

Richard “Chip” Benson

1943–2017

YALE UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY

OCTOBER 7, 2017



Lee Friedlander, *Richard Benson*, 2009. Gelatin silver print.
Yale University Art Gallery, Purchased with a gift from Mary Jo
and Ted P. Shen, B.A. 1966, HON. 2001, and with the Janet and
Simeon Braguin Fund, 2010.114.12.64

“In my long working life, the first part of photography – wielding the camera in the illuminated world – has been a magical act that I have never tampered with technically. Whether using an 8 × 10 view camera or a modern digital reflex camera, I have photographed in conventional ways while trying to understand the vastly complex conversion of the visual world into the fictional fact of a photograph. I strive to make my pictures look like that world out there which seems so much smarter and more surprising than anything I think up, while at the same time I remain committed to the idea that they are simply pictures and not the world from which they derive.”

Richard Benson



Lee Friedlander, *Richard and Barbara Benson, Newport, Rhode Island*, 2002. Gelatin silver print. Yale University Art Gallery, Purchased with a gift from Mary Jo and Ted P. Shen, B.A. 1966, HON. 2001, and with the Janet and Simeon Braguin Fund, 2010.114.12.34

Jock Reynolds, the Henry J. Heinz II Director of the Yale University Art Gallery, and Marta Kuzma, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Dean of the Yale School of Art, invite you to a celebration of the extraordinary life of Richard “Chip” Benson – renowned photographer; master printer; beloved teacher, colleague, and friend; and Dean Emeritus of the Yale School of Art (1996–2006), where he taught for over thirty years. Distinguished speakers will offer remembrances and tributes, to be followed by a reception in the Jan and Frederick Mayer Lobby. In addition, the Gallery has placed a broad array of Benson’s photographs and book projects on view throughout the museum.

Benson’s passion for photography emerged in the mid-1960s, after he had learned about optical repair while in the Navy, fixing telescopes, cameras, and binoculars on a ship in Norfolk, Virginia. His first job in the field was as an apprentice at the prominent printing house Meriden Gravure Company. Benson worked in all photographic media – silver, platinum, palladium, and ink – printing his own photographs as well as portfolios of prints by other artists, such as Walker Evans, Alfred Stieglitz, Paul Strand, James Van Der Zee, and Carl Van Vechten. He photographed with an 8 × 10-inch view camera and, in the 1990s, embraced digital photography. Benson’s later color photographs were made using an inkjet printer configured to print a single image in at least three successive stages, and in a project called simply *Recent Work* (2014), he stopped printing on paper entirely, instead displaying images on a 4K monitor via a computer program (for which he had written the code). A MacArthur Fellow, Benson was instrumental in revolutionizing the technologies and standards for photographic reproduction in ink through a series of groundbreaking photography books that he printed.

Beyond photography, Benson’s brilliant, mechanical mind and skilled hands led him to build everything from clocks to steam engines, and he was known for driving his restored Ford Model A pickup, *Norma Jean*, on his commute between Newport, Rhode Island, and New Haven. His remarkable curiosity and vivid imagination, coupled with a keen ability to think, speak, and write clearly, enabled Benson to become a truly great and beloved instructor.



Lee Friedlander, *Chip, Barbara, Daniel, and Abby Benson, Newport, Rhode Island*, 1992. Gelatin silver print. Yale University Art Gallery, Purchased with a gift from Mary Jo and Ted P. Shen, B.A. 1966, HON. 2001, and with the Janet and Simeon Braguin Fund, 2010.114.12.5

Speakers

A selection of photographs and short video clips by Dawoud Bey, Frank Cantor, Allan Chasanoff, Lee Friedlander, Nathaniel W. Gibbons, John Pilson, Harvey Wang, and others will be projected in the McNeil Lecture Hall before the start of the program.

ABBY BENSON

B.A. 1996, daughter of Barbara and Richard Benson,
and **DANIEL BENSON**
son of Barbara and Richard Benson

TOD PAPAGEORGE

former Walker Evans Professor of Photography, Yale School of Art

GREGORY CREWDSON

M.F.A. 1988, Professor and Director of Graduate Studies in Photography,
Yale School of Art

LISA KERESZI

M.F.A. 2000, Critic and Director of Undergraduate Studies, Yale School of Art,
and **BENJAMIN DONALDSON**

M.F.A. 2001, Lecturer, Yale School of Art

DAWOUD BEY

M.F.A. 1993, Professor of Photography, Columbia College Chicago

JOHN GAMBELL

M.F.A. 1981, Yale University Printer, and Senior Critic in Graphic Design, Yale School of Art

LEE FRIEDLANDER

photographer

MARIA MORRIS HAMBOURG

independent curator and former Curator in Charge, Department of Photographs,
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

