



The New York Public Library  
Manuscripts and Archives Division

Guide to the

**John Edward Heys collection**

1969-2009

MssCol 1394

Compiled by Diana Bertolini, 2013.

## Summary

**Creator:** Heys, John Edward, 1948-

**Title:** John Edward Heys collection

**Date:** 1969-2009

**Size:** 1.97 linear feet (6 boxes)

**Source:** Donated by John Heys from 1998 to 2009.

**Abstract:** John Edward Heys is an actor/filmmaker/director/writer who performed with numerous performance groups including the Angels of Light and Charles Ludlam's Ridiculous Theatrical Company. In August 1969, he founded America's first bi-monthly newspaper for the LGBSTG community, Gay Power. The collection contains a variety of materials documenting Heys' personal life and his role as an active member of the artistic and LGBST communities of New York and Berlin.

**Preferred citation:** John Edward Heys collection, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

**Processing note:** Compiled by Diana Bertolini, 2013 Compiled by Diana Bertolini, 2013.

### Related Materials:

John Edward Heys Papers, ca. 1962-2001 (bulk dates 1969-2000). Billy Rose Theatre Division, New York Public Library.

John Heys papers, Additions, 1930s-2011. Billy Rose Theatre Collection, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts..

## Creator History

John Edward Heys was born in New Jersey. Upon his father's death two days after Heys' 12th birthday, he was educated (grades 7 thru 12) at a private boarding school in northern New Jersey. Upon graduating from secondary school, Heys moved to Miami Shores, Florida, to the home of his maternal aunts. After two semesters of college majoring in Liberal Arts, Heys moved to New York City in 1968 and became part of the East Village and West Village alternative life and LGBSTG culture. In August

1969, he founded America's first bi-monthly newspaper for the LGBSTG community, *Gay Power*, the official title totaling 24 issues and was Editor until August 1970. One of its covers was created by Robert Mapplethorpe. The newspaper also contained illustrations by Touko Laaksonen, better known as Tom of Finland, as well as regular contributors as Arthur Bell, Taylor Mead, Charles Ludlam, Pudgy Roberts, Bill Vehr, Pat Maxwell, Clayton Cole and regular columns from all of the active LGBSTG groups, from the most conservative Mattachine Society to the most radical The Gay Liberation Front, and all the other groups in between. Heys is an actor/ filmmaker/director/writer who performed with numerous performance groups including the Angels of Light and Charles Ludlam's Ridiculous Theatrical Company. Heys worked with numerous artists including Charles Ludlam, Ethyl Eichelberger, Jackie Curtis, Cookie Mueller, Bill Vehr, Tomata du Plenty, and as Roman Polanski in Gary Indiana's *THE ROMAN POLANSKI STORY*.

Heys began his career as an usher then stage manager and designer for Ethyl Eichelberger. He was a member of the New York based Angels of Light and performed in several of the Palm Casino Revues in the 1970s. A onetime lover of Charles Ludlam, Heys acted in several Ridiculous Theatrical Company productions. He starred as Moderna 83 in *Le Bourgeois Avant-Garde* (1982), Aristotle Plato Socrates Odysseus in *Galas* (1983), and as Schahabarim in *Salammbô* (1985).

In the 1980s Heys acted in several shows with Cookie Mueller including *A Car Story* and *Two Chin People*. He acted in Gary Indiana's *The Roman Polanski Story* in 1981 and then in Indiana's ca. 1984 *Roman a Clef*. In 1987 he was one of the celebrated ensemble members for *Excerpts from Champagne & Glamour, Glory, & Gold* by Jackie Curtis. Heys was also a favorite model of photographers including Peter Hujar.

