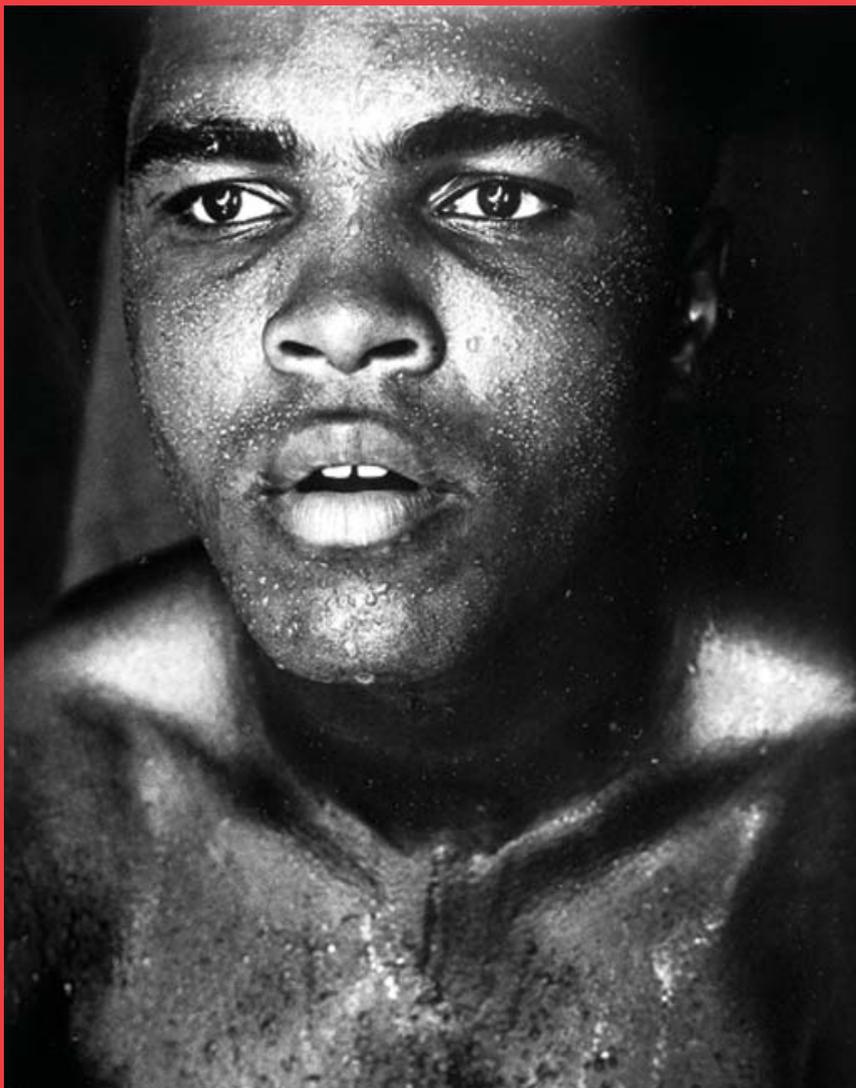


HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY MUSEUM GALLERY GUIDE

Where Art Inspires and Transforms



*The Greatest of All Time: **Muhammad Ali***

This show is curated by Hava Gurevich and organized by art2art Circulating Exhibitions.

September 21-December 2, 2008

Emily Lowe Gallery

The impressive body of work by photojournalists in this exhibition can be viewed as visual commentary on the life of Muhammad Ali. These photographs allow us to view his story through multiple lenses: as a sports icon, as a world figure, and as a “man of the people.”

Born in Louisville, Kentucky in 1942 as Cassius Marcellus Clay, Muhammad Ali was an Olympic gold medalist by the age of 18, and went on to fight for more than 20 years, becoming the first three-time World Heavyweight Champion. Ali is more than a sports hero; he is larger-than-life, an American icon who has fought more battles than those in the ring. He has been assailed as often as he has been admired. Proud of his African roots, his Muslim faith and his American heritage, Ali was (and continues to be) determined to stand up for his beliefs, to fight against social injustices, speaking to the American people in a voice they could not ignore and would not forget. Even after he retired from boxing, the “Champ” has refused to quit, continuing to battle injustice as well as wage his own personal crusade against Parkinson’s disease. As he continues to inspire millions around the world, he still retains his title as “The Greatest.”

More than documenting Muhammad Ali’s life and times, these photographs also inform us about ourselves and the world around us.

In viewing photographs, it is important to remember that the photographer makes use of certain elements that influence our response to, and our understanding of, the image.

Keep in mind the following when looking at photographic images:

- ▶ The visual elements of the composition
- ▶ The emotional elements
- ▶ The interpretation you, the viewer, bring to it

Throughout this gallery guide, there are well-known quotations by Muhammad Ali, a man known for his prowess with words.



