

Joseph Modica (1946-2018) Collection

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Description is written in: English.

Visual AIDS Archive

526 W 26th St

#309

New York, NY 10001

archive@visualaids.org

URL: <https://visualaids.org/archive>

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Summary Information

Repository:	Visual AIDS Archive
Title:	Joseph Modica (1946-2018) Collection
ID:	
ID [aspace_uri]:	/repositories/3/resources/255
Date [inclusive]:	1946-2018
Physical Description:	30 Linear Feet
Physical Description:	5 document boxes, 15 slide boxes, 5 large boxes, 2 smaller boxes
Language of the Material:	English

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Biographical / Historical

Joseph Modica (1946-2018) was born in 1946 in Staten Island and attended High School of Music and Art, Staten Island Community College and the School of Visual Arts. In the 1960s, Modica was part of a nascent gay and lesbian community on Staten Island and close with the artist Ned Asta and writer Larry Mitchell (author of *The Faggots and Their Friends Between Revolutions*, illustrated by Asta).

Modica was an avid photographer beginning in the late 1960s, documenting his circle of friends in Staten Island and, after moving to the East Village in the 1970s, the downtown New York club scene. His photographs from the 1980s chronicle spaces such as the Pyramid Club and Danceteria, featuring luminaries Divine, Ethyl Eichelberger, Keith Haring, and John Sex. During this time Modica also worked as a graphic designer and photographed male nudes for the pornographic serial *Straight to Hell*. Modica's photographs also document New York gay activism and several years of pride parades. After the year 2000, as he suffered from the effects of illness and depression, he turned away from photography and dedicated himself to life drawing, producing hundreds of male figure drawings over the next decade.

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Scope and Contents

This collection contains materials associated with both Joseph Modica's artistic practice and his personal life. Materials include photographic prints, 35mm slides, photographic negatives, papers, ephemera, periodicals, publications, press clippings, personal correspondence, and sketches. This collection consists of materials spanning from 1970-2017.

Notable subjects in this collection include *Straight to Hell*, Danceteria, New York nightlife, pride parades, the NYU wrestling team, Studio 54, The Pyramid Club, Limelight, Show Palace, Bad Boys, and Trax. Notable figures who appear in Modica's photographs include Ethyl Eichelberger, Divine, Keith Haring, John Sex, Boyd McDonald, Quentin Crisp, Divine, Boy George, and Sylvester.

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Arrangement

Materials in this collection were kept mostly in original order and all original folders are included. The folders were arranged in alphabetical order.

Series are organized according to Joseph Modica's original filing system. The Slide Photographs series were originally organized together in binders separate from the materials that make up the Photographs and Design Work Files series. The Drawings and Oversized Materials series consists of materials originally housed in large art portfolios. File names come from Joseph Modica's original file naming system.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

Visual AIDS Archive

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Custodial History

Joseph Modica's collection was cared for upon his death by Dominic Ambrose and Rosine Signoriello and was donated to Visual AIDS in March 2025.

Processing Information

This collection was processed and arranged by Jacs Rodriguez in 2025.

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General

For questions about this collection or to request permissions for reproductions, email archive@visualaids.org

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Collection Inventory

Photographs and Design Work Files

Scope and Contents

This collection contains artwork made by Joseph Modica as well as materials produced surrounding his artistic practice. These materials include photographic prints, 35mm slides, 35mm negatives, contact sheets, papers, correspondence, book covers, proofs of work, and ephemera. Though widely undated, these materials span the 1970s-2000s.

Arrangement

Materials in this series have been kept in original order as much as possible. Folders names are taken directly from Joseph Modica's original filing system.

Title/Description	Instances
Box 1, Folder 1: ACT UP Benefit - Leslie Gore at MK	Box 1
Box 1, Folder 2: AIDS Dance Benefit PS 122	Box 1

