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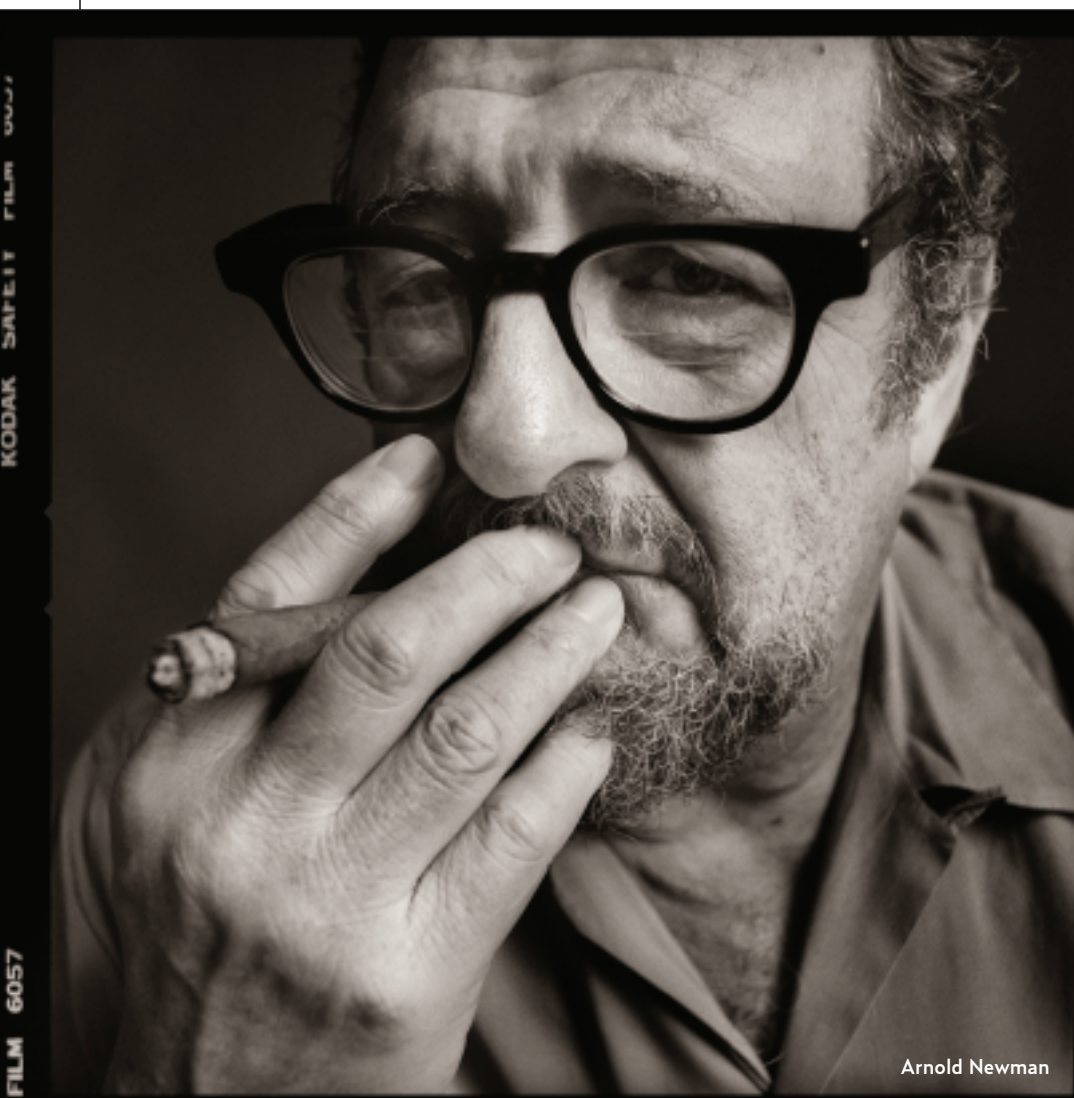
What's New, Cool Events, Interesting People, **Great Ideas**, Etc.

