

PERCEPTION THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY

GOAL	Teaching with Primary Sources	Time Required
OBJECTIVES	Participants will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare styles of photographers • Analyze a primary source • Develop instructional strategies to help students examine and analyze primary sources 	1 hour 0 minutes Standards AASL 1.1.3 AASL 2.1.3 NETS-T 1a NETS-T 2a
MATERIALS	Materials/Resources Using Primary Sources in the Classroom <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Portrait of Billie Holiday, Van Vechten <input type="checkbox"/> Portrait of Billie Holiday <input type="checkbox"/> Portrait of Billie Holiday and Mister, 1946 <input type="checkbox"/> Portrait of Billie Holiday and Mister, 1947 <input type="checkbox"/> Mr. Gottlieb's Comments http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/wghtml/wgpres04.html <input type="checkbox"/> Primary Source Analysis Tool <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher's Guide to Analyzing Photographs and Prints <input type="checkbox"/> Carl Van Vechten Biography <input type="checkbox"/> William P. Gottlieb's Life and Work 	
PREPARATION	Print one set per participant (or pair of participants) of the items below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Portrait of Billie Holiday, Van Vechten</i> • <i>Portrait of Billie Holiday</i> • <i>Portrait of Billie Holiday and Mister, 1946</i> • <i>Portrait of Billie Holiday and Mister, 1947</i> • <i>Teacher's Guide to Analyzing Photographs and Prints</i> <p>Print one <i>Primary Source Analysis Tool</i> per participant.</p> <p>Review and download <i>Mr. Gottlieb's comments</i> sound file. http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/wghtml/wgpres04.html</p> <p>Review the following resources, if desired, for background information on the photographers:</p>	

PERCEPTION THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY

- *Carl Van Vechten Biography*
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/vanvechten/vvbio.html>
- *William P. Gottlieb's Life and Work*
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/wghtml/wgbio.html>

PROCEDURE

1. Divide participants into groups.
2. Distribute a set of the four images of Billie Holiday (but don't identify her) to each group. Have groups examine them and report out on, "Which photographs are of the same person?"
3. Groups will complete the *Primary Source Analysis Tool* graphic organizer. Distribute *Teacher's Guide to Analyzing Photographs and Prints* and have groups refer to them for guiding questions.
4. In a large group discussion, have participants share observations and conclusions. Discuss how the subject's pose, props, and demeanor make the Van Vechten photo so different from the others; consider each photographer's purpose. Why were these photographs taken? What was the photographer's purpose for taking these photos?
5. Listen to *Mr. Gottlieb's comments*, where Gottlieb describes his work with Billie Holiday (about 2.5 minutes). How did the audio provide further insight not garnered from photographs?

ASSESSMENT

Discuss or reflect in writing: How could you incorporate the use of photographic style/purpose into instruction?

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There are 9 resources for this activity...



Portrait of Billie Holiday, Van Vechten

1949 portrait of Billie Holiday by Carl Van Vechten

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/van.5a52119>



Portrait of Billie Holiday

Portrait of Billie Holiday, Downbeat, New York, N.Y., ca. Feb. 1947 from William P. Gottlieb

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.music/gottlieb.04211>



Portrait of Billie Holiday and Mister, 1946

Portrait of Billie Holiday and Mister, Downbeat, New York, N.Y., ca. Feb. 1947 from William P. Gottlieb

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.music/gottlieb.04281>



Portrait of Billie Holiday and Mister, 1947

Portrait of Billie Holiday and Mister, Downbeat(?), New York, N.Y., ca. June 1946 from William P. Gottlieb

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.music/gottlieb.04271>



Mr. Gottlieb's Comments

Audio commentary

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/wghtml/wgpres04.html>



Primary Source Analysis Tool

A simple graphic organizer that helps students respond to and analyze primary sources

http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Primary_Source_Analysis_Tool.pdf

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PERCEPTION THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY



Teacher's Guide to Analyzing Photographs and Prints

An easy-to-use guide for facilitating student analysis of primary sources, with guiding questions and activity ideas

http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Analyzing_Photos_and_Prints.pdf



Carl Van Vechten Biography

Web Site

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/vanvechten/vvbio.html>
(2 pages)