Joseph Modica (1946-2018) Collection

Box 1, Folder 3: Alan Reust Portraits	Box 1
Box 1, Folder 4: Bad Boys #2 - Basic Bad Boys - Limelight - Keioki Dancing	Box 1
Box 1, Folder 5: Bad Boys #4 - Safe Sex	Box 1
Box 1, Folder 6: Bad Boys #9 - STH Best Butt Danceteria - Hapi Phace + Pyramid Drag Queens - John Reed	Box 1
Box 1, Folder 7: Bad Boys 8	Box 1
Box 1, Folder 8: Bad Boys Anniversary - Danceteria - Circle Jerk - Diane Brill - Michael Musto - Bad Boys At Siberia '88 - Jimmy James as Judy	Box 1
Box 1, Folder 9: Bad Boys II	Box 1
Box 1, Folder 10: Bad Boys Straight to Hell Final Show	Box 1
Box 1, Folder 11: Bad Boys Wrestling - Limelight	Box 1
Box 1, Folder 12: Bartenders for NY Native + ATR Poster	Box 1
Box 1, Folder 13: Beach Candid's	Box 1
Box 1, Folder 14: Beaches/Pool/Pier negatives	Box 1
Box 1, Folder 15: "Body Beautiful" Duplex Party - Limelight	Box 1
Box 1, Folder 16: Boxing - Danceteria	Box 1
Box 1, Folder 17: Boy Bar: Drag, The Larmons, Danceteria	Box 1
Box 1, Folder 18: Boyd McDonald + Quentin Crisp Portraits	Box 1

Joseph Modica (1946-2018) Collection

Box 1, Folder 19: Brideshead (TV)	Box 1
Box 1, Folder 20: Bridget	Box 1
Box 1, Folder 21: Club stuff/events negatives	Box 1
Box 1, Folder 22: Construction	Box 1
Box 1, Folder 23: Danceteria - 10,000 Maniacs	Box 1
Box 1, Folder 24: Dell Book Covers	Box 1
Box 1, Folder 25: Diane Brill's Millionaire's Fashions - Palladium	Box 1
Box 1, Folder 26: Divine - Pizza-A-Go-Go + Look Alike Contest - 1981	Box 1
Box 1, Folder 27: Divine and Stripping Photos	Box 1
Box 1, Folder 28: Dream Boys" - Limelight	Box 1
Box 1, Folder 29: Ethyl Eichelberger - SNAFU	Box 1
Box 1, Folder 30: Family and Friends (1 of 4)	Box 1
Box 1, Folder 31: Family and Friends (2 of 4)	Box 1
Box 1, Folder 32: Family and Friends (3 of 4) - Dom in BA - Dick + Jill, Tina/Lance Family Lobster Ride	Box 1
Box 1, Folder 33: Family and Friends (4 of 4) - New Years Eve '90 - LH, Ruby, Ned, Yvonne, Sal, Taz	Box 1
Box 1, Folder 34: Family negatives	Box 1

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Box 1, Folder 35: Fashion - Menza and Brazilian Fashion - Limelight	Box 1
Box 2, Folder 1: Florida	Box 2
Box 2, Folder 2: Florida Strippers, Tony Z Limelight, July 4 Party	Box 2
Box 2, Folder 3: Friends	Box 2
Box 2, Folder 4: Friends Negatives	Box 2
Box 2, Folder 5: Gaultier, "Le Defile" + Betsey Johnson	Box 2
Box 2, Folder 6: Gay Pride negatives	Box 2
Box 2, Folder 7: Gay Pride Proclamation	Box 2
Box 2, Folder 8: Gayiety Strip - International Crisis Show - Mark D'Aleo - Backstage + Time Expo	Box 2
Box 2, Folder 9: Helicopters Over NYC	Box 2
Box 2, Folder 10: Holly Woodlawn - James Siena, Chase, John Sex	Box 2
Box 2, Folder 11: "Inevitable Love: Safe Sex" - Limelight	Box 2
Box 2, Folder 12: IZOT - Cruising the Movies - At the Follies Stripping	Box 2
Box 2, Folder 13: Jamie James as Marilyn + Judy - Trax	Box 2
Box 2, Folder 14: Jean Hill Party - Area	Box 2
Box 2, Folder 15: Jefferson Airplane - Central Park	

Joseph Modica (1946-2018) Collection

Box 2

Box 2, Folder 16: Katherine Hamnett Fashion, Tomas and Sal, Charles Jordan, Martina	Box 2
Box 2, Folder 17: Kenneth Cole, Annie Liebowitz + Models, Zette @ Area, Apollo Talent Show, Robin Williams	Box 2
Box 2, Folder 18: Leo Ford + Dancers - Area + Limelight	Box 2
Box 2, Folder 19: Leo Ford with Killer Pussy - Area	Box 2
Box 2, Folder 20: LH Summer 85/Thanksgiving 82	Box 2
Box 2, Folder 21: Lifeguard Competition	Box 2
Box 2, Folder 22: Lounge Lizards	Box 2
Box 2, Folder 23: MacDougal Roof + Window Shots	Box 2
Box 2, Folder 24: Men Without Clothes - Area	Box 2
Box 2, Folder 25: Miscellaneous "To Be Printed"	Box 2
Box 2, Folder 26: Miscellaneous Negatives	Box 2
Box 2, Folder 27: Miscellaneous Photos	Box 2
Box 2, Folder 28: Miscellaneous Prints	Box 2
Box 2, Folder 29: Miscellaneous Prints and Art Book	Box 2
Box 2, Folder 30: Miscellaneous Prints and Negatives (1 of 3)	Box 2