THOMAS PALMER

photographer and printer

PETER GALASSI

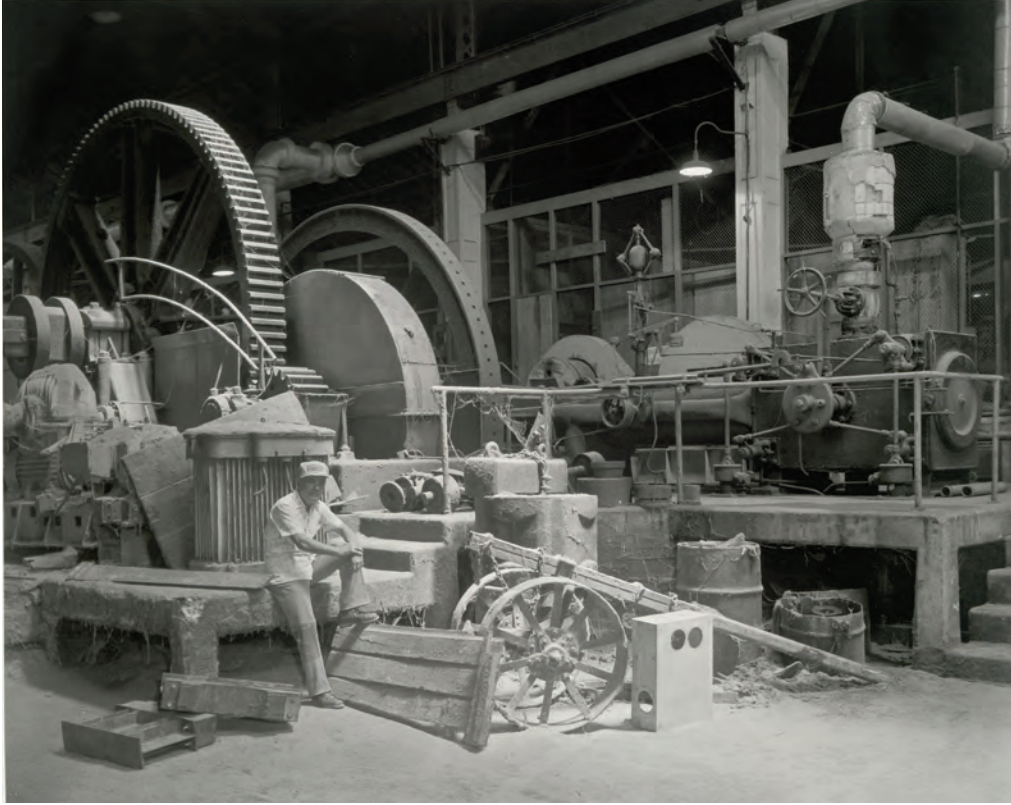
former Chief Curator of Photography, Museum of Modern Art, New York

DEBORAH BERKE

Dean and Professor, Yale School of Architecture

JOCK REYNOLDS

the Henry J. Heinz II Director, Yale University Art Gallery



Richard Benson, *Sugar Mill at Aguirre, Puerto Rico*, 1978.
Multiple-impression photo-offset lithograph. Yale University
Art Gallery, Gift of Doris Bry to the Doris Bry Inadvertent
Collection, 2008.204.3

On View

The Gallery has placed on view a number of works by Richard Benson, as well as works by Benson's friends and colleagues. We encourage you to visit the following spaces after the program:

FIRST FLOOR AND LOWER LEVEL, WEST ELEVATOR

Jan and Frederick Mayer Lobby and the Lower Lobby

Selection of books and photographs by Benson

FOURTH FLOOR, WEST ELEVATOR

James E. Duffy Study Room

Selection of photographs by Paul Strand, James Van Der Zee, and Carl Van Vechten, printed by Benson

SECOND FLOOR, CENTRAL ELEVATOR

Richard and Jane Manoogian Foundation

Galleries of American Art before 1900

Photographs by Benson of the Shaw Memorial in Boston

Richard Benson

Robert Gould Shaw Memorial by Augustus Saint Gaudens,
from the series *Lay This Laurel*, 1972

Platinum-palladium print

Yale University Art Gallery, Purchased with discretionary funds from
Yale University President Richard C. Levin in honor of Richard Benson,
Dean of the Yale University School of Art, 2001.25.1.15



Richard Benson

Brooklyn Bridge, ca. 1978

Platinum print

Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Phillip Periman, M.D., B.A. 1961,
1998.74.23



Richard Benson

Rhode Island, 2010

Multiple-impression pigmented inkjet print

Yale University Art Gallery, Richard Brown Baker, B.A. 1935, Fund,
2012.55.9



The Richard “Chip” Benson Scholarship Fund

Gifts in memory of Chip Benson can be directed to the Yale School of Art’s Richard “Chip” Benson Scholarship Fund by contacting Susan Sheehan Daniells, Director of Development, Yale School of Art, at susan.sheehan@yale.edu or 203.432.8187.

In special recognition of gifts of \$5,000, \$10,000, or more, the Yale University Art Gallery will make a donation of Benson’s groundbreaking publication *Photographs from the Collection of the Gilman Paper Company* (\$5,000+) or of a vintage photogravure of Alfred Stieglitz’s *The Steerage* (\$10,000+) to a school, library, college, university, or museum of the donor’s choice.



Jock Reynolds, *The Benson Family at Barbara and Chip's 50th Wedding Anniversary Celebration, Newport, Rhode Island, 2016*

Front cover: Harvey Wang, *Richard Benson*, 2012,
from the book *From Darkroom to Daylight*, published 2015.
Courtesy the artist

