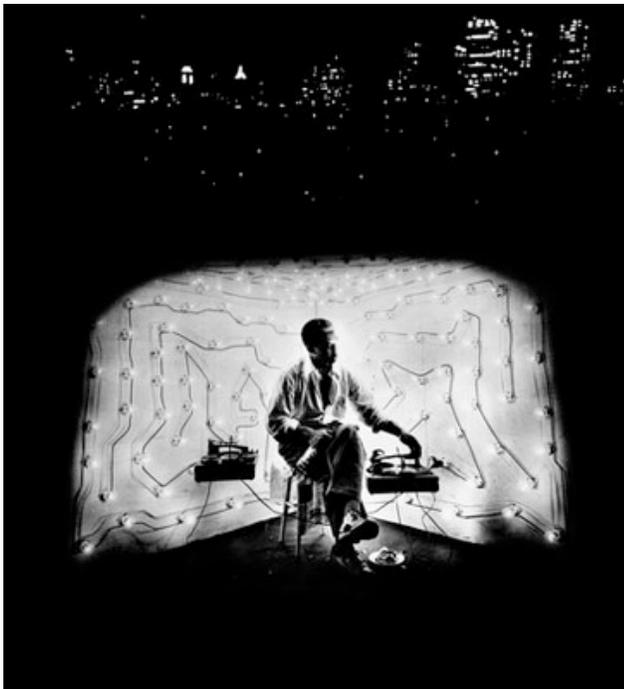


FEBRUARY 11, 2016

Gordon Parks, black and white against segregation

The Jenkins Johnson Gallery displays your pictures on the civil rights movement



Gordon Parks. Invisible Man Retreat, 1952

"I realized that the camera could be a weapon against poverty, against racism, against all kinds of social ills. Then I knew I had to have one."

Gordon Parks was the youngest of fifteen children in a poor family in Fort Scott, Kansas. Born in 1912, he held various jobs until he could buy in 1937 in a pawnshop in Seattle, a camera, and was hired for fashion images in a mall in Minneapolis. It was clear her talent, and in 1942 received from the Farm Security Administration a grant that, among others, had obtained before Dorothea Lange.

It was later a freelance photographer for Vogue, and in that same forties published two books: Flash Photograph (1947) and Camera Portraits: Techniques and Principles of Documentary Portraiture (1948). That same year he was hired by Life magazine, for which he worked for over twenty years (he was the first black photographer in the workforce).

Their cultural interests were varied: Parks was also a composer and writer, and in 1969 became the first African American to direct a film, which was called The Learning Tree and was based on his best-selling novel. Then, in 1971, he would Shaft .

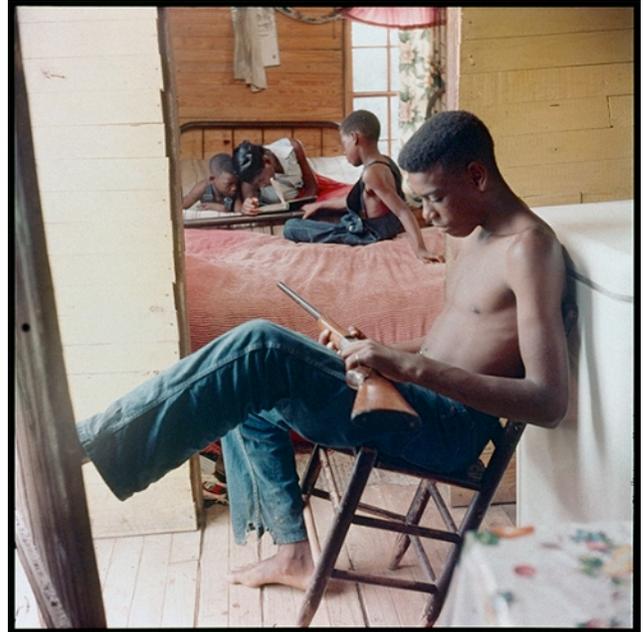
In March this year marks the tenth anniversary of his death and the United States celebrates with a program of simultaneous exhibitions; perhaps one of the most interesting is that up to April 2 presents the Jenkins Johnson Gallery in San Francisco. It consists of sixty works representative of its monitoring of the civil rights movement. His empathy and charisma allowed him, as a few photojournalists then, closer to their models to have depth and the inside story of the anonymous protagonists of those years. We can see in San Francisco images of the famous march on Washington, portraits of Duke Ellington or Muhammad Ali and photos of the Black Panthers.

The above shows that this room dedicated to Gordon Parks (it was also the first) took place in 2013 and, under the title of "Centennial" went over sixty years of experience; this, called "Higher Ground", consists of silver gelatin prints (there is an example in color) showing their view from within that crucial period in recent American history.

Look at the series Invisible Man (1952): The image is based on the award-winning novel of the same name Ralph Ellison and portrays a black man who is invaluable to the outside world. This work can be considered emblem of isolation and, from May, the Art Institute of Chicago will dedicate an exhibition entitled "Invisible Man: Gordon Parks and Ralph Ellison in Harlem".

The dates of the tribute are not random, and go beyond the decade that meets the death of Parks: in 2015 the movement for civil rights was six decades (it was December 1, 1955 when Rosa Parks urged him to refuse to give up her bus seat to a white passenger in Montgomery) and this February 21 will fifty-one years Malcolm X was assassinated. For fifty also he founded the Black Panther Party.

Parks toured churches, streets and fields of southern portraying the daily lives of the victims of segregation (sentences, education of children and adults, meetings, speeches mobilization ...), then the march on Washington Luther King and finally members the Black Muslims, contrary to collective initiatives Luther King for its emphasis on integration. He searched his images break stereotypes and its success lay in their talent to overcome barriers (starting their own home), perseverance and its persuasiveness.



Gordon Parks. Willie Causey, Jr., with Gun Violence During in Alabama, Shady Grove, 1956