Joseph Modica (1946-2018) Collection

Box 2, Folder 31: Miscellaneous Prints and Negatives (2 of 3)	Box 2
Box 2, Folder 32: Miscellaneous Prints and Negatives (3 of 3)	Box 2
Box 2, Folder 33: Miscellaneous Scanned Prints	Box 2
Box 2, Folder 34: NY Beaches, Staten Island Beach and Pool	Box 2
Box 2, Folder 35: NYU Locker Room 1985	Box 2
Box 2, Folder 36: NYU Locker Room 1985-1987	Box 2
Box 2, Folder 37: NYU Wrestling - Bulgaria vs US - 1989	Box 2
Box 2, Folder 38: NYU Wrestling 1986	Box 2
Box 2, Folder 39: NYU Wrestling Negatives	Box 2
Box 3, Folder 1: NYU Wrestling Prints	Box 3
Box 3, Folder 2: "On Tina Tuna Walk" Materials	Box 3
Box 3, Folder 3: P-Town	Box 3
Box 3, Folder 4: Pagan Place - Palladium	Box 3
Box 3, Folder 5: Party for "The Ritz" Play	Box 3
Box 3, Folder 6: Performance/events negatives	Box 3
Box 3, Folder 7: Personal Photographs (1960s-70s)	Box 3

Joseph Modica (1946-2018) Collection

ID [[aspace_uri](#)]: /repositories/3/archival_objects/32079

Box 3, Folder 8: Personal Photographs (Horse + Dog, Rex)	Box 3
Box 3, Folder 9: Phoenix Strippers, Mr Leather	Box 3
Box 3, Folder 10: Photo Book Materials	Box 3
Box 3, Folder 11: Pitt St Pool + Tompkins Square Park Basketball - 1986	Box 3
Box 3, Folder 12: Pop Tarts, Zette, John Sex, TV	Box 3
Box 3, Folder 13: Pride '86 - Christopher St Days - 1982	Box 3
Box 3, Folder 14: Pride '86 - Dean Johnson	Box 3
Box 3, Folder 15: Pride '89 + '91 Negatives	Box 3
Box 3, Folder 16: Pride Photo Slides	Box 3
Box 3, Folder 17: Pyramid - Eduardo Cartagena, Ethyl Eichelberger, STH	Box 3
Box 3, Folder 18: Pyramid - Eric Ryan - Victor Weaver, STH	Box 3
Box 3, Folder 19: Pyramid and Danceteria - Roger aka Frank Vickers	Box 3
Box 3, Folder 20: Red Hot Chili Peppers	Box 3
Box 3, Folder 21: Rolling Stones Photos	Box 3
Box 3, Folder 22: Salambo + White Whore	Box 3
Box 3, Folder 23: Scots/Charleton Heston - Central Park	Box 3

Joseph Modica (1946-2018) Collection

Box 3, Folder 24: Self-portraits	Box 3
Box 3, Folder 25: "Silver People" + Mr. NYC - Limelight	Box 3
Box 3, Folder 26: "Sketcher X" Proof	Box 3
Box 3, Folder 27: Slides labeled "To Lighten"	Box 3
Box 3, Folder 28: Stanton St - Rick M: Faces - Ned	Box 3
Box 3, Folder 29: STH at The Tunnel	Box 3
Box 3, Folder 30: STH Best Butt #1 at The Tunnel	Box 3
Box 3, Folder 31: STH Cover Boy - Danceteria + STH Cute Boy - Pop Tarts	Box 3
Box 3, Folder 32: STH Coverboy - Danceteria - 1985	Box 3
Box 3, Folder 33: STH Go-Go	Box 3
Box 3, Folder 34: STH Stripping for Money + Best Butt #3	Box 3
Box 3, Folder 35: STH Wet Jockeys	Box 3
Box 3, Folder 36: Streets (1 of 2)	Box 3
Box 3, Folder 37: Streets (2 of 2)	Box 3
Box 3, Folder 38: Streets/Construction/Ferry Negatives	Box 3
Box 3, Folder 39: Strippers at Majique/Underground - Mr. Jock - Danny Bozar	Box 3