© Steve Schapiro

Steve Schapiro *Muhammad Ali With Kids*

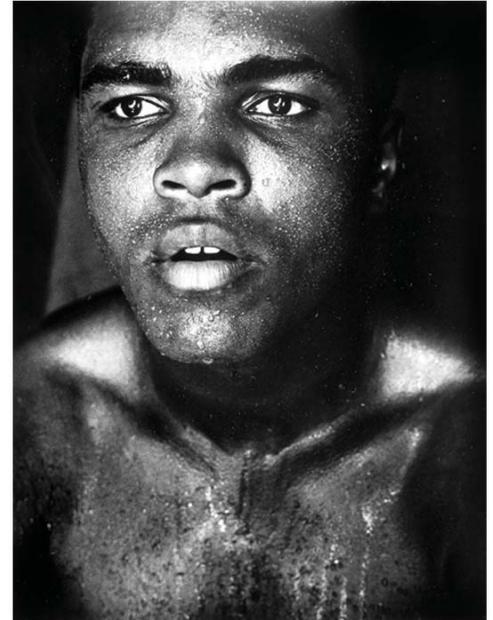
Louisville, KY, 1963

In this image taken in 1963, three years after Ali, then known as Cassius Clay, won the Olympic gold medal in Rome, he returns to Louisville, Kentucky as the hometown hero. The viewer becomes a member of the group of excited children greeting the champ. Schapiro draws the viewer in by placing Clay in the center of the image, welcoming us to join in. Not only is Clay the tallest figure, framed by the window pane, but he also is the only figure facing outward. His arms are raised in a champion-like pose, with the children eager to revere and praise him. Here we see [Ali] Cassius Clay, inspiring another generation.

Gordon Parks *Muhammad Ali*

1970

This intimate post-fight photograph was used for a *Life* magazine cover in 1970. It was taken after Ali's return to boxing following his forced exile due to his refusal to join the military on religious grounds. The subject fills the entire frame, making Ali larger-than-life. Gordon Park's use of harsh, frontal lighting illuminates Ali's piercing eyes and upper torso. Looking away from us, Ali is caught in a moment of uncertainty. We no longer see that "cocky" young man anymore, but a world-weary man struggling to regain his rightful place as world champ.



©Gordon Parks and Gordon Parks Foundation
Courtesy of Howard Greenberg Gallery

"I am king of the world! I am the greatest!!!"

“To make America the greatest is my goal, so I beat the Russian, and I beat the Pole, and for the USA won the medal of gold.”



© Art Shay
Courtesy of Stephen Daiter Gallery

Art Shay

Muhammad Ali Fighting

1964

Composition dominates this image of Ali pummeling Sonny Liston to win the world heavyweight championship title. A sense of Ali's weightlessness and speed is heightened by the enormous black background. That background is punctuated by the white linear ropes surrounding the subjects as well as Ali's white shorts. Although the two boxers are the subject of this photograph, the disembodied, out-of-scale hands in the upper-right corner reach in toward the action, arresting our view and throwing us into the ring.

*“Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee,
His hands can't hit what his eyes can't see.”*

Hazel Hankin

Fidel Castro With Muhammad Ali, Presidential Palace

Havana, Cuba, 1996

In this casual glimpse of Ali jesting with Fidel Castro, we see the champ's ability to disarm with his warm smile and hand reaching out to Castro. Ali was visiting Cuba as a member of a humanitarian delegation when he met the dictator. These two men understand the role of the camera as they play for the audience, their hands pointing to one another. We can easily “read” Castro's challenge to Ali, daring the legend to throw a punch, “right there” on the chin. The angle and cropping of the photograph allows the viewer to be in the moment with these two world figures. The photographer gives us the opportunity to view them more as everyday people, stepping back from their official postures.



©Hazel Hankin

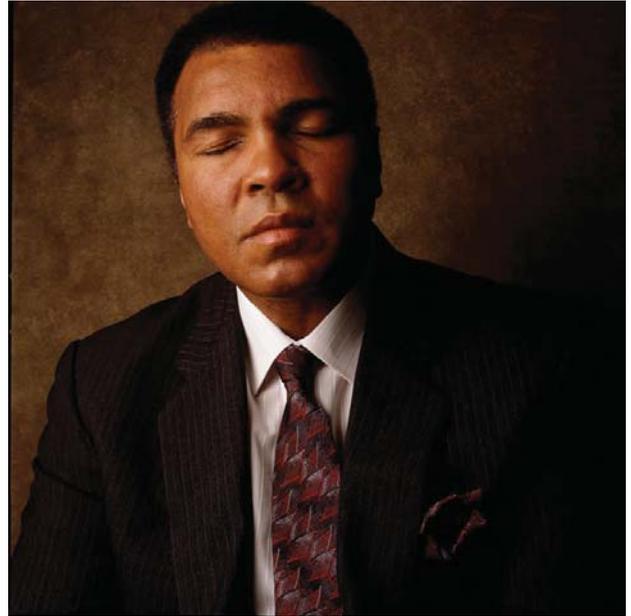
William Coupon

Ali

1991

In this unconventional portrait of Ali with his eyes closed, we are shown a man who seems to have made peace with himself. The dramatic use of light affecting his skin tone, facial features, and even the background, softens the subject. An air of serenity is created by the muted tones of the image and the relaxed posture of his body.

The two portraits highlighted in this gallery guide reveal the breadth of Ali – the “Champ” and the man.