William P. Gottlieb's Life and Work

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/wghtml/wgbio.html>
(10 pages)

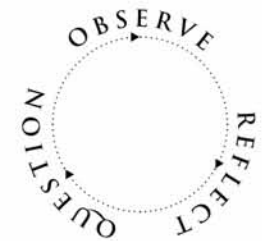


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PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS TOOL

OBSERVE

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REFLECT

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QUESTION

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FURTHER INVESTIGATION

TEACHER'S GUIDE ANALYZING PHOTOGRAPHS & PRINTS



Guide students with the sample questions as they respond to the primary source. **Encourage them to go back and forth between the columns; there is no correct order.**

OBSERVE

Have students identify and note details.

Sample Questions:

Describe what you see. • What do you notice first? • What people and objects are shown? • How are they arranged? • What is the physical setting? • What, if any, words do you see? • What other details can you see?

REFLECT

Encourage students to generate and test hypotheses about the image.

Why do you think this image was made? • What's happening in the image? • When do you think it was made? • Who do you think was the audience for this image? • What tools were used to create this? • What can you learn from examining this image? • What's missing from this image? • If someone made this today, what would be different? • What would be the same?

QUESTION

Have students ask questions to lead to more observations and reflections.

What do you wonder about...
who? • what? • when? • where? • why? • how?

FURTHER INVESTIGATION

Help students to identify questions appropriate for further investigation, and to develop a research strategy for finding answers.

Sample Question: What more do you want to know, and how can you find out?

A few follow-up activity ideas:

Beginning

Write a caption for the image.

Intermediate

Select an image. Predict what will happen one minute after the scene shown in the image. One hour after? Explain the reasoning behind your predictions.

Advanced

Have students expand or alter textbook or other printed explanations of history based on images they study.

For more tips on using primary sources, go to <http://www.loc.gov/teachers>

Portraits by Carl Van Vechten

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from the [Prints and Photographs Division](#)

[Collection Connection](#)
Classroom resources for teachers

Carl Van Vechten Biography

KEYS: [Descriptive Record](#) [Enlarge Image](#)

Carl Van Vechten was born on June 17, 1880 in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. At an early age, he developed an interest in music and theater, which he found hard to satisfy in his hometown. He left Iowa in 1899 to attend the University of Chicago. In Chicago he was able to explore art, music, and opera. He became interested in writing and contributed to the *University of Chicago Weekly*.

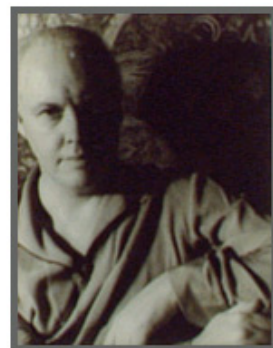
After college, Van Vechten's first job was with the *Chicago American*. In addition to covering a broad range of topics, he was occasionally asked to provide photographs to go along with his copy.

In 1906, when Van Vechten moved to New York City, he was hired as the assistant music critic at the *New York Times*. His interest in opera prompted him to take a leave of absence from the *Times* in 1907, to examine this art form in Europe. While in England he married his long time friend from Cedar Rapids, Anna Snyder. The marriage would end in divorce in 1912.

Van Vechten returned to his job at the *New York Times* in 1909 and soon became the first American critic of modern dance. At that time, Isadora Duncan, Anna Pavlova, and Loie Fuller were performing in New York.

In 1914, Van Vechten married actress Fania Marinoff. He left his full time newspaper job in the spring, but he continued to write, and published several collections of his essays relating to music, ballet, and cats. *Peter Whiffle: His Life and Works*, Van Vechten's first novel, was published in 1922.

Van Vechten became very interested in promoting black artists and writers. He was an avid collector of ephemera and books pertaining to black arts and



Portrait of Carl Van Vechten. 1934.

letters and a frequent visitor to Harlem. These experiences provided the inspiration for his controversial novel, *Nigger Heaven*, which was published in 1926. In the future, he would photograph many of the creative people he met in Harlem.

