

*T-Vim 2002-020

Guide to the Alvin Colt Designs, 1935-1990

Billy Rose Theatre Division



The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts
New York, New York

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Alvin Colt Designs, 1935-1990

Creator: Colt, Alvin

Call Number: *T-Vim 2002-020

Size: 3.75 linear feet ; 14 boxes

Repository: The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Billy Rose Theatre Division. New York, New York

Abstract: Alvin Colt is an award-winning costume and scenic designer that has worked in film, television and theater. The collection consists mainly of costume designs for television productions from the 1970s and 1980s, but also includes scenic designs for stage productions drawn early in his career (1935-1947).

Languages Represented: English

Administrative Information

Source: The Alvin Colt Designs were donated by Alvin Colt in 2002.

Access: Collection is open to the public. Photocopying prohibited. Advance notice required

Preferred Citation: Alvin Colt Designs, *The Vim 2002-050. Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Biography

Alvin Colt was born in Louisville, Kentucky on July 5, 1915. He received his drama training in Yale's Department of Drama (1934-37), where he was the youngest member of his class. After working in summer theater, he moved to New York and was soon told (by legendary costume designer Irene Sharaff) to forget about the theater and "Go and live a happy and peaceful life." Disregarding this advice, and began designing for what is now the New York City Ballet Company. His early experiences in designing for ballet made him a natural choice for the 1944 Broadway show *On the Town*. *On the Town* was based on the Jerome Robbins ballet, *Fancy Free*, and was Colt's Broadway debut.

Colt worked steadily both on and off-Broadway throughout the 1940s. Two of his notable works include a 1946 Mercury Production of *Around the World in 80 Days* (produced, written and directed by Orson Welles), and the design of over 200 costumes for *Music in My Heart* in 1947. In 1950 Colt was asked to design costumes for the smash-hit *Guys & Dolls*. The librettist, Abe Burrows, had seen Colt's designs for *On the Town* and thought they "looked like real New York people". In 1953 the 6 foot 6 inch designer from Louisville was aptly chosen to design for *The Tall Kentuckian*. He also helped to found the Phoenix Theatre. His work with the Phoenix included *Madam, Will You Walk* with Jessica Tandy and Hume Cronyn, 1954's cult musical *The Golden Apple*, and the legendary revival of *The Sea Gull* with Montgomery Clift, his longtime friend Kevin McCarthy, and Maureen Stapleton.

1956 brought greater recognition to Colt with a Tony Award for Costume Design for *Pipe Dream*, and an Antoinette Perry Award for Distinguished Work in the New York Theater. That year he also designed costumes for the Broadway production of *Li'l Abner*, which he would rework for the film version only three years later. Colt expanded into designing for television in 1961 with *The Enchanted Nutcracker*. He continued to work in television occasionally throughout the 1960s but it was the 1970s and 1980s that saw his true focus on the medium. His varied productions included Awards shows such as the Emmys and the Tonys, many specials, and a 13-hour historical drama called *The Adams Chronicles*.

In the 1990s Colt returned to the theater, and in 1994 began an ongoing relationship with the off-Broadway review *Forbidden Broadway* that continues to this day. He received the Irene Sharaff Lifetime Achievement Award in Costume Design from the Theatre Development Fund (TDF) in 1996, and in 2001 he was inducted into the Theatre Hall of Fame.

Scope and Content Note

The designs of Alvin Colt include both costume and scenic works. The costume designs were made for television productions, the bulk of which are from the 1970s and 1980s. They are mounted and often have fabric samples attached. The scenic designs are from an earlier period of Colt's career, 1935-1947, and consist mainly of sketches for theater sets. There is also a folder of photographs of stage sets done for Eltch's Garden Theatre.

Organization

- Series I: Costume Designs
- Series II: Scenic Designs

Series Descriptions/Container List

Series I: Costume Designs, 1961-1990

12 boxes

Alphabetical

This series contains costume design sketches and watercolors, often accompanied by fabric samples, made for various television productions.

