The Colors of Jazz Exhibition
At the American Jazz Museum

artwork by Harold Smith
poetry by Glenn North

American Jazz Museum

Gallery Tour
Our story has always been told through trees.

Boats break, boats break, boats break
From past to present, from one generation to the next.

Our story has always been told through trees.

Boats break, boats break, boats break
The water, the river, the sea, the ocean.

Our story has always been told through trees.

Boats break, boats break, boats break
The wind, the rain, the storms.

Our story has always been told through trees.

Boats break, boats break, boats break
The trees, the leaves, the branches.

Our story has always been told through trees.

Boats break, boats break, boats break
The animals, the birds, the insects.

Our story has always been told through trees.

Boats break, boats break, boats break
The sun, the moon, the stars.

Our story has always been told through trees.

Boats break, boats break, boats break
The fire, the flames, the smoke.

Our story has always been told through trees.

Boats break, boats break, boats break
The words, the stories, the history.

Our story has always been told through trees.

Boats break, boats break, boats break
The past, the present, the future.

Our story has always been told through trees.

Boats break, boats break, boats break
The sky, the earth, the universe.

Our story has always been told through trees.

Boats break, boats break, boats break
The story of life, the story of death.

Our story has always been told through trees.

Boats break, boats break, boats break
The story of love, the story of pain.

Our story has always been told through trees.

Boats break, boats break, boats break
The story of hope, the story of despair.

Our story has always been told through trees.

Boats break, boats break, boats break
The story of creation, the story of destruction.

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Praise Song for Julia Lee

By Brian Kay

"She never let black sweating girl who was just great, and could play any instrument you wanted to hear."
1st Minute, 1st Round: A Sonnet
(Muhammad Ali vs Sonny Liston, May 25th 1965)
by Glenn North

If you were a butterfly, brash and brown,
then Liston was a wing-weary moth, tricked
by the flame in your glove. 1st minute, 1st round,
like bad sex it was over just that quick.
Your phantom punch an unsuspected ping!
like Monk’s finger on a startled key,
a percussive approach used in the ring
filling Liston’s head with fierce cacophony.
That night there was a changing of the guard
in less than two minutes the switch occurred
the ancient Negro hit the canvas hard;
from his ashes, the new Black man emerged.
You are now trapped in tremors but I still see,
you lording over Liston like a king.
Liston's head with fierce cacophony.

In the night there was a changing of the guard. Less than two minutes the switch occurred. An ancient Negro hit the canvas hard; in his ashes, the new Black man emerged. I am now trapped in tremors but I still see, ording over Liston like a king.
Lamenting the Assassin
(A Found Poem)
by Glenn North

"John Kennedy died in Dallas
but he was shot in Birmingham."
-Rabbi Morris B. Margolis

Two weeping prophets sent
a sorrow-song through the bells
of two sagacious saxophones
that heralded the approach
of the assassin. He left
a trail of wormwood and gall
as he crossed a divided country.

He was not arrested
with the apprehension
of Lee Harvey Oswald.

He pulled the trigger and
four little girls lay dead in Alabama.

He could not be contained
by police cordons.

Though the Lord
is a strong avenger
he too is ubiquitous.

He was in Atlanta and in Montgomery
rubbing elbows with governors
in Chicago and San Francisco
smearing synagogues with swastikas
in Kansas City, seeking signatures
to keep certain Americans out
of places of public accommodation.

In his wake, the neo-Babylon
shall be utterly broken down
and her high gates shall burn
with fire and the labors
of the people shall come to
nothing as the screech-owls
howl and die and on...
Beats break, backs ache, health care sparks debate, the poor still have to wait, the rich overmedicate, schools fail to educate, media indoctrinates, government subjegates, prisons proliferate, immigrants assimilate, global economy inflates, earned wages dissipate, downsizing aggravates, church members congregate, but very few authenticate, the very faith they propagate, holy wars escalate, murder rates accelerate.

Our story has always been told through beats.
history of a people that has
than any other by color, if not with color itself?
Or, in the words of Andy Razaf and Fats Waller,
"What Did I Do to Be So Black and Blue?"

Black and Blue take on a special significance
in the work of Harold Smith. His paintings certainly
represent Black experiences, but they do so with
very little use of the shade of black itself. More
often than not, blue takes black's place as the
shadow, the base or background. This is not
without implication. In science, Black is defined
as the absence of color: a void where no light is
reflected, against which other colors inevitably
take precedence, but the subjects of Smith's work
are anything but a void.
For John Coltrane
Contrapuntal #1
by Glenn North

With strange incontinence,
Taste transcends (about) tracks
headed for a freedom now will ever know
a sonic ascent beyond dissonance
he cascades a hundred notes per minute
wielding his axe with the skill of a killer
through the thick anti-black forest
all praises, all praises, for St. John

Note: A contrapuntal poem can be read top to bottom, bottom to top, with only the lines that are justified left, with only the lines that are justified right, with all four variations in a circular fashion.
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proble
Louis Armstrong
by Glenn North

I'm sorry, Mr. Armstrong...
sorry that I mistook
your world-winning,
watermelon smile
for weakness.
By then I had come
to the conclusion
that happy guns
should be replaced
with hard grenades.
I thought that your generation
had shucked and jived
stepped and fetched
skinned and grained too long
leaving mine with the responsibility
of Revolution.

But you were the real warrior,
strong-lunged soldier,
with calloused toes,
ringing notes high enough
to pierce the ears of Gabriel.
You forced the world to
hear the sound of blueness.
What a dark dignity
you possessed,
so that others could
someday shine
there was genius hidden
in your smile...
the ignorance was mine.
Colours of Jazz
American Jazz Museum - Changing Gallery
March 11 – June 11, 2011

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Opening Reception - March 11, 2011
4pm
Join us for the public opening reception of "Colours of Jazz," a show of
jazz artwork by Harold B. Smith, an accomplished
artist and jazz musician. The exhibit includes paintings, sculptures,
and musical instruments. A live performance by Smith will be featured.

"Colours of Jazz" - April 22nd - 10am – 11:30am
Special exhibit of jazz-related art, featuring works by local
artists. A musical demonstration by Smith will be presented.

"Colours of Jazz Poetry" - May 26th - 7pm – 9pm
A special evening of jazz poetry, with readings from
selected works inspired by the theme of jazz. A
live performance by Smith will be featured.

Special mention to the Art of Jazz Musician through Education Specialist, Glenn Smith.