



Smithsonian

National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center

Guide to the Mel Rosenthal Photoprints

NMAH.AC.1307

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Archives Center, National Museum of American History

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title:	Mel Rosenthal Photoprints
Date:	circa 1975-2010
Identifier:	NMAH.AC.1307
Creator:	Rosenthal, Mel, 1940- (Photographer) Perry Mapp, Roberta (Donor)
Extent:	49 Items (1 box)
Language:	English .
Summary:	Black-and-white photoprints from two documentary projects: "In the South Bronx of America" and "Refuge". Mel Rosenthal's mission in the Bronx project was to record the deterioration and poverty there. Some photographs from the Bronx project have also been used in the "Refuge" project, because they document immigrants who moved into the Bronx.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Collection donated by Roberta Perry Mapp, July 21, 2012.

Processing Information

Processed by NMAH Staff, undated

Preferred Citation

Mel Rosenthal Photoprints, Archives Center, National Museum of American History.

Restrictions

Collection is open for research but is stored off-site and special arrangements must be made to work with it. Contact the Archives Center for information at archivescenter@si.edu or 202-633-3270.

Conditions Governing Use

Mel Rosenthal retains copyright. Archives Center cost-recovery and use fees may apply when requesting reproductions.

Biographical / Historical

Mel Rosenthal was born on March 5, 1940, and grew up close to the South Bronx neighborhood in which he made many of the photographs in this collection decades later, beginning in 1975. He earned a Ph.D. in English literature and American studies from the University of Connecticut, with a dissertation on the effect of alienation on American writers.

He traveled to Africa and worked as a medical photographer at the University Hospital in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. He engaged in other photographic projects there and soon had dedicated himself to documentary photography. He became a Distinguished Professor of Art at SUNY/Empire State College. He has been the photography editor of culturefront, the magazine of the New York Council for the Humanities. He was awarded fellowships from the New York Foundation for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.

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Scope and Contents

Silver gelatin black-and-white photoprints from two documentary projects: "In the South Bronx of America" (1975-1983, 42 prints) and "Refuge" (6 prints). According to Leonard Kriegel, Rosenthal's mission in the Bronx project and its book version was simply "to record the horror that is there....He wants us to feel shame at what has been done to the people of the South Bronx by a nation so indifferent to suffering that it can pretend the mean streets were burned down by their inhabitants." (Siegel, "In Sorrowful Celebration of the Bronx," *Forward*, Feb. 23, 2001, p. 13)

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into two series.

Series 1: In the South Bronx of America, as reproduced in the book

Series 2: Not in Book: From the "South Bronx of America" Project and the "Refuge" Project

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Immigrants -- 20th century

Types of Materials:

Black-and-white photographic prints -- Silver gelatin -- 1950-2000

Places:

Bronx (New York, N.Y.)
New York (N.Y.) -- 20th century

Container Listing

Series 1: In the South Bronx of America, as reproduced in the book

Box 1, Folder 1	Abandoned buildings, reproduced in book, pp. 2-3. 2
Box 1, Folder 1	Boy on bicycle, by overpass, p. 6.
Box 1, Folder 1	East on 173rd Street (young man standing by brownstone, 2 girls in window), p. 10. 5
Box 1, Folder 1	Off Claremont Parkway (girl running, hand over mouth), p. 13. 7
Box 1, Folder 1	Going to church on a Sunday morning (brick-strewn alley, couple walking in background, pp. 24-25. 14
Box 1, Folder 1	Bathgate Avenue (man with bicycle in doorway, graffiti-covered building, p. 26. 15
Box 1, Folder 1	Bathgate Avenue (couple walking in front of burned-out building, p. 27. 16
Box 1, Folder 1	Bathgate Avenue and East 173rd Street (2 girls by chain-link fence, p. 28. 17
Box 1, Folder 1	Bathgate Avenue and East 173rd Street (abandoned building, 173rd St. sign, p. 29.
Box 1, Folder 1	"One of the high school students told me she was going to be a dental assistant. The other two said they wanted to be models" (3 girls posing on sidewalk), p. 30. 19
Box 1, Folder 2	Mother and daughter, Claremont Parkway, p. 31. 20
Box 1, Folder 2	Candido and his nephews, p. 35. Not on Marie's list? 22
Box 1, Folder 2	"The building these three kids lived in had no heat or water. A few months later it was burned. A fire marshal told me it looked like arson." P. 36. 23
Box 1, Folder 2	Kids fencing. Bathgate Avenue and 174th Street. P. 39. 24
Box 1, Folder 2	Sisters on Bathgate Avenue (one with lollipop), p. 41. 26
Box 1, Folder 2	Mother and daughter sitting on window sill of their ground floor apartment, East 173rd Street, pp. 46-47. 29
Box 1, Folder 2	"She had been left behind when her family and friends moved out of the neighborhood" (old woman with cane and grocery cart), p. 38. 30