- | | | |
|------|------|--|
| b. 1 | f. 1 | <i>Ace Cable Awards, 1987</i>
11 plates
Includes costume designs for The Four Tops, Susie Carr, Sharon Farrel, Tim Smith, Tricia Farland, Carol Ann Basch, Alex Cole, Mic Thompson, Girl and Boy Dancers and 1 unidentified.
Includes fabric swatches. |
| b. 1 | f. 2 | <i>The Adams Chronicles, 1975</i>
10 plates
Includes costume designs numbered 101-110 for Abigail Adams, including designs for scenes at Weymouth, Braintree, and the Adams's farm. Includes fabric swatches. |
| b. 1 | f. 3 | <i>The Adams Chronicles, 1975</i>
7 plates
Includes costume designs for Mary, Elizabeth, Mrs. Smith (at the Weymouth Parsonage), Louisa Quincy Adams, and Mary Catherine. Also includes designs for headresses and sheets of fabric swatches. |
| b. 2 | f. 1 | <i>The Adams Chronicles, 1975</i>
10 plates
Includes 4 unidentified costume sketches, as well as one dated 1886. Also includes designs for Abigail Adams from Episode III (1783), and Episode IV (1784, Auteil-1785, Travel-1785, and "Dinner"). Includes fabric swatches. |
| b. 2 | f. 2 | <i>The Adams Chronicles, 1975</i>
10 plates
Includes costume designs for Episodes IV and V. Episode IV designs are for Abigail Adams (1786) and Nabby Adams (scene |

13, Travel, Love Scene, and Dinner Party). Episode V designs are for Abigail Adams (June 1788, Sept. 1788, 1795, and Bingham Scene), and Anne Bingham (Nov. 1793). Includes fabric swatches.

b. 2 f. 3

The Adams Chronicles, 1975

10 plates

Includes costume designs for Episodes VI, VIII, IX, and X. Episode VI designs are for Abigail Adams (1797, 1798, 1799, and 1800). Episode VIII designs are for Louisa Quincy Adams (1817 and 1824). The Episode IX design is for Mary Catherine (1829). Episode X designs are for Louisa Quincy Adams (1830, 1834, and 1841). Includes fabric swatches.

b. 3 f. 1

The Adams Chronicles, 1975

11 plates

Includes costume designs for Episodes X and XI. Episode X designs are for Louisa Quincy Adams (1848) and Mary Catherine (1834, Jan. 1841, April 1841, 1829, and 1848). Episode XI designs are for Abigail Adams (March 1861, May 1861-Dockside, May 1861-Court Dress, and Sept. 1863). Includes fabric swatches.

b. 3 f. 2

The Adams Chronicles, 1975

10 plates

Includes costume designs for Episode XII. Designs are for Marion Hooper (Oct 1870, Dec. 1870, 1871, 1872-Symphony, 1872-Dining Room, 1877, 1877-Picnic, 1880, 1881, and 1885). Includes fabric swatches.

b. 3 f. 3

CBS's 50th Anniversary Celebration, 1977

11 plates

Includes costume designs for Clifford Allen and Gene Castle, John Ring and Dave Massey, Reed Jones and George Jayne, John Henry and Ron Kubleren, three sets of cowboys A-G, three couples from the first half of the 20th century, and one unidentified. Includes fabric swatches.

b. 4 f. 1

CBS's 50th Anniversary Celebration, 1977

13 plates

Includes two plates of changing womens fashions (1932, 1939, 1947, and 1950), Rita O'Connor and Renee Baughman, Diane and Cathy Rice, Gerri and Dimita Jo Freeman, Lillian D'Hanau and Doran Grusman, a teenage couple from the 1950s, Gary Flannery and Mark Riena, Clifford Allen and Rick Mason, Mark Harryman and George Jayne, Mike Eselum and Dave Massey, a couple from the early 1960s, and a Hippy couple. Includes fabric swatches.