In the early 1930s, Miguel Covarrubias introduced Van Vechten to the 35mm Leica camera. He began photographing his large circle of friends and acquaintances. His earlier career as a writer and his wife's experience as an actress provided him with access to both fledgling artists and the established cultural figures of the time. Some of his subjects from this period include F. Scott Fitzgerald, Langston Hughes, Alfred A. Knopf, Bessie Smith, and Gertrude Stein.

Van Vechten's portraits are frequently busts or half-length poses, in front of bold backdrops. Dancers were usually photographed on stage. Van Vechten did his own darkroom work, but frequently used an assistant to help set up lights for the portrait sittings.

During World War II, Van Vechten volunteered at the Stage Door Canteen. Top-notch entertainers frequently performed there for servicemen. Saul Mauriber, one of the busboys under Van Vechten's supervision, began working as his photographic assistant and remained in this capacity for twenty years. Mauriber was also responsible for organizing Van Vechten's photographs and eventually became the photographic executor for Van Vechten's estate.

Van Vechten's photographs have been widely exhibited and frequently used as illustrations in books and magazines. He felt very strongly that his collection of manuscripts, letters, clippings, programs, and photographs, many pertaining to creative blacks, should be available for scholarly research. With this in mind, during his lifetime, he presented various parts of his collection to several university libraries. The Library of Congress acquired its collection of approximately 1,400 photographs in 1966 from Saul Mauriber.

Van Vechten remained active, writing and photographing, up until his death in 1964.

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William P. Gottlieb's Life and Work: A Brief Biography Based on Oral Histories¹

William P. Gottlieb, the youngest child of Sam and Lena Gottlieb, was born on January 28, 1917 in Brooklyn, New York. When he was four his family moved to Bound Brook, New Jersey, where his father was in the building and lumber business. When Gottlieb was in his early teens, his mother died, and his father passed away shortly thereafter. After high school graduation he enrolled at Lehigh University, where he majored in economics and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa, an honorary scholastic society. Gottlieb's interest in jazz resulted from a food poisoning incident in 1936. The day before the end of his sophomore year, Gottlieb's fraternity house served undercooked pork, which caused him and several of his classmates to come down with trichinosis. While bedridden over the summer, Gottlieb was visited frequently by his high school buddy "Doc" Bartle, a classical pianist and an ardent jazz fan. Bartle collected international music magazines in which he read that jazz was America's greatest contribution to the arts, and he shared his interest with Gottlieb, often bringing along Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington records when he visited. Gottlieb was quickly transformed from a Guy Lombardo fan into a jazz buff.



[\[Gottlieb, Washington, D.C., ca. 1940\]](#) (Music Division, LC-GLB13-1619)

When Gottlieb returned to Lehigh in the fall, he became a regular columnist for the weekly campus newspaper and editor-in-chief of *The Lehigh Review*, a once-thriving monthly magazine that is no longer published. Inspired by Bartle's Armstrong and Ellington records, Gottlieb made sure that jazz and jazz records were covered in each issue of the magazine. *Life* magazine was popular at the time, and Gottlieb strove to emulate its largely photographic format. Illustrations were provided by fellow students such as Lou Stoumen, who later won two Oscars for documentaries entitled *The True Story of the Civil War* and *The Black Fox*.

In 1938, Gottlieb's last year at Lehigh, he obtained a position at the *Washington Post*. The opportunity arose because of a rained-out tennis match. A school friend of Gottlieb's was the nephew of Don Bernard, the business manager of the *Post*, and the friend encouraged Gottlieb to meet with Bernard when he passed through Washington, D.C., while on tour with the varsity tennis team. Gottlieb was scheduled to be in town on a Saturday, and he

did not think he would have time for job searching, but he packed some writing samples just in case. The tennis match was canceled because of rain, so Gottlieb took a chance and called Bernard, who happened to be at work on that particular Saturday. While his wife-to-be, Delia, waited outside in his Ford, Gottlieb met with Bernard (who claims Gottlieb was still wearing his tennis outfit during the interview). Bernard was impressed with his work and recommended him for a position in advertising. After his college graduation, Gottlieb began working as a *Post* advertising solicitor with a salary of about twenty-five dollars a week.

