



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Hunter Braithwaite

Director, Cultural Counsel

hunter@culturalcounsel.com

Abby Ronner

Account Executive, Cultural Counsel

abby@culturalcounsel.com

**The Newark Museum of Art Presents *Billie Holiday at Sugar Hill: Photographs*
by Jerry Dantzic**

June 9, 2022 – August 22, 2022



Billie Holiday holding her pet Chihuahua, Pepi, in front of Sugar Hill, Newark, New Jersey, April 18, 1957.
All photographs © 2017 Jerry Dantzic/ Jerry Dantzic Archives. All rights reserved

NEWARK, NJ – May 9, 2022 – Nearly sixty-three years after her passing, Billie Holiday makes her return to Newark in a collection of largely-unseen photographs that underscores the artist's legacy, personal life and passions. The Newark Museum of Art is pleased to welcome *Billie Holiday at Sugar Hill: Photographs by Jerry Dantzic*, an exhibition dedicated to one of the 20th century's most iconic jazz and blues vocalists.

On view June 9, *Billie Holiday at Sugar Hill: Photographs by Jerry Dantzig* will feature the vivid and intimate images taken in 1957 by Jerry Dantzig, a photojournalist who received a rare glimpse of the esteemed singer when he documented the week of her performance run at the Sugar Hill nightclub in Newark, NJ. Two years before Holiday's death, Dantzig's lens captures intimate moments of the artist's life, both on and off stage with her family, friends and pet Chihuahua, Pepi.

A pioneer for female jazz artists, Holiday challenged the landscape and adversity of the industry while navigating the social systems of race, class and gender. She innovated a new style of song so deeply connected to its listeners, yet instinctively individual to her. The exhibition intends to honor the triumph, dignity and humanity of this iconic American artist.

“The Museum is honored to welcome the return of two luminaries in a collection that offers a new insight into a significant era in both jazz history and our city’s history,” said Linda C. Harrison, Director and CEO of The Newark Museum of Art. “We hope visitors will recognize our vibrant community among the vivid dialogue and unfolding narratives this exhibition holds.”

Along with the legacy of its subject, the exhibition also celebrates the work of its author, Jerry Dantzig (1925-2006). A renowned photojournalist in the early 1950’s who helped introduce color panoramic photography, Dantzig’s works have been featured across the international art scene and housed in permanent collections at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The International Center of Photography, the Whitney Museum of American Art and MoMA, among others. His photographs have also made appearances in print publications, such as *The New York Times*, *Life*, *Vanity Fair* and others.

The exhibition is complemented by commentary from celebrated author Zadie Smith, as well as the inclusion of ephemera like a copy of a 1957 SEE magazine, Dantzig's Leica M3 camera, and other items related to the jazz and blues icon.

Billie Holiday at Sugar Hill: Photographs by Jerry Dantzig is jointly curated by his son Grayson Dantzig, an archivist, author and musician; Robert O’Meally, the Zora Neale Hurston Professor of English at Columbia University, and director of Columbia’s Center for Jazz Studies; and Shannon Perich, a curator in the Photographic History Collection of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History. While independent curators, each brings a unique scholarship to this exhibition allowing for the breadth of Dantzig’s work and this important era in jazz history to be demonstrated with accuracy and sincerity.

This exhibition was organized for travel by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service in collaboration with the Jerry Dantzig Archives.

#

About the Newark Museum of Art

Founded in 1909, The Newark Museum of Art is the largest art and education institution in New

Jersey and one of the most influential museums in the United States. Its renowned global art collections, supported by significant holdings of science, technology and natural history, rank 12th among North America's art museums. The Museum is dedicated to artistic excellence, education and community engagement with an overarching commitment to broadening and diversifying arts participation. As it has for over a century, the Museum responds to the evolving needs and interests of the diverse audiences it serves by providing exhibitions, programming and resources designed to improve and enrich people's lives.

The Museum also encompasses the Victoria Hall of Science, the Alice and Leonard Dreyfuss Planetarium, the 1885 Ballantine House, the MakerSPACE, the Billy Johnson Auditorium, the Alice Ransom Dreyfuss Memorial Garden, an authentic 1784 Schoolhouse, and the Newark Fire Museum.

The Newark Museum of Art, a not-for-profit museum of art and science, receives operating support from the City of Newark, the State of New Jersey, the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State (a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts), the New Jersey Cultural Trust, the Prudential Foundation, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, the Victoria Foundation, the Estate of Phyllis and Sanford Bolton, the Wallace Foundation, and other corporations, foundations, and individuals. Funds for acquisitions and activities other than operations are provided by members and other contributors.

ABOUT THE CURATORS

ROBERT G. O'MEALLY is the Zora Neale Hurston Professor of English at Columbia University, and director of Columbia's Center for Jazz Studies. His books include *Lady Day: The Many Faces of Billie Holiday*; *The Craft of Ralph Ellison*; and *Romare Bearden: A Black Odyssey*. He has edited or co-edited many volumes, including *The Jazz Cadence of American Culture*; *History and Memory in African American Culture*, and *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*. Several of his music projects have won awards. In recent years, O'Meally has served as co-curator for art at Jazz at Lincoln Center, and has curated many other exhibitions around the world.

SHANNON THOMAS PERICH is a curator in the Photographic History Collection at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, where she has worked for over twenty years. She is the author of *Changing Face of Portrait Photography: From Daguerreotype to Digital* and *Portrait of Family about Richard Avedon's photographs of the John F. Kennedy family*. Perich's research often explores the dynamic intersections of the art, technology, and history of photography, especially where the personal experience and a national narrative are at play.

GRAYSON DANTZIC is an archivist, curator, photographer, documentary videographer, and musician. He is a special projects archivist for the Warner Music Group Archives, and in 1999, he and his mother established the Jerry Dantzic Archives. He edited and wrote the introduction for *Jerry Dantzic's New York: The Fifties in Focus*, as well as *Jerry Dantzic: Billie Holiday at Sugar Hill*. He has

curated several photographic exhibitions, and is co-founder and executive vice president of the American Photography Archives Group.

About SITES

The Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES) has been sharing the wealth of Smithsonian collections and research programs with millions of people outside Washington, D.C., for more than 70 years. SITES connects Americans to their shared cultural heritage through a wide range of exhibitions about art, science and history, which are shown wherever people live, work and play.

Exhibition descriptions and tour schedules are available at www.sites.si.edu.