- b. 4 f. 2 *Disney-MGM Theme Park Opening, 1989*
12 plates
Includes costume designs numbered 101 ("Script Girl"), 101-103, 102 (Audrey Baramishyn), 103-105 ("Super Stadium", Cindi Miller and Michael), 203-205 (Michael, Jerald Vincent, and Paul Thorpe), 206-207 ("Stuntmen"), 301-302 ("Movieland: 3 Flappers"), 304 (Lori Werner), 305-306 (Paula, Michelle), 307 ("Marie Antoinette", Dominique), 308 ("Mae West", Nannette), and 309-310 ("Jean Harlowe", Cindy Miller, Melissa Hurley). Includes fabric swatches.
- b. 5 f. 1 *Disney-MGM Theme Park Opening, 1989*
12 plates
Includes costume designs numbered 311-312 (Melissa Hurley and Cindy M.), 312, 313 (Janine Best), 314 (Paula and Tina), 315-317 ("Girls with Smokey Robinson"), 401 (David Robertson), 403-405 ("Stuntmen"-Three Musketeers), 406 (Suzy), 407 (Jerrold Vincent), 409 (Daryl Yeager), 412-413 ("Stuntmen"-Roman Soldiers), and 414-416 ("Stuntmen"-Cowboys). Includes fabric swatches.
- b. 5 f. 2 *Disney-MGM Theme Park Opening, 1989*
11 plates
Includes costume designs numbered 417 (Michelle and Dominique), 418 (Michael Chambers), 419-420 (Tom Akos), 419-420 (Joe Hess), and unnumbered designs: 2 labeled "Jazzy", designs for Lorraine, Audrey, Gigi and Lori, Nannette, and designs labeled "Dancers with Ann Miller" and "Suzy Wongs". Includes fabric swatches.
- b. 5 f. 3 *Disney-MGM Theme Park Opening, 1989*
9 plates
Includes four unidentified costume designs, as well as designs for Estelle Getty, Ann Miller, Smokey Robinson, and Suzanne Sommers. Includes fabric swatches.
- b. 6 f. 1 *Emmy Awards Show, 1978; 1986*
6 plates
Includes costume designs for Monique, Sandi, and Sharon, as well as 3 unidentified designs. Includes fabric swatches.
- b. 6 f. 2 *Emmy Awards Show, 1978; 1986*
7 plates
Includes costume designs for Fern Fitzgerald, Mary Fran, Stephanie Kramer, Lisa Whelchel, Mary Cadorette, Audrey, and Carol Ann Basch. Includes fabric swatches.

- b. 6 f. 3 *Emmy Awards Show, 1978; 1986*
10 plates
Includes a design labeled "Dancers", as well as costume designs for Tim Smith and Darryl Green, Suzie Carr, Clarence Teeters, Mark Harryman and Alex Cole, Valerie Miller and Sharon Ferrol, Tricia Mc Farland, and three designs for Shelly Long. Includes fabric swatches.
- b. 7 f. 1 *The Enchanted Nutcracker, 1961*
7 plates
Includes costume designs numbered 100-105 (for Robert Goulet, Pat Adiarte, a Turkish costume, a toy soldier, a bull fighter, and Pierre Olaf), and an unnumbered Asian costume. Includes fabric swatches.
- b. 7 f. 2 *The Enchanted Nutcracker, 1961*
7 plates
Includes costume designs numbered 200-206: four for Carol Lawrence, one unidentified, one for Shelley Farrell, and one Asian costume. Includes fabric swatches.
- b. 7 f. 3 *Happy Birthday Hollywood, 1987*
10 plates
Includes costume designs numbered 101-106 (early Twentieth Century policemen), 107-108 ("Mack Sennet Bathing Beauties"), 109-110 (Eileen Casey and Winona Smith), 111-112 ("Mack Sennet Bathing Beauties"), 113-114 (Valerie Miller and Jude Warner), an unnumbered "Silent Screen Vamp" similar to 116, 116 (Leslie Ferrarra), 117 (Audrey), 118-120 (Cindy Miller, Melissa Hurley, and Andrea Noen), and 121 ("Silent Screen Vamp", Janine Best). Includes fabric swatches.
- b. 7 f. 4 *Happy Birthday Hollywood, 1987*
10 plates
Includes costume designs numbered 122 (Janella Lucas), 126 (Richard Monteo), 128 (Eddie Junior), 129 and 115 (Bill Bohl and Dawn Duncan), 130 (Bill Burns), 149 (Liza Minelli), 150 (Liza Minelli), 151 (Liza Minelli as Charlie Chaplin), 201-203 (Mia Peeples, and two unidentified), and 204-206 ("Busby Berkeley", Nancy Dussault, Betty White, and Mary Fran). Includes fabric swatches.
- b. 8 f. 1 *Happy Birthday Hollywood, 1987*
10 plates
Includes costume designs numbered 207-209 ("Busby Berkeley", Stephanie Kramer, Stephanie Powers, and Maryann Brettany), 210-212 (two versions), 213-215 (Lorna Luft, Sheryl Lee Ralph,

and Michelle Lee), 216-218 ("Busby Berkeley", Jacqueline Smith, Mary Hart, and Michelle Lee), 219-221 (two unidentified, and Joan Van Ark), 222-224 (Shari Lewis, Marilyn, and Linda Carter), 225-227 (unidentified, Donna Mills, and Barbara Eden), 228-230 (Morgan Fairchild, Shari Belafonte Harper, and Dee Wallace), and 231-232 ("Busby Berkeley", unidentified and Janet Leigh). Includes fabric swatches.