Several months after he began working for the *Post*, Gottlieb volunteered to write a weekly jazz column for the Sunday edition of the paper. His request was granted, and he was paid an extra ten dollars a week to write the column, which became the first of its kind to be published on a regular basis in a daily newspaper. Initially a photographer accompanied Gottlieb on assignment at local nightclubs and theaters, but after two weeks the *Post* concluded that it could not afford to pay a photographer. Determined to illustrate his articles, Gottlieb traded in hundreds of records from his extensive collection—which consisted mainly of promotional records he had received for review—for a 3-1/4 x 4-1/4-inch Speed Graphic press camera, film, and flashbulbs.



[Gottlieb with his Speed Graphic camera, July 1997. Photographer: Jim Higgins].
(Photoduplication Service)

The Speed Graphic was the classic press camera of its day and required considerable skill to master. If used with film holders (in contrast to film packs), its capacity was two pieces of film and thus two exposures. Since exposing the second piece of film required flipping the holder and removing a dark slide, the photographer had to make each exposure count. Despite its awkwardness, the camera was a fine instrument, and Gottlieb once said, "If you can shoot a Speed Graphic, you can shoot anything." With the help of coworkers in the *Post's* photo department, and after a tremendous amount of trial and error, Gottlieb conquered the complicated camera, or "beast," as he called it. The bulk of Gottlieb's photographs were taken with the Speed Graphic, although a few were produced with a Graflex and a Rolleiflex, and most were black-and-white. Noteworthy exceptions include color photographs of Fifty-second Street in New York City, the Stan Kenton Orchestra, and Frank Sinatra.

The Speed Graphic used bulky, non-reusable flashbulbs as its principal source of light. Although the flashgun could be attached directly to the camera—the configuration Gottlieb often used for his shots of performers on a theater stage—Gottlieb preferred to position his light or lights away from the camera for better cross- or back-lighting. In this mode, one or more flashguns were connected to the camera by extension cables. Multiple lights could be placed anywhere in the room within reach of the cables. Alternatively, if a photocell was attached to a second (or "slave") unit, it could be situated at a greater distance and triggered by the flash of the "master"

unit. In some circumstances, the flashguns were fastened to a stand, furniture, or the wall, but Gottlieb often recruited audience members to help him hold flashguns. It was difficult to show the volunteers how to hold and aim the lights correctly, and new bulbs had to be inserted after each exposure.

Because Gottlieb did not get paid for illustrations and his photographic supplies were bulky and expensive, he limited each photo session to three or four shots. This approach was, of course, ideally suited to the discipline required by the Speed Graphic and the use of flashguns. Gottlieb's portraits are well-thought-out character studies, not candids or pictures selected from dozens of exposures.

Gottlieb did not have the advantage of being a professional musician like other jazz photographers, such as Milt Hinton, a bassist, and Charles Peterson, a guitarist and banjo player. Nevertheless, he was able to obtain memorable results because he knew the music, the musicians, and what he wanted each photograph to show.

By the age of twenty-two Gottlieb was known as "Mr. Jazz" in the Washington, D.C., area. In addition to his position at the *Post*, he had a half-hour interview show on WRC radio (an NBC outlet) and a thrice-weekly disc jockey job at WINX, a local independent radio station. On his radio shows, Gottlieb often had musical guests from the Earle Theater or the Howard Theater and would play music by the featured artists as well as music by those who influenced them. Other guests included jazz personalities such as Nesuhi and Ahmet Ertegun, the sons of the Turkish Ambassador to the United States. Ahmet Ertegun and Herb Abramson founded Atlantic Records, while Nesuhi Ertegun became head of the sister international company. Gottlieb and the Erteguns were good friends, dining frequently at one another's homes. Nesuhi and Gottlieb practiced table tennis in the main ballroom of the Turkish Embassy and competed in the doubles competition of the National Table Tennis Championships.



