EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

1. Langston Hughes, Chicago, 1941, silver gelatin print
2. Elia Watan and Her Grandchildren, Washington, D.C., 1942, silver gelatin print
3. American Gothic, Washington, D.C., 1942, silver gelatin print
4. Man with Straw Hat, Washington, D.C., 1942, silver gelatin print
5. Emerging Man, Harlem, NY, 1943, silver gelatin print
6. Battered Man, Harlem, NY, 1943, silver gelatin print
7. New England Family, 1943, silver gelatin print
8. Table of Snow, 1945, digital pigment print from original negative
9. Red Jackson and Hettie May Study Wounds on Face of Stab Gang Member Maurice Gaines, 1948, silver gelatin print
10. Neighbors, Harlem, NY, 1948, silver gelatin print
11. Harlem Rooftops, 1948, silver gelatin print
12. Frisco Railway Station, Fort Scott, 1949, silver gelatin print
13. Husband and Wife, Sunday Morning, Fort Scott, 1949, silver gelatin print
14. Frisco Railway Station, Fort Scott, 1949, silver gelatin print
15. Place de Concorde, Paris, France, 1950, silver gelatin print
16. Paris Fashion, 1950, silver gelatin print
17. Paris Fashion, 1950, silver gelatin print
18. Drugstore Cowboys, Blind River, Ontario, 1955, silver gelatin print
20. Drinking Fountains, Birmingham, Alabama, 1956, silver gelatin print
22. Mother and Children, Birmingham, Alabama, 1956, silver gelatin print
23. Willie Causey’s Son with Gun During Violence in Alabama, 1956, silver gelatin print
24. Raiding Detectives, Chicago, 1957, chromogenic print
25. Crime Suspect with Gun, Chicago, 1957, chromogenic print
26. Knife Wielder, Chicago, 1957, chromogenic print
27. The Bridge, 1958, digital pigment print from original negative
29. Blue Girl, Pera, 1960, digital pigment print from original negative
30. Flavio da Silva, Rio de Janeiro, 1961, silver gelatin print
31. Flavio Amuses Smaller Brothers and Sisters, Rio de Janeiro, 1961, silver gelatin print
32. Isabel Beside Sick Father, Rio de Janeiro, 1961, silver gelatin print
33. The Dove, 1962, digital pigment print from original negative
34. Malcolm X Addressing Black Muslims Rally in Chicago, 1963, silver gelatin print
35. Ethel Shariff in Chicago, 1963, silver gelatin print
36. Evening Prayer, Muslim Father and Son, New York, 1963, silver gelatin print
37. Black Panthers Headquarters, Berkeley, CA, 1969, silver gelatin print
40. Untitled (sunset), 1994, digital pigment print from original negative
41. A Memory, 1994, digital pigment print from original negative
42. Morning Blossom, 1994, digital pigment print from original negative
43. White Blossom, 1994, digital pigment print from original negative
44. Untitled (two leaves), n.d., digital pigment print from original negative
45. Johanna Fiore, Portrait of Gordon Parks, 1997, digital pigment print from original negative

All works courtesy of art2art Circulating Exhibitions and Howard Greenberg Gallery

FURTHER READING


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GORDON PARKS

Born in 1912, on a farm in Fort Scott, Kansas, Gordon Parks entered a world shaped by racism and poverty. Following the death of his mother in 1927, Parks left Kansas and moved to St. Paul, Minnesota to find work. Eventually, he found a job as a waiter on a Pullman car, a position that introduced Parks to the communicative power of photography. The long train rides gave Parks time to peruse the magazines that passengers left behind. He found the images in these magazines compelling, especially the works of Farm Security Administration (FSA) photographers Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans, and Russell Lee. Working under the direction of Roy Stryker, FSA photographers documented the lives of poor families during the Great Depression and Dust Bowl era. The impoverished conditions depicted in these photographs resonated with Parks, and he realized that the camera could be a means to address social issues in a segregated America.

Inspired by the FSA images, Parks purchased a used camera and began to take pictures. His natural ability with the camera led to a job photographing women’s fashion for a St. Paul department store. The success of this work gave Parks the opportunity to move to Chicago where he continued as a fashion and portrait photographer. A studio in the Works Progress Administration Southside Community Center provided Parks with space to display his first serious exhibition, Creative Photography, which included fashion shots, portraiture, and images of the city’s poverty stricken Southside. The exhibition won him the Julius Rosenwald Fellowship, which enabled Parks to spend a year with Roy Stryker and the photographers of the FSA in Washington, DC.

Parks began working with Stryker by studying the images of the other FSA photographers and exploring the city without his camera, to get a sense of the racism that was prevalent in the nation’s capitol. His first series of photographs for the FSA included images of Ella Watson, a cleaning lady who was raising her two grandchildren and an adopted daughter. In American Gothic, Parks photographed Watson with a mop and broom in front of a large American flag. Her interaction with the camera reveals both the hardship of her existence and the determination of her character. This direct approach to his subjects is one that Parks would use throughout his career.

Parks covered a wide variety of subjects for the FSA including Harlem street life, portraits of black artists, the Fulton Fish Market, political events, and working class families. When the FSA was absorbed into the Office of War Information (OWI) in 1943, Parks continued his work for Stryker by documenting the war effort on the home front. In 1943, Parks left the OWI to join Stryker on a public relations project for Standard Oil of New Jersey. During this time, Parks relocated his family to Westchester, New York, wrote two books, and worked as a photographer for Vogue, Harper's Bazaar, Glamour, and Ebony.

In 1948, Parks joined the staff of Life magazine covering fashion, celebrities, human interest stories, and the swiftly changing cultural environment of the 1960s. As the political and social climate grew intense, Parks reported on racism in the South, the Civil Rights Movement, and poverty in the United States and Latin America. Being a black photographer, Parks had access to the African-American experience in ways unlike his white colleagues. The editors at Life recognized this and assigned Parks to race-sensitive subjects including the Black Panthers, the Black Muslims, the Harlem riots, Muhammad Ali, and the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

By the late 1960s, Parks had branched out from photography, writing the award-winning novel, The Learning Tree, and the autobiographical A Choice of Weapons. Parks also directed the film adaptation of The Learning Tree and the popular private detective movie Shaft. Over the next three decades, Parks would direct and score Hollywood films, co-founded Essence magazine, compose a ballet in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr., and write volumes of poetry, novels, and three more autobiographies. Gordon Parks died at ninety-three in New York City on March 6, 2006, leaving behind an artistic legacy that reflects the complex and varied experiences of his remarkable life.