b. 8 f. 2

Happy Birthday Hollywood, 1987

10 plates

Includes costume designs numbered 233-234 (unidentified and Jayne Kennedy), 235-236 (Sally Kellerman and unidentified), an unnumbered design similar to 233-265, 233-265 (two versions), 285 ("Busby Berkeley Number 100 Girls", 305 (Bernadette Peters), 307 (Bernadette Peters), 308 (Bernadette Peters), and 311 (Bernadette Peters). Includes fabric swatches.

b. 8 f. 3

Happy Birthday Hollywood, 1987

10 plates

Includes three unnumbered costume designs for Bernadette Peters and designs numbered 318 (Treat Williams), 321, 322, 327, 328-329 (Tina and Dominique), 332-333 (Vicki and Allison), and 334-335 (unidentified and Colleen). Includes fabric swatches.

b. 8 f. 4

Happy Birthday Hollywood, 1987

7 plates

Includes costume designs numbered 336-337 (Camille and Mary), 338-339 (Michelle and Jamie), and five unnumbered designs: two unidentified, Debbie Allen, a third unidentified, and Ann Miller. Includes fabric swatches.

b. 9 f. 1

NBC's 60th Anniversary Celebration, 1987

13 plates

Includes costume designs numbered 2 (Eric Henderson), 3 (Bill Burns), 5 (Raymond Del Barrio), 6 (Dennon Rawles), 7 (Paul Thorpe), 10 (Sahyber Rawles), 11 (Sandi Johnson), 12 (Nannette La Chance), 13, and four unnumbered designs: Alton Ruff and Carroll O'Connor and three unidentified. Includes fabric swatches.

b. 9 f. 2

Night of 100 Stars I, 1982

14 plates

Includes costume designs numbered 1 ("Prehistoric", Philmena Nowlin), 2 ("Egyptian", Jo Ann Ogawa), 3 ("Greece", Julie Pars), 4 ("Moyen Age", Katheryn Wright), 6 ("Pompidour", Lynn Sullivan), 7 ("Directoire", Barbara Anne Ciriadino), 9 (Dee Dee Knapp), 10 ("Poiret 1916", Mary Sue Finnerty), 11 ("Twenties", Lynn Newton), 12 ("Hippy Flower Child", Anita Ehrler), 14 ("6

Dancers"), 201 ("6 Olympic Team"), 203-204 ("6 Dancers"), and one unidentified. Includes fabric swatches.

- b. 9 f. 3 *Night of 100 Stars II & III, 1985 & 1990*
9 plates
Includes costume designs numbered 101 (Gregory Hines), 102-105 (Hinton Battle, Lee Roy Reams, Greg Burge, and unidentified), 106 (Bonnie Franklin), 107-108 (Georgia Engel and Elaine Joyce), 109 (Beth Howland), 110 (Christopher Walken), 111-112, 113-114, and an unnumbered design labeled "6 Dancing Girls". Includes fabric swatches.
- b. 10 f. 1 *Night of 100 Stars II & III, 1985 & 1990*
9 plates
Includes costume designs numbered 116 (Chita Rivera), 117 (Gwen Verdon), 118 (Debbie Allen), 119 (Juliet Prowse), 120, 121 (Ginger Rogers), 122 (Marge Champion), 123 (Nannette Fabrey), and 205-206. Includes fabric swatches.
- b. 10 f. 2 *Night of 100 Stars II & III, 1985 & 1990*
8 plates
Includes a costume design for "Dancers", and designs numbered 301-302 (Peggy Parton and Jeff Shade), 303-304 (Mamie Duncan and David Askler), 305-306 (Jane Lanier and Michael Ragan), 307-308 (Tina Bells and T. Michael Dalton), 309-310 (Nancy Ann Keller and Dennis Edenfeld), 311-312 (Lisa Guignard and Paul Charles), and 401 (Anita Morris). Includes fabric swatches.
- b. 10 f. 3 *Night of 100 Stars II & III, 1985 & 1990*
9 plates
Includes costume designs for Bea Arthur, Estelle Getty, Rue McClanahan, and Betty White, and for a "Sports Number", including costumes for John Van Biesbrouck, Riddick Bowe, Jackie Joyner-Kersey, Willie Gault, and Greg Louganis. Includes fabric swatches.
- b. 11 f. 1 *Parade of Stars at the Palace, 1983*
11 plates
Includes three unidentified costume designs, as well as designs for Dinah Shore, Debbie Reynolds as Eva Tanguay, Debbie Allen as Josephine Baker, Pam Dawber and Anne Reinking as the Dolly Sisters, Ann Jillian as Mae West, Linda Lavin, and "Irish Clog Dancers". Includes fabric swatches.
- b. 11 f. 2 *Placido Domingo Stepping Out with the Ladies, 1982*
9 plates
Includes costume designs numbered 101 (Juliet Prowse), 102-103