[Gottlieb at WINX, Washington, D.C., ca. 1940]. (Music Division, LC-GLB13-1618)

Washington, D.C., was Duke Ellington's hometown, yet its jazz scene was not especially prosperous, at least compared to New York City's. The District was a highly segregated town during this period, and the jazz venues reflected this policy: the Howard Theater was a black establishment, while the Earle Theater served a white clientele. Smaller nightclubs, such as the Silver Fox, came and went quickly. One of Gottlieb's fondest memories as a Washingtonian is an occasion on which he orchestrated a jam session between the Count Basie band at the Howard Theater and the Bob Crosby Orchestra, the leading Dixieland ensemble, which was performing at the Earle Theater. Since both groups were in town at the same time, Gottlieb thought it would be delightful to bring them together. The manager of the Howard Theater gave Gottlieb permission to use the stage for the event after hours. (Gottlieb publicized the Howard Theater regularly in the

Post, so the manager "owed" him.) The collaboration resulted in a powerful band with Basie, Ray Bauduc, and Bob Haggart in the rhythm section, and Matty Matlock, Eddie Miller, Lester Young, and Hershel Evans on reeds. Gottlieb later described the event as "simply glorious."

In 1941 Gottlieb quit his job in advertising and enrolled as a graduate student in economics at the University of Maryland at College Park (a suburb of Washington) and taught a few freshman-level classes. "Mr. Jazz" remained active in the jazz scene, continuing to write his weekly *Post* column and do radio shows.



Portrait of Ahmet M. Ertegun, Duke Ellington, William P. Gottlieb, Nesuhi Ertegun, and Dave Stewart, William P. Gottlieb's home, Maryland, 1941. (Music Division, LC-GLB13-0234)

A group of students at the University of Maryland asked Gottlieb to teach a jazz appreciation course. The school administration would not approve the proposed class, however, and Gottlieb later learned why: "A lot of the students approached me with the idea of teaching a not-for-credit course or a for-credit course in jazz. I was something of a character at the school. Here I was teaching economics and having an NBC show, a three-a-week on a local station, and a weekly jazz column because I kept that. But the faculty turned it down, and I learned second hand, or a little more than second hand, it was turned down because the university didn't want it since that would have

given too much praise, so to speak, to blacks. On my radio shows and on my columns, I featured blacks a great deal. Not because I was out crusading, but because they were the key people in jazz." Disgruntled with the university system, he obtained a position as an economist with the wartime Office of Price Administration.

Gottlieb was drafted into the Army Air Corps in 1943. He underwent a series of orientations in Virginia, Mississippi, North Carolina, Connecticut, California, and Washington, and eventually served as both a photo officer and classifications officer. He was fortunate to remain in the United States in ideal working conditions; in fact, he fondly (and with a certain amount of guilt) recalls listening to the Glenn Miller Orchestra play in the balcony of the mess hall at Yale University. Gottlieb continued to submit articles to the *Post* for some time. He always carried his typewriter, camera, flashgun, and tennis racquet with him in a crate. Gottlieb said, "While a private at the Gulfport (Mississippi) Airfield, I was still sending out things to the *Washington Post* and that used to irritate one of the sergeants. He didn't know what was in those letters, and he would put me on extra KP duty and things like that, but he never would make an all-out frontal attack on me because I was too big and kind of domineering in my own way. So I always got away with this sort of thing."

After World War II, Gottlieb went to New York City to pursue his journalistic career. One of his first stops was the office of *Down Beat* magazine in the RKO building at

Rockefeller Center. *Down Beat*, the leading jazz magazine, was headquartered in Chicago and had branch offices around the world. The staff was already familiar with Gottlieb's *Post* column and radio shows and offered him a position as assistant editor to Mike Levin. Gottlieb's primary duties were to write concert reviews and to compile a catchall column of jazz news from around the world; occasionally he illustrated articles he did not write. He was still not paid to be a photographer, yet he became better known for his photographs than for his articles. Gottlieb's first assignment was to review the Glenn Miller Orchestra under the leadership of Ray McKinley at the Hotel Pennsylvania. His [double-exposure of McKinley](#) ended up on the cover of *Down Beat* and has been widely reproduced ever since--quite an accomplishment for a first assignment. Gottlieb's photographs later appeared on numerous *Down Beat* covers.

"[Through the Looking Glass](#)" was a special feature in *Down Beat* that showed Gottlieb's fondness for reflecting his subjects in mirrors. A musician was placed in front of a dressing room mirror and then photographed to capture the interior of the room. In a portrait of Duke Ellington taken backstage at the Paramount Theater, Gottlieb photographed a reflection of the elegant Duke's extensive wardrobe, his collection of various creams and powders, and fan notes wedged into the mirror's frame. Gottlieb shot a similar photo of Glen Gray in the same position but with quite different surroundings: a tired old shirt and jacket hang on the wall, a bag of golf clubs is beside Gray, and a handgun lies conspicuously on the dressing table.

