

## Leonard Nones: Essential Workers

May 21–July 31, 2024 at the Derfner Judaica Museum



Leonard Nones, *Nelson Altreche, Assistant Engineer, Engineering*, 2024. Inkjet print, 19 x 13 in.

Derfner Judaica Museum + The Art Collection at Hebrew Home at Riverdale is pleased to announce our upcoming exhibition, **Leonard Nones: Essential Workers**, which will be on view from May 21 through July 31, 2024. Admission to the Museum is always free. Photo I.D. required for entry.

**Leonard Nones: Essential Workers** features photographer Leonard Nones's portraits of staff on RiverSpring Living's Riverdale campus. The series of eighteen archival inkjet prints are tributes to the strength, resilience, and compassion of all the people who work with the Hebrew Home's residents. It was inspired by the influential *Vogue* photographer Irving Penn's *Small Trades* (1950–51). Like Penn, who invited tradesmen and women into his studio and photographed them against a simple cloth backdrop, Nones welcomed staff into the makeshift studio he set up in the dining room of RiverWalk, an independent living community he lives in that is part of RiverSpring Living in Riverdale.

Penn's subjects brought with them "the tools of their trades" just as RiverSpring Living's staff members have. Penn's pastry chefs wear their white aprons and hold their rolling pins; his fireman carries a hose. Among a few examples of Nones's subjects: A Hebrew Home registered nurse wears scrubs, with her I.D. badge prominently displayed and a stethoscope draped around her neck; a resident engagement coordinator holds a legal pad, her glasses, and a ring of keys, while wearing her phone on a chain like a cross-body purse; an assistant engineer is seated next to one of the oxygen tanks he is charged with safely loading and unloading from weekly deliveries; a lawyer displays an award recognizing an early achievement before she began the lifesaving work she does as part of the team at RiverSpring Living's Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Center for Elder Justice; occupational and physical therapists in their uniforms carry the training balls they use to help patients and residents regain and maintain their strength and physical abilities; several Therapeutic Arts and Enrichment Program staff pose with puppies and a dog—the "tools" of the pet therapy program.

The portraits reflect the originality of Nones's eye combined with compositional and conceptual elements from Penn's series. All the images are narrow and vertical, and the subjects photographed from a somewhat low vantage point, which adds to their sculptural monumentality. They look out at the camera with direct and arresting gazes and are animated, active, often posed with their weight resting on one leg, their knee bent. Their readiness and confidence are marks of the professionalism, dedication, and skill they bring to their positions in caring for others.



Leonard Nones, *Lisabeth Johnson, Registered Nurse, Nursing*, 2024. Inkjet print, 19 x 13 in.



Leonard Nones, *Raik Jones, Activity Generalist, Therapeutic Activities and Enrichment Program*, 2024. Inkjet print, 19 x 13 in.

Nones joins the generations of esteemed artists and photographers interested in producing pictures of working people that recognize them and the work they do. Jeff L. Rosenheim, the curator in charge of photographs at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, has observed of Penn's *Small Trades* portraits: "Collectively, they reveal how a true master who knew what he wanted from a portrait could use a neutral space, careful side lighting, and exquisite photographic materials to celebrate and honor the daily lives of working men and women." RiverSpring Living's collaboration with Nones similarly honors all of its employees for their commitment to the older adults they serve.

#### About the photographer

Leonard Nones worked as a photographer for fifty years. He was born in 1930 in Philadelphia to Lena née Greenberg and Martin Nones. After graduating from South Philadelphia High School, he worked as an apprentice with a commercial photography studio in Philadelphia. With that experience and a small portfolio, he decided to seek work as a freelance photographer in New York City.

His work has appeared in such magazines as *McCalls*, *Red Book*, *GQ*, *True Magazine*, *Life*, *Time*, and others. He has photographed famous personalities including Lyndon Johnson at his ranch in Texas when he was President of the United States, and many others from the sporting world to Hollywood actors. His work has taken him around the world, including a challenging advertising campaign in a plane over Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania. After that experience, Nones became a pilot, flew his own plane, and was instrument rated.

Nones met his future wife, Sondra Fox, who was also from Philadelphia, on a blind date. She was a fashion illustrator and later a stylist in her husband's studio. They were married in 1955 and were happily married for sixty-five years until her death in 2020. They have two daughters, Karen London and Margot Nones, and three grandchildren, Rebecca London and Philip London and Philip's wife Lola Guerrero Larrea.

#### **Museum Hours**

Museum hours: Sunday–Thursday, 10:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m. Photo ID is required for all visitors to the RiverSpring Living Riverdale campus. Call 718.581.1596 or email [art@riverspring.org](mailto:art@riverspring.org) to schedule a visit, in-person or virtual group tours, or for holiday hours. For further information, visit our website at [www.derfner.org](http://www.derfner.org).

#### **About Hebrew Home at Riverdale**

As a member of the American Alliance of Museums, the Hebrew Home at Riverdale by RiverSpring Living is committed to publicly exhibiting its art collection throughout its 32-acre campus, including the Derfner Judaica Museum and a sculpture garden overlooking the Hudson River and Palisades. Derfner Judaica Museum + The Art Collection provides educational and cultural programming for residents of the Hebrew Home, their families and the general public from throughout New York City, its surrounding suburbs and visitors from elsewhere. RiverSpring Living is a nonprofit, non-sectarian geriatric organization serving more than 18,000 older adults in greater New York through its resources and community service programs.



Leonard Nones, *Malya Levin, Assistant Director and General Counsel, The Weinberg Center for Elder Justice*, 2024. Inkjet print, 19 x 13 in.