

## SIDNEY B. FELSEN PHOTOGRAPHY ARCHIVE ACQUIRED BY THE GETTY



© 1984 Sidney B. Felsen



The photographic archive of Sidney B. Felsen has been acquired by the Getty through the generosity of a gift made by Jack Shear.

Felsen's photographs are personal yet their subjects are artworld personalities, ones that historians will be studying for decades to come. The majority of the over 70,000 photographs will enter the Getty Research Institute, while a smaller selection will become part of the Getty Museum's photography collection. As a co-founder of the legendary artists' workshop and publisher, Gemini G.E.L., Felsen and his camera have been present during quiet yet historic moments as artists changed the global landscape of art during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Felsen's photographs capture both private acts of creativity and more public moments of relaxation, a family album created with the eye of someone whom the artists have loved, respected and, most importantly, trusted for over a half-century.

**"It all started innocently, about 50 years ago, when I took some pictures in the workshop, mostly of artists in collaboration with printers. It was fun to do, so I kept on taking pictures. I've always felt there's a trust and friendship extended by the artists and the printers in allowing me to share so many remarkable moments. It has been a privilege and an honor to have them as my subjects. It's 50 years later and there's now approximately 70,000 photos in the collection. As my 95<sup>th</sup> birthday was approaching, I felt it was time to find a happy home that will take care of the photography collection and respond to the many photo-requests I receive. Thus, for me, it's a dream come true. I'm a great admirer of the Getty and its remarkable staff, and I believe they will be very responsible and efficient in the care and storage of the archive. A special thanks to Jack Shear, who is kindly funding the acquisition." - Sidney B. Felsen**

For many years, Shear, himself a respected photographer and the husband of artist Ellsworth Kelly, and Constance Glenn, museum director and curator, urged Felsen to come out from behind the camera and



make his photographs more public. A book published in 2003 titled *The Artist Observed: Photographs by Sidney B. Felsen*, was the beginning of a public emergence of an important private eye, and in her essay in *The Artist Observed*, Glenn describes Felsen's photos as "*neither straight documentary images, typically associated with records of events populated by strangers, nor classic portraits negotiated between a manipulative photographer and cooperative subject, but rich snippets that perfectly embed – in silver on paper – the zeitgeist of printmaking in Los Angeles.*" Robert Rauschenberg recognized the importance of Felsen's photographs, and, in the introduction of the book, Rauschenberg said: *Sid Felsen sees and lives every moment as history. Each of the nows are icons that hold the innocence of being there, he and his camera, on the edge of drama before the play, witnessing the process of effort forcing the success and lifestyle of comradery and trust that is essential to any collaboration.*

Felsen's humble approach to the work he's produced, and his focus on his "day job" – the management of the Gemini workshop – means that his photographs have remained some of Contemporary Art's best-kept secrets. And yet, this is a body of work with considerable historic value, meant to be shared. Slowly, his photographs have emerged from the binders and files at Gemini and onto gallery walls and into books. The Felsen Archive at the Getty will allow for an even more public distribution of these remarkable images.