Heys performed several one-man shows beginning with an autobiographical monologue in 1980s *The Childhood Show*. In 1982 he presented *La Mamounia (Crime Doesn't Pay)*, an autobiographical show written and performed at the Open Gate Theatre at Bellevue Hospital. In 1984 Heys was invited to Berlin to perform two characters from David Wojnarowicz's (Sounds In The Distance) and his own two pieces *La Mamounia - Crime Doesn't Pay* and *Poverty In The Penthouse*. He presented his *Moroccan Bride* based on his trips to Morocco and Spain in New York in the 1980s and in Berlin in 1997. His celebrated portrayal of *Diana Vreeland* was performed in New York at La Mama in the early 1990s, at Ellen Stewart's 30th Anniversary celebration at La Mama in 1992, and in Berlin in 1997 as *The Empress V at Goodbye to Berlin? 100 Jahre Schwulenbewegung*. He also created *A Diana Vreeland Christmas* for La Mama in 1991. In 1997 he directed Alba Clemente in Rene Ricard's translation of Jean Cocteau's *A Human Voice*. and his short documentary film co-created with Fernando Kuntzel concerning Charlotte von Mahlsdorf premiered at the Berlin International Film Festival.

## Scope and Content Note

The John Edward Heys collection covers Heys' personal life, and role as an active member of the artistic and LGBT communities of New York and Berlin from 1969 to 2008. Materials present include issues of *Gay Power*, photographs, posters, flyers, publicity materials, periodicals, correspondence, notes, and other writings. This collection contains photographs of Heys and various friends from 1969 to the 1980s. Many of the photographs were taken to promote the newspaper *Gay Power*.

Postcards, Flyers, Notes and Correspondence provide insight into Heys' social life and activities in the LGBT communities of New York, and to a lesser extent, Los Angeles and San Francisco, in the 1960s to 1980s and in Berlin, and other European cities from the 1990s to 2008. There are advertisements, postcards, flyers, posters, and programs for plays and other theatrical performance pieces; films and film festivals; musical groups and performances; museums; art and photography exhibitions;

restaurants; gay nightclubs, parties and other social events; and safer sex promotions. Many of these promotional materials are in German, French, Russian, and other languages. Often these materials include related correspondence from the artists, and/or friends of Heys recommending the event, such as notes written on the backs of promotional postcards, and letters accompanying promotional flyers.

Periodicals held in this collection include complete magazines, newspapers, and journals, and excerpted articles from 1970 to 2008. Many of the periodicals from 1990 to 2008 are in German, Italian, Danish, and Japanese. Most of these periodicals concern gay issues, drag performance or avant-garde art and performance. Periodicals contained here include *adix*, *Die Andere Welt*, *Arsenal*, *Art Forum*, *Bear*, *Brutus*, *Cooking with Verbal Abuse*, *The East Village Other*, *Female Impersonator News*, *Gay Power*, *Gay Press*, *The Great Female Mimics*, *Hinnerk*, *Homo Décor*, *Manhattan Review of Unnatural Acts*, *New York*, *The New York Review of Unnatural Acts*, *Per Lui*, *Rags*, *Sergej*, *Siegessäule*, *Straight to Hell*, *Der Szeneführer durch Berlin*, and *Zitty*.

**Arrangement:** The collection is divided into three groups: Photographs; Flyers, Postcards, and Posters; and Periodicals.

## Key Terms

### Subjects

AIDS (Disease) in art -- Germany  
AIDS (Disease) in art -- United States  
Gay artists -- New York (State) -- New York  
Gays in popular culture -- Germany -- 20th century  
Gays in popular culture -- United States -- 20th century  
Nightlife -- Germany -- Berlin  
Nightlife -- New York (State) -- New York  
Performance art -- Germany -- Berlin  
Performance art -- New York (State) -- New York  
Pornography  
Transvestites -- New York (State) -- New York

### Geographic Names

Berlin (Germany) -- Social life and customs -- 20th century  
New York (N.Y.) -- Social life and customs -- 20th century

### Genre/Physical Characteristic

Flyers  
Journals (periodicals)  
Magazines  
Photographs  
Postcards  
Posters

### Titles

Gay Power

## Container List

- b. 1 f. 1    Photographs 1969-1996
- Flyers, Postcards and Posters 1970-2009
- b. 1 f. 2-5    1970-1999
- b. 2 f. 1-6    1991-2009, undated
- b. 5 f. 1    2009
- Periodicals 1969-2009
- b. 5 f. 2    1969
- b. 3 f. 1-4    1970-2008
- b. 4 f. 1-2    1992-1996
- b. 121    Gay Power 1969-1970