

# P R E S S R E L E A S E

## Joseph Rodriguez: Spanish Harlem

**Opening:** Thursday, 19 April 2018, 6 p.m. - 10 p.m.

**Duration:** 20 April – 30 June 2018

**Location:** Galerie Bene Taschen, Moltkestraße 81, 50674 Cologne



Joseph Rodriguez, Saturdaynight cards, Rodriguez Family, New York, 1987 (left) // Dwayne smoking crack, Spanish Harlem, NY 1988 (right)  
both images: © Joseph Rodriguez + Courtesy Galerie Bene Taschen

**Galerie Bene Taschen** is pleased to present *Spanish Harlem*, a series of Cibachrome prints from the 1980's by **Joseph Rodriguez**.

Joseph Rodriguez, born and raised in Brooklyn, is world renowned for his intimate portraits of American and global subcultures over the past four decades. In this series, Rodriguez invites us into the streets and homes of New York's Latino district, Spanish Harlem. Taken throughout the latter half of the 1980s, the images reveal the community and family spirit, which are at the heart of the neighborhood. The portraits show residents playing card games, listening to boomboxes, and dancing in the street. Despite the presence of crime and violence never being far away, Rodriguez rejects a primary focus on poverty in favor of creating dignified portraits of the struggling area's inhabitants.

This series would not be possible were it not for the intimacy and access that Rodriguez was granted by his subjects. Following a brush with drugs and crime as a minor, Rodriguez turned to photography to get him back on the straight and narrow. The empathy that he shares with his subjects is exceptionally powerful. Rodriguez's *Spanish Harlem* allows us to walk through the troubled neighborhood at a time when people wouldn't dare enter, and understand the essence and struggles of New York's mecca for Puerto Rican American culture.

The series, published as a monograph by powerHouse in 2017 under the title *Spanish Harlem: El Barrio in the '80s* is a revised reprint of a 26-page cover story for the National Geographic (May, 1990). Many of the Cibachrome prints featured in the exhibition at Galerie Bene Taschen will be exhibited for the first time.

**Joseph Rodriguez (b. 1951, Brooklyn, New York)** started taking pictures in the mid-1980s. Drawn to the social documentary style, he sought out photography in an attempt to break stereotypes and expose the world to the truthful portraits of American struggle. People are at the heart of his work and his pictures are often the product of lengthy periods spent gaining the trust of his subjects. The results are raw, gritty, and vivacious images that reveal the resilience and beauty of his subjects. Rodriguez has won several awards and his work is today housed in numerous leading institutions. His photos are regularly published in prominent newspapers and magazines such as The New York Times, Der Spiegel, and National Geographic.

**Selected Public Collections:** LACMA – Los Angeles County Museum, Los Angeles; International Center of Photography, New York; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington D.C.; The Open Society Foundation, New York



Joseph Rodriguez, Pitbulls, Spanish Harlem, New York 1987 © Joseph Rodriguez + Courtesy Galerie Bene Taschen

**About Galerie Bene Taschen:** Founded in Cologne in 2011, **Galerie Bene Taschen** represents some of the leading international artists in contemporary photography and painting. The gallery is committed to promoting its roster of international artists with regular participation in prominent art fairs such as Paris Photo and Art Cologne, as well as an extensive exhibition schedule. In 2011, Galerie Bene Taschen debuted with the LA-based photographer, Gregory Bojorquez, together with Joseph Rodriguez, from New York. In 2014, acclaimed photographer, Miron Zownir, from Berlin, and the Düsseldorf painter, Oliver Blum, joined the gallery program. 2015 saw the addition of American photographers, Jamel Shabazz and Arlene Gottfried, both from New York City, and in 2016, German painter, Ulrike Nattermüller. As of fall 2017, the gallery is pleased to announce the representation of New York-based photographer, Jeff Mermelstein and German painter, Charlotte Trossbach.

**For more information about the gallery or the artworks please contact:**

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Web: [www.benetaschen.com](http://www.benetaschen.com) | Opening times: Wednesday – Saturday, 1 p.m. - 6 p.m.

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