A completely different feature in *Down Beat* was Gottlieb's "[Posin](#)" column, inspired by the *New York Daily News* "Inquiring Photographer" feature. In each issue, Gottlieb posed a question to several jazz personalities and published their answers beside thumbnail-sized portraits. Some of the shots were taken specifically for the column, while others were cropped from existing photographs. Gottlieb said, "Often for fun, I would invent the answers, saying what I thought the person might have said. What used to get to me is that some of the New York newspaper columnists would pick up those quotes as if they were there and heard it, and they were my own inventions. None of the musicians ever objected because I did capture what they would like to have said."

In addition to working for *Down Beat*, Gottlieb submitted a monthly piece for the *Record Changer*, a magazine that featured a listing of records to be bought and sold. Four or five large photos were included in each issue as illustrations for his regular column. The magazine was also brilliantly illustrated with drawings and cartoons by Gene Deitch. Intermittently, Gottlieb also published work in the *Saturday Review*, *Collier's*, and the *New York Herald Tribune*.



["Spring maids," Kitty Kallen and Doris Day on the cover of Down Beat, v. 14, no. 8 \(Apr. 9, 1947\).](#)

Many of Gottlieb's photographs were taken in New York City clubs on Fifty-second Street or "Swing Street," the block between Fifth and Sixth Avenues. The ground floors of brownstone houses had been converted into restaurants and nightclubs, notably jazz clubs such as Club Downbeat, the Famous Door, Jimmy Ryan's, the Three Deuces, the Onyx Club, and the Spotlite. Kelly's Stable, the Hickory House, and Birdland were located a short distance away. One could coddle an inexpensive drink--for maybe fifty cents--and go from club to club all night to hear world-famous jazz, from Dixieland at Jimmy Ryan's to the more contemporary sound at the Three Deuces.

Practical considerations came into play when Gottlieb was on assignment for magazines and newspapers. Since he usually did not know in advance whether his photographs would be published in a single column, two columns, or a half page, he produced images that were clear even when limited in size. He often focused on capturing one or two individuals instead of, for example, an entire orchestra. Gottlieb also favored vertical shots, which naturally reflect the shape of the human face and body.

Gottlieb's photographs fall into three categories: personality studies, illustrations that augment an article's text, and portraits with special effects. An example of Gottlieb's first and most common type of photograph is his [famous portrait of Billie Holiday](#), perhaps the most widely reproduced photograph of any jazz artist. Of this portrait, Gottlieb said, "I especially tried to capture personality, but that's an elusive quality and I was successful only a portion of the time. But I certainly hit it on the button here with a picture of Billie Holiday, whose voice was filled with anguish. I also tried to capture the beauty of her face. She was at her most beautiful at that particular time which was not too long after she had come out of prison on a drug charge. She couldn't get any drugs or alcohol while she was incarcerated. She lost weight and came out looking gorgeous, and her voice was I think at its peak. I was fortunate enough to have spent time with her during that period, and I caught this close-up of her in a way that you could really see the anguish that must have been coming out of her throat."

On other occasions, Gottlieb tried to produce a photograph that expanded or interpreted his text. A [portrait of Stan Kenton](#) falls in this category. By photographing Kenton's reflection in a broken mirror, Gottlieb created a visual translation of Kenton's "shattering" music, which was described as discordant, unconventional, and loud. While the Kenton Orchestra was onstage in Richmond, Virginia, Gottlieb purchased a few inexpensive mirrors at a local drug store. He disassembled the mirrors and glued them back together with rubber cement, taking care that the glass adhered to the cardboard backing so that when he covered the mirrors with a towel and punched them, the pieces would stay in position. Gottlieb placed the broken mirror on a wall in the dressing room and asked Kenton to pretend he was directing one of his trumpet players, Buddy Childers.