Box 4, Folder 1: Studio 54 - Gym Night - Wil Higgins Party - Boy George	Box 4
Box 4, Folder 2: Studio 54 Lifesavers	Box 4
Box 4, Folder 3: Studio 54 Lingerie Fashion Show	Box 4
Box 4, Folder 4: Sylvester	Box 4
Box 4, Folder 5: Tango Night - Limelight	Box 4
Box 4, Folder 6: Thomson Family/Bob and Missy	Box 4
Box 4, Folder 7: Tony Nunz and Tom Spanbauer	Box 4
Box 4, Folder 8: Trax AIDS Benefit, Show Palace, Wig Ball	Box 4
Box 4, Folder 9: Truro '90	Box 4
Box 4, Folder 10: TV	Box 4
Box 4, Folder 11: TV Negatives	Box 4
Box 4, Folder 12: Unconscious Lovers	Box 4
Box 4, Folder 13: Union Wrestling + Area Wrestling	Box 4
Box 4, Folder 14: Vacations negatives	Box 4
Box 4, Folder 15: "Very mixed" slides	Box 4

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Personal Papers

Scope and Contents

This series includes personal materials including correspondence, journals, exhibition materials, sketches, pornographic materials, and ephemera.

Title/Description	Instances
Box 5, Folder 1: Awards and Certificates	Box 5
Box 5, Folder 2: Celebrity Photos and Autographs	Box 5
Box 5, Folder 3: Correspondence (In Touch and First Hand)	Box 5
Box 5, Folder 4: Donation Information	Box 5
Box 5, Folder 5: Doodles	Box 5
Box 5, Folder 6: Exhibition Announcements	Box 5
Box 5, Folder 7: Handwritten Notes and Emails	Box 5
Box 5, Folder 8: Magazine Correspondence	Box 5
Box 5, Folder 9: Miscellaneous Papers	Box 5
Box 5, Folder 10: Personal Identification Materials	Box 5
Box 5, Folder 11: Personal Notebooks	Box 5
Box 5, Folder 12: Personal Papers	Box 5
Box 5, Folder 13: Personal Photos and Notes	Box 5
Box 5, Folder 14: Personal Writings	Box 5
Box 5, Folder 15: Personal Writings and Dreams	

Box 5

Box 5, Folder 16: Political Buttons	Box 5
Box 5, Folder 17: Pornographic Materials	Box 5
Box 5, Folder 18: Pornographic Materials (1 of 2)	Box 5
Box 5, Folder 19: Pornographic Materials (2 of 2)	Box 5
Box 5, Folder 20: Pornographic Publications	Box 5
Box 5, Folder 21: Postcards	Box 5
Box 5, Folder 22: Publications and Maps	Box 5
Box 5, Folder 23: Resumes, Cover Letters, Invoices	Box 5
Box 5, Folder 24: Sketches	Box 5
Box 5, Folder 25: Visual AIDS	Box 5
Box 5, Folder 26: Visual AIDS - Grants and Postcards	Box 5
Box 5, Folder 27: Writing, Lists, Personal Papers	Box 5

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Slide Photography

Scope and Contents

This series of slide boxes contains 35mm slides, negatives, contact sheets, and some photographic prints of both personal and professional photography. This series includes materials from 1970-1988.

Arrangement

Materials in this series consist of slides housed separate from the photographic work in the Photographs and Design Work Files series in binders. The labels come from the original slide sheets as well as from labels on the outside of original binders.