Box 1, Folder 2	"When I looked for her to give her the picture, her building had burned and she had moved" (young girl posing in front of destroyed building), cover image and p. 33. 33
Box 1, Folder 2	"The Martin Luther King, Jr. Health Clinic had a milk program for the children of the neighborhood," p. 54. "Mel's Office 8 x 10" on verso, 34.
Box 1, Folder 2	"Shorty was always with his dog. Then someone shot the dog. He was heartbroken and didn't take care of himself for a while," p. 59, holding photo on p. 58. 39
Box 1, Folder 3	"Mickey at the bar, next to my photographs," p. 64. 43
Box 1, Folder 3	"The kids played baseball, using a parking meter as second base. The runner was safe," pp. 66-67. 45
Box 1, Folder 3	"Junior high school student, Bathgate Avenue" (with tennis patch on cap), p. 74. 51
Box 1, Folder 3	Two "Cambodian brothers" on verso, p. 76. 53
Box 1, Folder 3	Untitled (Cambodian man, scratching forehead), p. 77. RFEX 2
Box 1, Folder 3	Cambodian Buddhist Monastery in the South Bronx, pp. 78-79. RF 14, also BXBK 55
Box 1, Folder 3	Indio, member of the Savage Nomads gang, p. 97. 70
Box 1, Folder 3	South Bronx site of the 1980 "People's Convention in opposition to the Democratic Party's nominating convention downtown," p. 116. 81
Box 1, Folder 3	Fourth of July, hanging out on the stoop of their apartment house, p. 123. 83
Box 1, Folder 3	Family seated on couch, 8 x 10". BX 190.

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Series 2: Not in Book: From the "South Bronx of America" Project and the "Refuge" Project

Box 1, Folder 4	Standing man in shorts, holding beer can (variant of "Out-of-work men, p. 89). BX163
Box 1, Folder 4	Man standing next to candy machines. "BX 166 / Paulina's son" on verso
Box 1, Folder 4	Two girls. "Carmen / BX 174" on verso
Box 1, Folder 4	Dog behind store gate. BX 219
Box 1, Folder 4	Two men. "BX Cowboy / Paulina's son in sombrero" on verso.
Box 1, Folder 4	Boy, two girls with TV. "Three Teen in Apt." on verso.
Box 1, Folder 4	Man wearing hardhat. BX 262.
Box 1, Folder 4	Smiling girl kneeling, holding bottle. BX 183
Box 1, Folder 4	Woman next to "Social Club" sign. "Paulina & Soc. Club" on verso. BX 180
Box 1, Folder 4	Two men, woman with patterned skirt. BX 141
Box 1, Folder 5	Man with "Kiss" buckle and young boy. BX 122
Box 1, Folder 5	Boy by chain-link fence. BX 116
Box 1, Folder 5	Young man standing by brownstone, 2 girls in window (variant of image on p. 10). BX 105
Box 1, Folder 5	Man in white shirt, cap, smoking cigarette. BX 109.
Box 1, Folder 5	Two men in diner. "Best pizza in the Bronx" on verso. BX 111.
Box 1, Folder 5	"Family on dark stair" on verso. BX, but no number. (Not on Marie's list)
Box 1, Folder 5	Family in kitchen, calendar on wall [?], Refex 6
Box 1, Folder 5	Rabbi and group with Torah, RefEX 22
Box 1, Folder 5	Two Hmong men in traditional dress. Ref Ex 3
Box 1, Folder 5	Man with dictionary of American English Usage and a swan on his notebook. Ref Ex 27

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