[Stan Kenton and Buddy Childers as Reflected by Gottlieb, Richmond, Va., 1947 or 1948]. (Music Division, LC-GLB04-1274)



[The Finished Photograph]. (Music Division, LC-GLB13-0485)

Sometimes Gottlieb employed what he called "gimmicks," or attention-getting devices, in his photographs. For example, he might take an in-camera double exposure or use symbolic imagery. In his "foggy" portrait of Mel Tormé, who earned the appellation the "The Velvet Fog" because of his soft yet husky voice, Gottlieb shows the singer vocalizing while surrounded by dry-ice clouds. On this particular assignment, Gottlieb went backstage to interview Tormé, and after a brief greeting, the vocalist headed for the shower, giving Gottlieb time to consider the type of portrait he should take. He went out to a delicatessen for some dry ice. Back in the dressing room, he put the ice in the sink, and when Tormé finally came out of the shower and dressed, Gottlieb asked him to sing beside the sink as water running over the ice created clouds. To eliminate any distracting details, Gottlieb pulled a sheet from the cot in the room and draped it on the wall behind the sink.

Gottlieb joined the Stan Kenton Orchestra on its tour of Southern states in 1948. For nearly a week, he served as the band's photographer as it traveled hundreds of miles a day and played numerous concerts. After the tour, Gottlieb retired from the jazz field. By the late 1940s the jazz scene in New York, and specifically Fifty-second Street, was starting to perish because of a recession in the music business and a newly issued entertainment tax. Bop gained popularity and slowly drove out the old-school jazz fans who supported the clubs. Rockefeller Center expanded, the old brownstones were replaced with skyscrapers, and businesses encroached on "Swing Street." *Down Beat* circulation declined, and the second leading jazz magazine, *Metronome*, folded. Gottlieb himself grew tired of hanging out in nightclubs every night, as he explained in an interview: "Most important of all, I was really something of a square; I had a wife and children, and the joys of staying out until four a.m.



[Mel Tormé, New York, N.Y., between 1946 and 1948]. (Music Division, LC-GLB-0862)

with musicians, even those who were my idols, had evaporated, especially since I was often the only sober one there."²

After Gottlieb left *Down Beat*, he was offered a job at Curriculum Films, an educational filmstrip company in an office adjacent to *Down Beat*'s. His new desk was on the opposite side of the wall from his old *Down Beat* desk. Later he started his own filmstrip company with Walter Schaap, who had worked for Charles Delaunay as editor of *Hot Discography*. (Schaap is the father of Phil Schaap, a leading jazz historian and broadcaster.) At a party in the office celebrating Gottlieb's new business, James P. Johnson, Fess Williams, Freddie Moore, and Joe Thomas provided the musical entertainment. At its peak, the company consisted of approximately fifteen employees and several freelance artists and produced films for educational and institutional corporations, such as Encyclopedia Britannica Films, D.C. Health, McGraw-Hill, and Oxford University Press.

In 1969 McGraw-Hill bought Gottlieb's company and hired him as president of a division, a position that he kept for ten years. Before his retirement, he produced some fourteen hundred filmstrips, personally writing and illustrating approximately four hundred of them. Five to six hundred of the total were photographic, while the rest were literal (realistic depictions) or cartoon drawings.



[Gottlieb's Office Party with James P. Johnson and Freddie Moore, Jamaica, Queens, New York, New York, ca. 1948]. (Music Division, LC-GLB23-0463)

The average filmstrip was approximately fifty frames in length and comprised a string of illustrations on a strip of 35-mm film. Accompanying text was either placed at the bottom of each image as a caption or distributed as a sound recording. Gottlieb enjoyed his career as an independent filmstrip creator because there was so much variety in his work: essentially, he had to become an expert on a wide range of topics, from "How to Set a Table" to "Number Bases Other Than Ten" to "Space Flight." His filmstrips won awards from the Canadian Film Board and the Educational Film Librarians Association, which honored him with more first-place ribbons than any other filmmaker. Gottlieb also wrote a number of children's books, including

several *Golden Books*, with sales totaling about five million copies to date. Particular favorites are *Science Facts You Won't Believe*, *Space Flight*, and *Laddie the Superdog*, a story based on the Superman character.