Title/Description	Instances
Box 6 – Glenn Swann, Mr. Leather, Bob Sandor, James - New Orleans, Scorpio - MacDougal & Sal's, Eduardo, Cerebrum - Staten Island Community College, Indi	Box 6
Box 7 – Tom Young, Eduardo, Fritz, Nikki, Billy, Gary Casanova, Danny, Davey Hernandez, Scorpio	Box 7
Box 8 – Models: Mark D'Aleo, Jason, Wayne, Len, Mike Carr, Miscellaneous; Body builders, Beacon, Danceteria mud wrestling, Scots - Central Park, Firemen 84, Studio 54 Gym Night, Lingerie, Better Bods, Madison Ave Muscle, Union Club, Tony Z Limelite	Box 8
Box 9 – LH SI, Miscellaneous Slides	Box 9
Box 10 – Bad Boy 88, Mark D'Aleo, Bob Sandor, Hammock - clothed, Bedroom, James - New Orleans, Published - Giacino (Honcho), Mario Listo (Honcho), Scorpio (Firsthand)	Box 10
Box 11 – Personal photographs	Box 11
Box 12 – Bob Sandor	Box 12
Box 13 – Indio, Frank Kennedy, Tom Doldon, Jaimie Bleu, Antonio Moreno, Mario Castro, Malibu '70, Dream Canyon, Peaceful Valley, Boulder 70, Yosemite/Yellowstone/Gunsight/Palo Alto, Miscellaneous	Box 13
Box 14 – Bad Boys Anniversary, Backstage circle jerk, Wrestling Limelite, Bad Boys 9, Bad Boys Danceteria, Bad Boys Jason, Best Bad Boys '88 @ Siberia, Frank Kennedy, Unlabeled	Box 14
Box 15 – Til Tuesday - Simon F, Grease, John Sex, Theatre Street, Studio 52, Joe Jackson/10,000 Maniacs, 60s Concerts, White Whore, East Village fashions, Defile	Box 15

Palladium, TV/Movies, Bob Hope, Helen Hayes, Lucy,
Puerto Rico '86

Box 16 – Speedy (Eric), Cesar Monroy, Alain Ruest, Glenn Swann, Kevin Wallace, Steve Potter, Michael, Untitled, Stonewall 25, Cheryl's Going party, Poor Rex, JT Assaulted, Summer Canada, AntiWar World, TugBook Two, SI Woodstock

Box 16

Box 17 – Show Palace AIDS Benefit Trax, Gay Pride 1986, Gay Pride 1982 - Christopher St Parade, Trax Gay Pride Day - AIDS Benefit, Spirit + Flesh - Saint Carla Dunlap, 21 Club dancers - Fort Lauderdale, Dancers at The Building, John Sex - Limelight, ACT UP Halloween Party, Gayety Show, Best Butt II, Tunnel, Straight to Hell Parties, Best Lifeguards, Miscellaneous, Salombo Backstage, Salombo Onstage, 60's, NY Snow, '05 Rag Project, Art Portfolio Slides

Box 17

Box 18 – Red Party P-town Eldridge, Acapulco, Mexico w/ Paul and Claudia, SF Baker Beach - Rich + Terry, Rob + Tina, SABA Last Day, St Martin

Box 18

Box 19 – Joseph Kathy show/Steven Diverte, memory cards, Vatican/Mitch's table, Juda + Lee cabin, LH Party, cut up flash negs, LH winter 75-76, Bald Mitch + Rick, Mitch/Sal Summer NY - 3rd St, Shorts at Sheridan Square/Christopher St, Key West, Andy and Tony, Bald Jose, Halloween 76, unlabeled

Box 19

Box 20 – Unlabeled, Intern, Cornell Dance, Pink Satin, Land meeting, Cabin/LH, Clearwater, Winter LH - wiki/ David/Ned/Jose/Luna, Neddy, Luna, Jose, David/Snow/ Wiki/Peter Provok, Reservoir (Year of Watkins Concert), Yvonne in LH Kitchen, Luna, Luna/Neddy/Jose in the snow, Boston - David Moore/Rich Goldman/State St. Apt, J Troy Windows, Unlabeled/loose negatives, Early LH, Calvin, Key West, Watkins Glen - concert trash, Hedda, Shana, Building A-frame, Jada Spring St with Cat, Mitch and Phoebe, Sunny on the road, from kick's show, P-town, Richard, intensify, paintings (card), various personal photos

Box 20

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Drawings and Oversized Materials

Scope and Contents

This series of materials includes primarily original artwork in the form of large sketches as well as graphic design proofs, some photographs, publications, and periodicals.

Title/Description	Instances
Box 21 – sketches	Box 21
Box 22 – design work, publications, periodicals	Box 22
Box 23 – sketches	Box 23
Box 24 – sketches	Box 24
Box 25 – sketches, design work	Box 25
Box 26 – sketches, publications, personal notebooks, photography, and ephemera	Box 26
Box 27 – sketches and photography	Box 27

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