

## Herman Leonard

### Jackson Fine Art

Three months after Hurricane Katrina devastated his New Orleans home, 83-year-old Herman Leonard began the painstaking process of making new prints from decades-old negatives that had been stored off-site just days before the storm hit. These images came to life in “Jazz Giants,” an exhibition of 21 portraits shot largely between 1948 and 1960.



Herman Leonard, *Sarah Vaughan, New York City, 1949*, 1949, archival pigment print, 40" x 32".  
Jackson Fine Art.

Leonard's signature style is an immediately recognizable mix of smoky ambience, backlighting, silhouetted figures, and jagged, intersecting lines. Included in this exhibition were Leonard's most familiar portraits: *Billie Holiday, New York City, 1949*; *Duke Ellington, Paris, 1958*; and *Frank Sinatra, Monte Carlo, 1958*. Leonard reprinted these and many of the others in a 40-by-32-inch format that presents his subjects literally larger than life.

Leonard's printing technique—accentuating light, texture, and detail—complements his eye for expressive body language. In *Sarah Vaughan, New York City, 1949*, the singer's angled arm, flared fingers, and feathery corsage echo the joyful, expansive expression on her face as she performs. The print is so fine that the whorl of Vaughan's thumbprint is clearly visible.

Other, more intimate images rounded out the show. In one particularly poignant shot from 1960, a pensive Louis Armstrong leans back against a wall, while spotlights cast a tonal trio of shadows behind him. These photographs offer a glimpse into an extraordinary musical era and a blending of art forms that remains elegant and atmospheric. —*Debra Wolf*

