

THE GORDON PARKS FOUNDATION

THE GORDON PARKS FOUNDATION HOSTS “ELEMENT.”

New Photography Exhibition Highlights the Powerful Gordon Parks Photographs that Inspired Celebrated Rapper Kendrick Lamar’s Music Video

Pleasantville, New York – **The Gordon Parks Foundation** announced the opening of **ELEMENT** – a new exhibition on view at the Foundation’s exhibition space from December 1–February 10 showcasing Gordon Parks photographs that inspired rapper Kendrick Lamar’s music video **ELEMENT** from his album, **DAMN**. Lamar, known for using powerful images in his music videos, directly references and revives a number of Parks’ images that explore the lives of Black Americans, including the 1963 photo [Boy With Junebug](#), [Untitled](#), the 1956 photo from Parks’ “Segregation Stories” series, [Ethel Sharrieff](#), a 1963 photo from his “The White Man’s Day Is Almost Over” photo essay about Black Muslims, as well as photos from Parks’ 1948 “[Harlem Gang Leader](#)” series.

“Gordon Parks’ work is continuing to have a great impact on young people – and particularly on artists like Kendrick who, use the power of imagery to examine issues related to social justice and race in our country,” said **Peter W. Kunhardt, Jr.**, Executive Director of The Gordon Parks Foundation. “With **ELEMENT** the music video, Kendrick has helped to call attention to one of the most important artists of our time.”

Long-time friend and supporter of The Gordon Parks Foundation, **Kasseem Dean** (aka, Swizz Beatz) noted, “I’m so inspired that my friend Kendrick Lamar chose the iconic imagery of the legendary Gordon Parks in his video for **ELEMENT**. It’s a prime example of how contemporary change makers – artists, musicians, filmmakers, designers – can borrow from the greats of the past who were also working towards social change.”

At the foundation of **ELEMENT**, are Parks’ photo essays exploring issues related to poverty and social justice which established him as one of the most significant story tellers of American society. “Harlem Gang Leader,” the photo essay published in LIFE magazine, is credited with introducing Parks to America. The photos explored the world of Leonard “Red” Jackson, the leader of a gang in Harlem. Soon after, Parks was offered a position as staff photographer for the magazine, making him the first, and for a long time the only, African American photographer at the magazine. Also published in LIFE, Parks documented the daily life of an extended African American family living under Jim Crow segregation in the rural South entitled “The Restraints: Open and Hidden.”

For more information and about the exhibit and press images please contact Amanda Smith at The Gordon Parks Foundation (amanda@mkfound.org).

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About Kendrick Lamar

Platinum-selling, Grammy-award winning artist Kendrick Lamar is one of the rare artists who has achieved critical and commercial success while earning the respect and support of those who inspired him. A native of Compton, California, Lamar released his debut album, *good kid, m.A.A.d city* in October 2012 which debuted at

Hours & Admission

Free and open to the public.
M-F: 10am - 4pm
Sat: 10am - 3pm
Sun: Closed

General Information

48 Wheeler Avenue, Floor 1
Pleasantville, NY 10570
Tel: (914) 238-2619
Website: www.gordonparksfoundation.org

Social Media

Facebook: The Gordon Parks Foundation
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number two on the Billboard 200 and earned him seven Grammy Award nominations. His second album, *To Pimp a Butterfly*, released in March 2015 immediately earned rave reviews and topped the Billboard 200 with sales of 325,000 copies within its first week, despite it coming a week early due to a technical accident. The album garnered Lamar five Grammy nominations with a win for Best Rap Album.

About Gordon Parks

Gordon Parks was a seminal figure of twentieth century photography. A humanitarian with a deep commitment to social justice, he left behind a body of work that documents many of the most important aspects of American culture from the early 1940s up until his death in 2006, with a focus on race relations, poverty, civil rights, and urban life. In addition, Parks was also a celebrated composer, author, and filmmaker who interacted with many of the most prominent people of his era - from politicians and artists to celebrities and athletes.

About The Gordon Parks Foundation

The Gordon Parks Foundation's mission is to permanently preserve the work of Gordon Parks, make it available to the public through exhibitions, books, and electronic media, and support artistic and educational activities that advance what Parks described as "the common search for a better life and a better world." The primary purpose of The Gordon Parks Foundation's exhibition space is to present focused exhibits of Parks' photography, as part of the Foundation's commitment to educating the public and preserving his work.

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