



ANOTHER SIDE OF BOB DYLAN LEARNING RESOURCE

GVAM
ART MUSEUM
GRAND VALLEY



Douglas R. Gilbert, *Bob Dylan Looking at a Book in Bookstore at Greenwich Village, New York*, silver gelatin print, 1964, The Douglas R. and Barbara E. Gilbert Collection, 2018.48.843a

EXHIBITION BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Another Side of Bob Dylan: Photographs from the Douglas R. Gilbert Collection is named after Dylan's fourth album of the same name which came out in 1964. The exhibition title also reflects the intent of the photographer, Douglas R. Gilbert, who wanted to photograph Dylan in his everyday life. These images show "another side" of the artist rather than just his musician persona. These photographs were also taken in 1964, the same year as the album's release.

Further, the title also represents a time of transition in both Dylan and Gilbert's lives. For Dylan, 1964 marked a shift away from folk music and more towards a rock-n-roll sound and look. For Gilbert, his pitch to photograph Dylan was his first chance as a professional photographer to follow his own artistic path. Photographing Dylan introduced Gilbert, a young man from Michigan, to other musicians and the possibility of using his photographs for creative purposes.

DOUGLAS GILBERT AND BOB DYLAN

Douglas Gilbert began to pursue photography from a young age with support from his family. In high school, he was already selling his photographs to Michigan newspapers. In college, he had a summer photography internship with *Look Magazine*. It was during this time that a friend's little brother introduced him to the music of Bob Dylan. After graduating from Michigan State University in 1964, he moved to New York City for a staff position with the same magazine. Editors encouraged all the staff members to submit proposals for the magazine. The first story proposal Gilbert pitched was to interview and photograph Bob Dylan, which the editors accepted.

SIDE BAR: MAGAZINES

It might be hard for many people today to understand the importance of magazines in the 1960s. In a time before the internet, magazines were the way to spread the news (or gossip), provide information on upcoming and popular bands, and show what life was like in different parts of the country. Magazines could largely determine how Americans looked at and thought about a celebrity. Affordable and easy to share, magazines were very popular – so getting a full-time job at a major magazine at just 21 years old was a big deal for Douglas Gilbert.

For a week, Gilbert shadowed Dylan, taking photographs of him in his home, as well as in Woodstock, NY, Greenwich Village, NY, and Newport, RI. Gilbert used only natural light and his Leica Rangefinder cameras, attempting to be as unintrusive as possible. The photographs were mostly un-staged and spontaneous, but occasionally Gilbert or Dylan would direct the photographs. Gilbert took so many photographs that he reported Dylan occasionally looking up to ask him, "Don't you have enough?" Gilbert was able to capture Dylan in intimate, quiet moments, shortly before Dylan reinvented himself as a rock 'n roller and more strictly controlled his media image. The images in this exhibition, which ultimately were rejected by Look for being "too scruffy" remained unseen for years. Gilbert, 21 years old, captured Dylan, 23 years old, right before his fame began to skyrocket to a household name. These images show us both the complexity and mundanity of a man who sought fame yet needed privacy, and whose works inspire us to this day.

"In every situation that I found myself with him, I try to be alert to moments, things that happened internally with him or between him and another person. I guess one of the things that I learned to watch for in any of the photographing was moments of connection, response to another person, to a situation, and to be very alert to what that means, what that meant, what that looked like." – Douglas Gilbert

CLOSE LOOKING

Douglas R. Gilbert, *Bob Dylan and John Sebastian Jamming at Café Espresso, Woodstock, New York*, silver gelatin print, 1964, The Douglas R. and Barbara E. Gilbert Collection, 2018.48.861a



These photographs, taken in 1964 like all of Gilbert's Dylan photos, feature singer John Sebastian with Bob Dylan in *Café Espresso* in Woodstock, New York. These images depict the same moment in time, captured from two different angles. First, look at each image individually. For each image, ask yourself:

- What is going on in this picture?
- What do I see that makes me say that?
- What is the relationship between the two figures?
- What are the two figures doing?

Douglas R. Gilbert, *Bob Dylan and John Sebastian, Intense Jam Session at Café Espresso, Woodstock, New York*, silver gelatin print, 1964, The Douglas R. and Barbara E. Gilbert Collection, 2018.48.858a



Now look at the two images together.

How does looking at this moment from two different angles change your perspective of this scene? Does it change the tone of the moment or the relationship between the two figures?

While 1964 was over 60 years ago, what do you see in these pictures that is familiar? If you could step into this moment, what would you hear, smell, see, touch, taste?

(Larger images available on pages 7-8)

Douglas R. Gilbert, *Bob Dylan at Home with Allen Ginsberg in the Yard, Woodstock, New York*, silver gelatin print, 1964, The Douglas R. and Barbara E. Gilbert Collection, 2018.48.874a



- Look at Dylan and Ginsburg. How would you describe the relationship between these two figures?
- What do you think they are doing?

Douglas R. Gilbert, *Bob Dylan Reading Liner Notes in Workroom above the Café Espresso, Woodstock, New York*, silver gelatin print, 1964, The Douglas R. and Barbara E. Gilbert Collection 2018.48.829a



- What do you think Dylan is reading? How would you describe his mood?
- Take a moment to notice the items in the room. What kinds of items do you see?
- Where do you think Dylan is?

BEHIND THE LENS

Ginsburg bought a harmonium in Benares, India, but didn't know how to play. Dylan taught Ginsburg three chords on the instrument and encouraged him to sing his poetry out loud. Ginsburg said that he would never have considered singing his poetry without the encouragement of Dylan.

Bob Dylan and Alan Ginsburg were lifelong friends, despite their generational divide. Dylan had great respect for the Beat poet. He read the Beats in high school, connecting deeply with *Howl*, a poem by Ginsburg that was published in 1956. They met in 1964 and developed a friendship of mutual respect, each influencing the other's writing styles.

(Larger images available on pages 9-10)

PROGRAMMING IDEAS

Do: Douglas Gilbert got started with photography by making photograms. Have a photogram party!

Watch: There are many films about Bob Dylan. Host a screening of:

- *A Complete Unknown*: a recent film starring Timothee Chalamet
- *The Other Side of the Mirror*: a documentary which captures Dylan's transition from folk artist to rock star
- *Don't Look Back*: a 1967 documentary which captures footage of Dylan on tour in England right before he played electric guitar at the Newport Music Festival
- *No Direction Home*: a documentary by director Martin Scorsese

Watch Douglas Gilbert discuss his experience of photographing Bob Dylan on Youtube:

[Douglas Gilbert on Photographing Bob Dylan in the Mid-60s](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ujOaRFKk5E>

Douglas Gilbert took photographs of many musicians, artists, and singers, including Janis Ian. His photos were used in the recent award-winning documentary *Breaking Silence*. Introduce (or re-introduce) your audience to another artist who made her break in the 1960s by screening *Breaking Silence*.

Play: Host a jam night in the gallery!



Douglas R. Gilbert, *Bob Dylan Daytime Performance at Newport Folk Festival, Newport, Rhode Island*, silver gelatin print, 1964, The Douglas R. and Barbara E. Gilbert Collection, 2018.48.850a

Listen: During a program, play our Bob Dylan playlist. All songs are from 1964 and before.

https://open.spotify.com/playlist/44LciHkA2rxcLDo4IUFTs1?si=sP1fIYfeQ3qAFDcnM_56IQ







