

From the Office of Public Relations
Massachusetts Institute of Technology For IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Cambridge 39, Massachusetts

Note to Editors: Gjon Mili will be at M.I.T. to supervise the hanging of his photographs on Monday and Tuesday. He will appear on the "Inside the Arts" program on Channel 2 at 6:50 p.m. Tuesday.

Gjon Mili, who came to M.I.T. thirty-five years ago as an undernourished student speaking broken English, will return next week as a world-famous photographer. The first one-man exhibit of his pictures will open at the Hayden Memorial Library Wednesday, to remain through January 26.

Mili was born in Albania in 1904 but lived in Roumania during most of his boyhood. Because he wanted to be an engineer and because he had relatives in the Boston area, he came to the United States in 1923 to enroll in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

He had studied English in high school and had a working knowledge of the language, but he was very shy. The first time he went to the M.I.T. cafeteria for lunch, he recalls, the boy ahead of him selected spaghetti and french fries, and Mili followed suit. "I ate spaghetti and french fries for two weeks," he says, "because I was afraid to ask for anything else."

Mili gained confidence when he took his first quiz in mathematics, under the now-eminent Norbert Wiener. The class was given a third-degree equation to solve, a task which was expected to take one hour. But because of his European training in mathematics, Mili knew a short-cut and was able to turn in the right answer in seven minutes, thereby earning the respect of Professor Wiener and members of the class.

(more)

Gjon Mili - M.I.T.

2.

Mili's special interest was lighting and, with the expectation of going into motion pictures as a career, he took all the courses pertaining to light and photography that he could. He used a camera only incidentally, in connection with his laboratory work.

After graduating from M.I.T. in electrical engineering, Mili went to work for Westinghouse Electric Company. There he gradually became more interested in photography. He took the first experimental pictures that were made for the company with flashbulbs, which had been newly developed in Europe.

Meanwhile, Dr. Harold E. Edgerton of the M.I.T. faculty, who is known as the father of stroboscopic photography, had done extensive development work. In 1937 he and Mili both took part in a scientific meeting at M.I.T., and when Mili expressed his interest in stroboscopic photography, Dr. Edgerton urged him to try it and offered to lend him the necessary equipment.

In his studio in New York Mili began work with the Edgerton equipment by making pictures of the Duncan Dancers -- pictures which stopped their action in mid-air and revealed for the first time elusive elements of movement which the human eye is too slow to see. In 1938 Life magazine used his action pictures of Bobby Riggs, the tennis star -- the first pictures of the kind that had ever been published.

Since that time the stroboscope has been simplified and has been adopted by most professional photographers but Mili is still regarded as the outstanding stroboscopic photographer -- especially in the multiple flash technique by which a whole series of movements are recorded on one film. He has broadened his interests, however,

(more)

Gjon Mili - M.I.T.

3.

and in recent years has been greatly concerned with photography as an art medium.

"Unquestionably, Gjon Mili has been the leading journalist photographer in the world in the use of the stroboscope," says Professor Edgerton, "and it is largely a result of his work that photography has been so widely accepted."

Half of the exhibition will consist of pictures made by Mili during the twenty years of his career as a photographer. The other half will be comprised of pictures made for a photographic essay on M.I.T.

January 2, 1958

-30-