

The Early Years of Rhythm and Blues: Photographs by Benny Joseph from the Documentary Arts Collection

October 18, 2015 – January 10, 2016



KCOH disk jockey Skipper Lee Frazier and go-go girls, Houston, 1965.
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Public reception: Sunday, October 18, 2015, 1 to 6 p.m.
A complimentary shuttle service will depart every half hour from Milk Studios (450 West 15th Street, New York, NY 10011) starting at 12:30 p.m., and returning every half hour from Mana starting at 2 p.m.

On view (by appointment only) from October 18, 2015–
January 10, 2016 Monday–Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

JERSEY CITY, NJ, October 8, 2015—Mana Contemporary is pleased to announce *The Early Years of Rhythm and Blues: Photographs* by Benny Joseph from the *Documentary Arts Collection*, co-presented with the International

Center of Photography (ICP). Drawn from ICP's recent acquisition of the Texas African American Photography (TAAP) Archive, the exhibition consists of 50 black and white prints by Houston photographer Benny Joseph (b. 1924). The exhibition opens at Mana Contemporary on Sunday, October 18, 2015, with a reception from 1 to 6 p.m.

Tracing the rise of rhythm and blues music in the 1950s and 1960s within the context of civil rights movement, it features portraits of such celebrated performers as B.B. King, Sam "Lightnin'" Hopkins, Junior Parker, Mahalia Jackson, and Della Reese. The exhibition also includes Joseph's striking portraits of prominent African

Americans of the same era, including Martin Luther King, Jr., Thurgood Marshall, and Barbara Jordan.

Benny Joseph studied photography with A.C. Teal, a community photographer who established a school for African American photographers in Houston in 1942. Like his fellow students, Joseph had to “do it all” to make a living as a photographer: portraits, news photos, advertising, and social events. Although studio photography was the mainstay of his business, he also worked for the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), KCOH radio station, and the Peacock Record Company. Peacock Records, started in 1949 by Houston entrepreneur Don Robey, became the most successful black-owned independent record company prior to Motown. The label featured some of the most prolific rhythm and blues artists of the 1950s and 1960s.

The Early Years of Rhythm and Blues is organized by ICP and Documentary Arts, a Dallas and New York City-based nonprofit group established in 1985. Alan Govenar, the founder of Documentary Arts, is guest curator of the exhibition.

The TAAP Archive, founded by Govenar and Kaleta Doolin, consists of 60,000 works made primarily by 20th century African American community photographers active in rural and urban Texas. It is the centerpiece of more than 100,000 photographs, films, videos, audio recordings, and new media works donated to ICP by Documentary Arts in 2014.

About ICP

The International Center of Photography (ICP) is the world’s leading institution dedicated to the practice and understanding of photography and the reproduced image in all its forms. Through our exhibitions, educational programs, and community outreach, we offer an open forum for dialogue about the role images play in our culture. Since our founding, we have presented more than 700 exhibitions and offered thousands of classes, providing instruction at every level. ICP is a center where photographers and artists, students and scholars can create and interpret the world of the image within our comprehensive educational and archival facilities. Visit www.icp.org for more information.

About Mana Contemporary

Founded in 2011, Mana Contemporary is a leading arts destination dedicated to celebrating the creative process. Headquartered in a former tobacco warehouse in Jersey City, Mana unites artists’ studios, exhibition spaces, and ancillary services in a single location, facilitating conversation and collaboration among its burgeoning creative community. Together with its sister campuses in Chicago and Miami, Mana serves as a lively center for all members of the art world. Mana Contemporary is home to the Richard Meier Model Museum, Ayn Foundation, the International Center of Photography, The Florence Academy of Art, Gary Lichtenstein Editions, Eileen S. Kaminsky Family Foundation, Armitage Gone! Dance, Keating Foundry, Shen Wei Dance Arts, Mana Urban Arts Project, and many others. For additional information, please visit manacontemporary.com.

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