© William Coupon

*“God gave me Parkinson’s syndrome to show me I’m not “The Greatest” – he is.
To show me I have human frailties like everybody else does.
That’s all I am; a man.”*

Photojournalism is distinguished by the qualities of:

- ▶ **Timeliness** – the images have meaning in the context of a recently published record of events.
- ▶ **Objectivity** – the situation implied by the images is a fair and accurate representation of the events they depict in both content and tone.
- ▶ **Narrative** – the images combine with other news elements to make facts relatable to the viewer or reader on a cultural level.

Visual elements of the composition are the use of light and shadow, depth and perspective, line, shape and form, as well as the unique viewing point the photographer gives us with his/her lens.

Emotional elements include the mood or feeling created by the image, the statement or story being told, as well as the photographer’s viewpoint.

Interpretation is the understanding that the viewer assigns the image, bringing together our insights, emotions, and of course, our memories, to find meaning in the photograph.

“Keep asking me, no matter how long on the war in Viet Nam, I sing this song “I ain’t got no quarrel with them Vietcong.”

Muhammad Ali



- 1942 Born Cassius Marcellus Clay in Louisville, Kentucky, January 17
- 1954 Clay's new, red bicycle is stolen; his desire to "find the thief and beat him up" said to be the impetus for learning to box
- 1960 Wins gold medal in Rome's Summer Olympics
First professional fight, October
- 1963 First professional bout overseas (London), defeated British heavyweight champion
- 1964 Beats Sonny Liston, new world heavyweight champion
Converts to Islam
Changes name to Muhammad Ali (meaning: "Greatly praised, high exalted one")
- 1967 Convicted of draft evasion for refusing to fight in the Vietnam War on grounds of religious beliefs; exiled from boxing for three years - passport revoked, fined; appealed sentence. Speaks at colleges and other venues.
- 1971 U.S. Supreme Court reverses earlier conviction of draft evasion as a conscientious objector
Returns to boxing
Joe Frazier "Fight of the Century" at Madison Square Garden: Ali loses (first loss in his professional career), first of three legendary fights with Frazier.
- 1974 Ali defeats Frazier in their second match; "Rumble in the Jungle" Ali fights George Foreman in Kinshasa, Zaire using his "rope-a-dope" strategy to tire out Foreman. Wins and reclaims world heavyweight champion title.
- 1975 "Thrilla in Manila" defeats Joe Frazier in their third fight in the Philippines
- 1978 Loses heavyweight title to Leon Spinks; regains title from Spinks seven months later
- 1981 Ali retires permanently from pro-boxing
- 1984 Diagnosed with Parkinson's syndrome
- 1990 Travels to Iraq on peace mission during Gulf War to negotiate release of American hostages
- 1996 Lights flame of Olympic torch at 1996 Summer Olympics, Atlanta; Visits Cuba and meets Fidel Castro as part of humanitarian aid delegation organized by Disarm Education Fund
- 1998 Named "Messenger of Peace" by the UN
- 2002 Visits Kabul, Afghanistan, on behalf of UN as Messenger of Peace
- 2005 Receives Presidential Medal of Freedom, White House; Receives Otto Hahn Peace Medal, Germany; Muhammad Ali Center opens in Louisville, Kentucky
- 2007 Awarded Princeton University Honorary Doctorate degree

Resources

Books:

For Children:

- ▶ *Twelve Rounds to Glory: The Story of Muhammad Ali*
Charles R. Smith, Jr. Candlewick Press, Cambridge, MA, 2007
- ▶ *Champion: The Story of Muhammad Ali*
Haskins, Jim, and Eric Velasquez (illustrator Walker & Company). 2002; Ages 6-10
- ▶ *Photography*
(DK Eyewitness Books), DK Publishing, 2004

For Adults:

- ▶ *King of the World: Muhammad Ali and the Rise of the American Hero*
David Remnick. New York, Random House, 1998
- ▶ *The Photographer's Eye*
John Szarkowski. Little Brown & Co, 1980
- ▶ *Photography and Art: Interactions Since 1946*
Andy Grundberg, Kathleen McCarthy Gauss. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Fort Lauderdale Museum of Art, Abbeville Press, 1987
- ▶ *A Hungry Heart: A Memoir*
Gordon Parks. Atria, 2005

Web sites:

- ▶ Official site for the legendary boxer
ali.com
- ▶ The Muhammad Ali Center in Louisville, Kentucky
alicenter.org/Pages/default.aspx
- ▶ Smithsonian Institution Exhibition, *Sports: Breaking Records, Breaking Barriers*
americanhistory.si.edu/sports/exhibit/introduction/index.cfm
- ▶ International Center of Photography
icp.org
- ▶ Newsmeum, the Museum of News History
newsmeum.org/

This exhibition is presented in conjunction with the Hofstra Cultural Center conference
The Greatest: From Cassius Clay to Muhammad Ali, November 13-15, 2008.

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For information about related programs and events, please visit
our Web site at hofstra.edu/museum or call (516) 463-5672.*



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Cover Image: Gordon Parks, *Muhammad Ali*, 1970
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