

"If you have to ask what jazz is, you'll never know." –Louis Armstrong



William P. Gottlieb, Billie Holiday, c.1948, silver gelatin print, printed 1979, 14 x 11 inches

The photographers featured in the exhibition, may not be as commonly known as the Jazz greats they have depicted but each possess an equally fascinating professional history. Some were born and began their careers in Europe and moved to America seeking a new life, others born in the United States, but likewise started from backgrounds of hardship and disadvantage. All persistently pushed to achieve their dreams, like the musicians, and depicting their own American story through the camera's lens. **Gjon Mili** worked with *Life* magazine for approximately 45 years and is recognized for his spirited, ground-breaking and unique compositions of celebrities, sports stars, musicians and artists, including the celebrated portraits of Picasso drawing with light. Mili was noted by Henri Cartier Bresson as a master of his technical proficiency. Mili's assistant at *Life* magazine, **Dennis Stock**, quickly won first prize in the magazine's Young Photographers Contest and became widely recognized for his remarkable and intimate portraits of Jazz musicians and James Dean. Known for his prolific and multifaceted career in the arts, **Gordon Parks**, illuminated the pages of both *Life* and *Vogue* magazines with outstanding photo essays and portraits. His depictions of Jazz musicians are full of life and presence. **Ed Van Der Elsken**, Gjon Mili and **W. Eugene Smith**, were all included in the historic and poignant exhibition, "The Family of Man", curated by Edward Steichen. First exhibited in 1955 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, this powerful exhibition was a commentary on human everyday existence compiling photographs by famous and non-famous photographers. Moreover, many of the photographers such as Parks, Mili, have works in collections such as J. Paul Getty Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art.

Jenkins Johnson Gallery is pleased to announce **AN AMERICAN SOUND**, opening in San Francisco on Thursday, February 4 from 5:30-7:30 p.m. The exhibition continues through March 13. This exhibition is dedicated to the memory of Karen Jenkins-Johnson's beloved Uncle Hilliary Howard Matthewson who taught his family Jazz appreciation and loved to listen to An American Sound.

AN AMERICAN SOUND is a group photography exhibition featuring portraits of jazz musicians from the 1930s and 1940s, considered the "Golden Age" of American jazz, and into the 1950s and 1960s. Most of the images are silver gelatin prints, including vintage prints, shot by iconic, award-winning American photographers of the twentieth century, such as Gordon Parks and Gjon Mili. The exhibition honors our American heritage told through images of the history and the sound of Jazz music during Black History Month.

Jazz originated in New Orleans at the beginning of the twentieth century and was cultivated largely in New York City and Chicago. Jazz music has many different styles such as the big band sound, bebop, swing, cool jazz, Latin and Afro Cuban, and many more. Portraits in the exhibition include some of the most influential Jazz musicians in the history of the genre such as, **Louis Armstrong**, known as one of the originators of the sound; **Sarah Vaughn**, known for her exquisite, extraordinary vocals; and **Miles Davis** and **Duke Ellington**, both masters of composition and instrumentals who were both able to adapt and construct the music in totally unique, resonant ways. All lived with a great passion and intelligence for their craft.



Gordon Parks, Duke Ellington, listening to playback, Los Angeles, 1960, gelatin silver print, 13.5 x 9 inches

The 2010 exhibition will showcase the work of: Ray Fisher, William Paul Gottlieb, Sy Kattelson, Gjon Mili, Hank O'Neal, Gordon Parks, Dennis Stock, W. Eugene Smith and Ed Van Der Elsken. Please visit www.jenkinsjohnsongallery.com for more information.