PHOTOGRAPHIC JOURNEY HOME

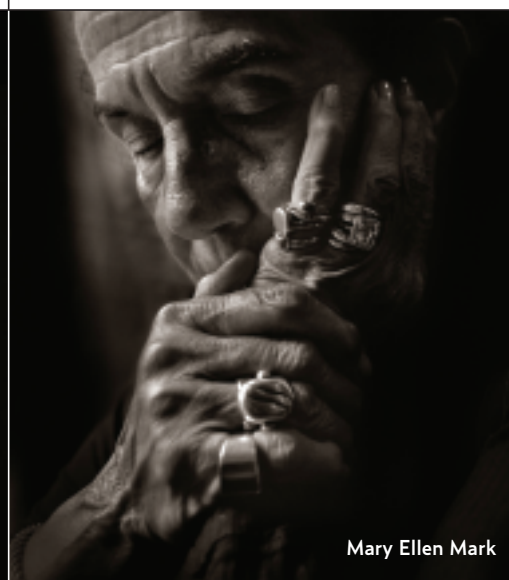
Michael Somoroff pays homage to his childhood heroes—important photographers of the 20th century

BY LORNA GENTRY

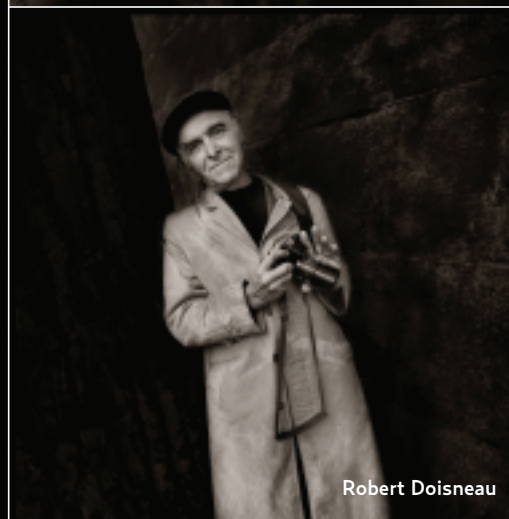
Published this month is a handsome book of black-and-white portraits by New York photographer, filmmaker, and sculptor Michael Somoroff titled “A Moment: Master Photographers” (Damiani). Legendary photographers—including Brassai, Elliott Erwitt, Cornell Capa, Horst P. Horst, and Robert Doisneau—sat for Somoroff from 1977 to 1983, when he was in his 20s. Somoroff is the son of prominent still life photographer Ben Somoroff, and he grew up surrounded by photographers, writers, and designers. This is the first time the images in this book have been published.



Arnold Newman



Mary Ellen Mark



Robert Doisneau

All Images ©Michael Somoroff

PP: After 30 years, how is it to be working again with these portraits?

MS: I love photography. It's home for me. I'm 55 now, and I'm amazed that anybody even sat for me. Looking back on it, where did I get the audacity? I was, well, the polite word is "overconfident," that I could call up people like Brassai or André Kertész and suggest that they come to my studio. In every case, they said yes. I think that in almost every instance they felt, well, you know, we have to support this kid.

Did any of them direct you?

I don't recall anybody directing me or even making a suggestion, which was nerve-racking, by the way, because they're my heroes. I certainly didn't want to come back to them with a bad picture. Talk about pressure!

Your triptych of Lillian Bassman was taken just before her death in February at age 94.

How did that come about?

I regret that there are certain photographers I didn't photograph back then. When I decided to do the book I rushed to shoot Lillian. She had a wonderful skylight in her brownstone, and the chair was under it. I wanted to do a daylight shot using the skylight, but shortly after I arrived it got overcast so the light wasn't right. Rather than drag Lillian out for a portrait in the wrong light, we decided that I would come back a few weeks later. It was clear to me that Lillian didn't have a lot of time left. I conceptualized at that moment the triptych that I call "Requiem." I photographed the chair with full knowledge that I would complete the portrait as a triptych. I went back and photographed Lillian, and it was wonderful. We had a great sitting together, and not long after, she passed away.

To see more of Michael Somoroff's work visit michaelsomoroff.com.

