



GLBT
Historical
Society
museum & archives

September 4, 2020

MEDIA CONTACT

Mark Sawchuk
(415) 777-5455 x 8
mark@glbthistory.org

Online Photography Exhibition Highlights 1970s San Francisco Drag Queens

San Francisco — The GLBT Historical Society will be unveiling an online selection of images drawn from its exhibition “Reigning Queens: The Lost Photos of Roz Joseph,” which was on display at the GLBT Historical Society Museum from October 2015 to March 2016. The suite of evocative photographs depicts San Francisco’s epic drag and costume balls of the mid-1970s. They were created by noted photographer Roz Joseph (1926–2019), whose remarkable oeuvre was rediscovered after she donated the work to the GLBT Historical Society in 2010. The vintage prints will be available for online viewing from September 21.

The exhibition is being updated for its online incarnation to honor the life and work of Joseph, who passed away in December, 2019. “Roz Joseph documented a world of self-styled baronesses in diamond tiaras, elaborate ‘royal’ coronations and gender-bending performance,” notes curator Joseph Plaster. “Her photos show how gay men deployed theater and fantasy to make very real contributions to San Francisco’s gay community. We’re excited to bring these long-lost images back into public view almost four decades after they were made.”

Roz Joseph was born in the Bronx in 1926 and studied photography in New York City. In the 1960s, she shot images in Europe and North Africa. In 1970, she moved to San Francisco, where she began photographing city scenes. In 1991, Chronicle Books published a volume of her work, *Details: The Architect’s Art*. She also published in *Artweek* and *California Living*. Her prints have been exhibited at the San Francisco Art Institute, the California Museum of Photography and Paradox Gallery. Joseph lived in San Francisco for nearly 50 years.

Many of the drag queens Joseph photographed were associated with the Imperial Court, a philanthropic organization that annually elects a drag empress who raises funds for local charities. Founded in San Francisco in 1965 and now established in cities around world, the Imperial Court system is celebrating its 55th anniversary this year.

“Reigning Queens: The Lost Photographs of Roz Joseph” opens on September

21 on the GLBT Historical Society's website at www.glbthistory.org/reigning-queens. For more information, visit the society's website at www.glbthistory.org.

-- end --

About the Curator

Joseph Plaster is curator in public humanities for the Sheridan Libraries and an Assistant Research Scholar at the Alexander Grass Humanities Institute at Johns Hopkins University. His research and teaching focuses on collaborative public humanities, performance studies, interdisciplinary oral history and queer studies. He is currently working on the Peabody Ballroom Experience, a collaboration between Johns Hopkins and Baltimore's ballroom community. Other projects include youth workshops archiving the history of Pennsylvania Avenue, Baltimore's Black arts and entertainment district, and an "Engaged Humanities" public speaker series. His current book project, under contract with Duke University Press, combines archival, ethnographic, and oral history research to explore the social worlds that abandoned and runaway queer street youth, their patrons, and their protectors have created over the past century in San Francisco's Tenderloin district.

About the GLBT Historical Society

The GLBT Historical Society is a public history center and archives that collects, preserves, exhibits and makes accessible to the public materials and knowledge to support and promote understanding of LGBTQ history, culture and arts in all their diversity. Founded in 1985, the society maintains one of the world's largest collections of LGBTQ historical materials. The society's operations are centered at two sites: the GLBT Historical Society Museum, located since 2011 in the heart of San Francisco's Castro neighborhood; and the Dr. John P. De Cecco Archives and Research Center, open to researchers in the Mid-Market district. For more information, visit www.glbthistory.org.

Graphics for Reproduction

The following graphics may be reproduced free of charge only in conjunction with coverage of the "Reigning Queens" exhibition on the GLBT Historical Society's website. Credits cited in the captions are mandatory. For high-resolution files, contact Mark Sawchuk at mark@glbthistory.org.



"Frieda, Ninth Empress of San Francisco's Imperial Court," ca. 1976;
photograph by Roz Joseph, Roz Joseph Photographs (2010-08), GLBT
Historical Society.



"Ambi Sextrous," ca. 1976; photograph by Roz Joseph, Roz Joseph Photographs (2010-08), GLBT Historical Society.