Gottlieb's career as a jazz photographer and journalist can be divided into three periods: his stint as "Mr. Jazz" in Washington, D.C., his post-war position at *Down Beat*, and finally, nearly thirty years later, his "retirement" in which he has made another career out of his earlier work. More than two hundred of his striking jazz photographs, along with

personal recollections, are published in *The Golden Age of Jazz* (Simon and Schuster, 1979; Pomegranate Artbooks, 1995). The book earned an ASCAP (American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers) Award and is now in its eleventh printing. In 1997 *Down Beat* honored Gottlieb with its Lifetime Achievement Award--the first time the honor had gone to a photographer--and in that same year, the New Jersey Jazz Society honored him as the non-musician who did the most for jazz. Gottlieb is a member of the American Federation of Jazz Societies, Photographic Administrators, Incorporated, and the Jazz Photographers Association.

Gottlieb is no longer active as a photographer, but in the past few years he has taken a few portraits of jazz artists. The photo editor of *Modern Photography* asked him to photograph Les Paul as he did in the 1940s, so Gottlieb rented a Speed Graphic, lenses, and flashguns with extension cables to capture the jazz guitarist at the Fat Tuesday nightclub in New York City. In recent years he has also photographed Gerry Mulligan, Al Grey, and a few others. Gottlieb still listens to jazz, especially Armstrong and "straight-ahead Benny Goodman period jazz," citing Miles Davis as his cutoff point.

The photographs Gottlieb took from 1938 to 1948 are perhaps the most widely reproduced jazz images today. The Library of Congress's William P. Gottlieb Collection is extensively used by patrons both on- and off-site and is consulted regularly by journalists, book editors, museum curators, artists, and producers of multimedia documentaries. The photographs are in numerous art galleries and have been exhibited in more than 150 venues in the United States and abroad, including the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C. (which has acquired prints of Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn), the Library of Congress as part of the permanent American Treasures exhibit, the Deutsche Bank on Fifty-second Street in New York City, the United States Information Service Amerika Haus in Berlin, the Museum of Modern Art in Stockholm, and the Natio Museum of Art in Osaka, Japan. Gottlieb's work has been featured in countless books and articles, used for nearly 250 record album covers, appeared in television documentaries and major motion pictures, and been distributed on posters, postcards, calendars, and T-shirts. Articles about Gottlieb have appeared in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, *Down Beat*, *Jazz Times*, *Civilization*, the *Mississippi Rag*, and dozens of other newspapers and magazines. In 1994 the United States Postal Service selected Gottlieb's portraits of Billie Holiday, Charlie Parker, Mildred Bailey, and Jimmy Rushing for a series of postage stamps commemorating jazz performers. National Public Radio recently interviewed Gottlieb for its popular program "All Things Considered," and earlier he appeared on its "Fresh Air" show.



[Four of Gottlieb's portraits are the basis for U.S. postage stamps].

Concerning Gottlieb's photographs, Walter Schaap commented, "They are such wonderful photographs and so typical of the artist they represented that it stuck in my memory that this is what Coleman Hawkins looked like, and this is what Lester Young looked like, and this is what Louis Armstrong looked like, so that today, when I recall these musicians whom I knew, I think of them in terms of what they look like in Bill's photographs." A skilled craftsman, Gottlieb was able to capture the personalities of jazz musicians in a sensitive, storytelling manner. He preferred dignified depictions of serious artists at work, rather than posed portraits, and discouraged mugging and clowning. (An exception is the case of Cab Calloway, who was known for his flamboyance.) The photographs show a natural affinity for the artists' humanity and a genuine respect for their creative art. Gottlieb's work is an important contribution to the documentation of American culture during a period when jazz music thrived despite the Depression and World War II.

Notes:

1. The biographical information cited in this essay has been gathered from an oral history by Dean Hennie (1995; transcribed by Jeni Dahmus, 1997) and a series of interviews with Gottlieb by Jon Newsom, Morgan Cundiff, Carl Fleischhauer, and Jeni Dahmus (1997-98).

2. Gottlieb and his wife Delia have four children, four grandchildren, and one great-grandchild. They also raised two of Delia's half-brothers and half-sisters. Outside of his family life, Gottlieb was heavily involved in the labor movement (his father-in-law, Jacob Potofsky, was President of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America) and with tennis. Gottlieb and one of his sons, Steven, were twice ranked among the top ten father-and-son United States tennis teams.

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