

Earlie Hudnall, Jr. HOMeward

A black and white photograph of a young Black boy. He is looking upwards with his eyes closed, and his hands are resting on his shoulders. The background is blurred, showing some outdoor elements like a fence or trees.

Art Museum of Southeast Texas
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Earlie Hudnall, Jr. HOMeward

essay by
Phillip Collins

"My interest in photography was inspired by my father who was an amateur photographer. He would always take pictures of us on fourth Sundays after church... I began to understand the importance of keeping a visual record of the family, the community and of our surroundings. The love for this common way of life and memories of those times provided me with the inspiration to become a photographer."

- Earlie Hudnall, Jr.

Born in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, Hudnall's early family life, combined with the vibrant tapestry of Black Southern culture, instilled in him a deep sense of empathy. Empathy is the cornerstone of his photographic artistry. Hudnall has a rare gift for connecting with his subjects in a manner that enables him to delve beneath the images' surface to create portraits of his subjects with sincere honesty, integrity, and sensitivity.



*Lady in Black Hat with Feathers. Third Ward, Houston, Texas, 1990, silver gelatin print.
Image courtesy of the artist.*



*Mother and Son, Hurricane Ike, Houston, Texas, 2008, silver gelatin print.
Image courtesy of the artist.*

Hudnall's photographs are characterized by their monochromatic elegance and emotional depth. They encapsulate the spectrum of human experience. His clear tonal contrast of light and shadow images evoke a timeless quality that transcends the boundaries of time and culture. The heart of Hudnall's work is rooted in his commitment to social commentary. He is dedicated to amplifying the voices of the marginalized and challenging societal norms. According to Hudnall, "I believe that as an artist, I have the responsibility to highlight the injustices I witness." Through his lens, he sheds light on the harsh realities of racial discrimination, poverty, and systematic inequalities. His photographs serve as a mirror, reflecting the collective conscience of society and compelling viewers to confront uncomfortable truths. He consciously looks out for and captures in print the vulnerability, resilience, and grace of his subjects, which gives his work a universal quality and appeal.

Phillip Collins is an art historian and museum curator, the current Executive Director of the Memnosyne Institute and former Vice Chair of Arts and Culture Commission, City of Dallas.



Support Affirmative Action, 1986, silver gelatin print.
Image courtesy of the artist.



The Guardian, Rodeo Parade, Houston, Texas, 1991, silver gelatin print.
Image courtesy of the artist.

Biography

Earlie Hudnall, Jr. (b. 1946) is a Houston-based photographer whose work is shaped by his sense of community. Hudnall began photographing while serving as a Marine in the Vietnam War in the 1960s. In 1968, he relocated to Houston to attend Texas Southern University (TSU) and received his BA in Art Education. While attending TSU, he found the encouragement to continue photographing from well-known TSU faculty members, including art professor John Biggers and professor of philosophy Dr. Thomas Freeman. After graduating, Earlie made Houston his permanent home and worked as a staff photographer for TSU from the 1970s to 1990. He then worked as the university photographer from 1990 until his retirement in 2019.

Earlie's accolades include a Lifetime Achievement Award in the Visual Arts from Art League Houston in 2022 with an accompanying exhibition and catalog titled *Drawn to Communities*. A selection of previous solo and group exhibitions includes the Holocaust Museum, Houston, Texas; Houston City Hall, Houston First Corporation, Grace Museum, Abilene, Texas; Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, Kalamazoo, Michigan; African American Art Museum, Dallas, Texas; Galveston Arts Center, Galveston, Texas; Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago, Illinois; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC. His work is held in numerous public and private collections, including the Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, Texas; Chicago Art Institute, Chicago, Illinois; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC; Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago, Illinois; and Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, New York. He is represented by Photographs Do Not Bend Gallery (PDNB Gallery) in Dallas, Texas.

The cinematographer, James Laxton, an Academy Award winner for Best Picture in 2017, *Moonlight*, mentioned Earlie as visual inspiration on how the film should depict African-Americans both aesthetically and symbolically. A Time Magazine article written by Paul Maokley in August 2020 spotlighted Earlie's 40+ year career as a documentary photographer.

* Cover image: *All Kings were Boys*, 1989, silver gelatin print. Image courtesy of the artist.

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