(Christine Colby and Michon Peacock), 104-105 (Karen Harvey and Gigi Hunter), 106-107 (Daryl Richardson and Carol Ann Basset), 108 (Stephanie Powers), 109 (Marilyn McCoo), 110 (Maureen McGovern), 111 (Patti LaBelle), and an unidentified design. Includes fabric swatches.

b. 11 f. 3

Placido Domingo Stepping Out with the Ladies, 1982

9 plates

Includes costume designs numbered 114-115 (Michon Peacock and Karen Harvey), 116-117 (Christine Colby and Carol Ann Basset), 118-119 (Gigi Hunter and Daryl Richardson), 120 (Maureen McGovern), 121 (Patti LaBelle), 122 (Marilyn McCoo), 123 (Juliet Prowse), 124 (Kathy Lee Johnson), and 125 (Leslie Vagans). Includes fabric swatches.

b. 12 f. 1

Placido Domingo Stepping Out with the Ladies, 1982

9 plates

Includes costume designs for Stephanie Powers, Susan Anton, Juliet Prowse, and Leslie Vagans, as well as designs numbered 126 (Michon Peacock), 127 (Christine Colby), 128 (Karen Harvey), 129 (Daryl Richardson), and 130 (Carol Ann Basset). Includes fabric swatches.

b. 12 f. 2

The Prince of Homberg, 1977

9 plates

Includes costume designs numbered 10A&B (Frank Langella-The Prince of Homberg), 10C (Frank Langella-The Prince of Homberg), 11A&B (Larry Swanson-Marshall Dorfling), 12 A&B (Roger Pekoven-Rottwitz), 13A&B (K.Lype O'Dell-The Elector), 14A&B (George Murfogen-Hohenzollern), 15A&B (Jon Peter Benson-Hennings), 16A&B (Frank Anderson-Revas), and 17A&B (William Moyers-Colonel Truches). Includes fabric swatches.

b. 12 f. 3

The Prince of Homberg, 1977

10 plates

Includes a costume design numbered 18 (for K. Lype O'Dell-The Elector), as well as unnumbered designs for The Elector's Wife, Marshall Dorfling, Count Hohenzoller, Princess Natalia (Randy Denson), and 2 unidentified. Includes fabric swatches.

Series II: Scenic Designs, 1935-1947

2 boxes

Alphabetical

This series contains Colt's earlier works. It includes scenic design

sketches and watercolors, as well as some photographs of the actual scenery. (Though there is no show that includes both a photograph and the design sketch.)

- b. 13 f. 1 *Androcles & the Lion*
1 plate
A design labeled "Androcles-The Jungle"
- b. 13 f. 2 *Bill of Divorcement*
1 plate
A design labeled "*Bill of Divorcement* -Theatre By the Sea, Matunuck, RI 1938"
- b. 13 f. 3 *Bright Rebel*
2 plates
Designs for Act I and Act II.
- b. 13 f. 4 *Music in My Heart, 1947*
8 plates
Includes an unidentified design, as well as designs labeled "Act I", "Act II-*Beauty and the Beast* Ballet", "Prologue-Exhibit C", "Act II-Hunting Lodge-Exhibit D", "Act II-Love Song-Exhibit E", and two unidentified designs.
- b. 13 f. 5 *Once is Enough*
1 plate
One design labeled "Lonsdale".
- b. 14 f. 1 *Quiver in My Liver*
1 plate
One design labeled "Green Mansions".
- b. 14 f. 2 *Skin of Our Teeth*
2 plates
Includes designs for Act I and Act II.
- b. 14 f. 3 *The Tall Kentuckian, 1953*
7 plates
Includes designs depicting an unidentified boat, three interiors, one exterior, a Lincoln campaign rally, and an interior.
- b. 14 f. 4 Unproduced ballet
1 plate
Includes one stage design.
- b. 14 f. 5 Various - Eltch's Garden Theatre,
9 photographs
Includes photographs of sets for "*The Traitor*", "*Twentieth*

Century", "*John Loves Mary*", "*Strange Bedfellows*", "*Clutterbuck*", "*The Winslow Boy*", "*The Heiress*", and "*Arms and the Man*".

b. 14 f. 6

The Wild Duck

2 plates

Includes designs for Act I and Act III.