



The New York Public Library  
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

**Rumi Missabu collection**

1952-2017

\*T-Mss 2015-021

Compiled by Lea Osborne, 2015.

## Summary

**Creator:** Missabu, Rumi

**Title:** Rumi Missabu collection

**Date:** 1952-2017

**Size:** 6.16 linear feet (13 boxes, 1 oversize folder, 2 tubes); 18.02 gigabytes (4381 computer files)

**Source:** Donated by Rumi Missabu (James Bartlett), 2015, 2016, and 2017.

**Revision History:** Additions processed by Heather Lember, 2016. Additions processed by Susan M. Kline, 2017.

**Abstract:** The Rumi Missabu collection (1952-2017) documents Missabu's artistic endeavors as one of the founding members of the San Francisco-based theatrical troupe known as The Cockettes. The collection consists of photographs of troupe members and friends; zines containing interviews with Missabu and other experimental artists; and flyers, programs, and posters advertising Cockette performances and events.

### Conditions Governing Access:

Electronic records are unavailable pending processing. Audio and visual materials are unavailable pending digitization. \*T-Cabinet items are available by appointment. Please email [theatre@nypl.org](mailto:theatre@nypl.org) for more information.

**Preferred citation:** Rumi Missabu collection, \*T-Mss 2015-021. Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

**Language of the Material:** English

**Processing note:** Compiled by Lea Osborne, 2015.

## Creator History

Rumi Missabu is a founding member of the San Francisco-based, glittery drag-spectacle known as The Cockettes. A prominent group within the experimental, psychedelic theater and arts scene, the Cockettes were known for pushing the boundaries of drag and sexuality and exploring gender fluidity from the 1960s on. One of their most well-known and often-revived productions is *Pearls over Shanghai*, a mock-operetta set in 1937 Shanghai in which issues of miscegenation and white slavery are explored. Film credits for Missabu include the documentaries *The Cockettes* and *Uncle Bob* and the short *The Glitter Emergency*. Throughout the 2000s, Missabu continued to collaborate with artists and musicians as well as be involved in revival shows of Cockette productions.

## Scope and Content Note

The Rumi Missabu collection contains primarily visual material, such as photographs, fliers, and programs stemming from performances with The Cockettes as well as Missabu's solo performances. These events are entrenched within the underground art scene in San Francisco from the 1960s until the 2000s. Missabu's colleagues and friends appear in original photographs that he collected, many of which indicate the photographer's name.

Cockette performances have been captured through audio recordings of soundtracks and video recordings of productions. Audio and visual materials are unavailable pending digitization.

There are also around thirty-five zines covering topics such as poetry and literature, photography, music, gay and lesbian life, and political action. Many of the zines include interviews with Missabu or advertise Cockette performances.

**Arrangement:** The collection is arranged alphabetically by name, title, or format.

## Key Terms

### Subjects

Counterculture -- California -- San Francisco  
Experimental Theater -- California -- San Francisco  
Female impersonators -- United States  
Theater -- California -- San Francisco -- History  
Transvestites -- California -- San Francisco

### Genre/Physical Characteristic

Experimental drama  
Experimental films  
Fanzines  
Filmed performances  
Photographs  
Picture postcards  
Posters  
Programs

### Geographic Names

San Francisco -- Social life and customs -- 20th century

### Names

Missabu, Rumi  
Cockettes (Theatrical troupe)

## Container List

- b. 11 f. 1 Allen, Brian circa 2010s  
Handmade birthday card for Rumi.  
Arnold, Steven
- b. 1 f. 1 1970s-1980s
- b. 7 f. 1 1992-2009
- b. 7 f. 2 Articles 1997-2009
- b. 11 f. 2 *The Bank of America of Louisiana by Jim Morrison* 1975, 2017  
Bowers, Bill
- b. 5 f. 1 2000s
- b. 7 f. 3-5 2005-2013
  - er. 1 Photographs 2005-2010  
(47 computer files 39 megabytes)
  - er. 2 Bowers & Phillips Clothes 2005  
(186 computer files 96 megabytes)
- b. 11 f. 3 Capone, Rene 2016  
Book containing images of paintings.
- b. 7 f. 6-7 Cards 2005-2009  
Chaignaud, Francois
- b. 7 f. 8 2009
- b. 1 f. 2 2009-2012  
The Cockettes
- b. 10 f. 1 1971
- b. 7 f. 9-10 2002-2016
- b. 11 f. 4 Accounting circa 1970s
  - er. 3 Contact Sheets 2015  
(64 computer files 6 megabytes)
- b. 11 f. 5 Paper Doll book 1971  
Photographs
  - er. 4 2001  
(25 computer files 12 megabytes)
  - er. 5 2002  
(95 computer files 158 megabytes)
  - er. 6 2004  
(30 computer files 46 megabytes)
  - er. 7 2007  
(11 computer files 13 megabytes)
  - er. 8 2009  
(453 computer files 359 megabytes)
  - er. 9 2012-2015  
(6 computer files 3 kilobytes)
  - er. 10 2015  
(68 computer files 2 megabytes)
- Costa, Vincent

- Costa, Vincent (cont.)
- b. 7 f. 11 2005-2010
  - b. 5 f. 2 2006-2014
- Croonquist, Robert
- b. 7 f. 12 2012
  - b. 11 f. 7 2014-2016  
Photographs.
- Dames at Sea*
- b. 7 f. 13 1969-1973
  - b. 1 f. 3 1973
- Elevator Girls in Bondage*
- b. 4 f. 1-2 1971, 2002
  - b. 7 f. 14 1989-2009
  - er. 11 Photographs  
(195 computer files 655 megabytes)
  - b. 11 f. 8 Fan Mail
  - b. 8 f. 1 Faulk, David and Johnstone, Michael 2003-2008  
Flyers
  - b. 4 f. 4 1960s-2003
  - b. 8 f. 2-3 1970-2011
  - b. 8 f. 4 *Gay Glo* 2002
  - b. 8 f. 5 Green, Aaron 1999-2000
  - b. 1 f. 5 Helms, Chet 2003-2005
- Hibiscus*
- b. 4 f. 3 1973, 1990s-2000
  - b. 8 f. 6 2000-2003
  - b. 1 f. 6 Jagodowski, John and Scott, David 2014
  - b. 8 f. 7 Jet AKA James Tresler 2001-2003
- Kohl, Tommy
- b. 8 f. 8 1998-2004
  - b. 1 f. 7 2002-2003
  - b. 1 f. 8 Lee, Bud 2001-2015  
Includes eulogies.
- Letters and Notes
- b. 8 f. 9 1972-2003
  - b. 1 f. 9 1999-2003
- Linkheart, Carl
- b. 1 f. 10 1990s-2000s
  - b. 10 f. 2 2000-2016
  - b. 4 f. 4 Fussy Lo Mein 2008
  - b. 11 f. 9 Lady Gaga 2008
  - b. 13 f. 1 *The Last Days of Pompei* 2016  
Photographs.

- er. 12 *Low Trash = High Art* 2002  
(123 computer files 206 megabytes)  
Machado, Agosto
- b. 8 f. 10 2012-2015
- b. 11 f. 10 2016-2017
- b. 11 f. 11 *Madame Gin Sling Tattoo Photographs* 2016  
Tattoo with Rumi's face.
- b. 1 f. 11 Malanga, Gerard 1970s, 1990s
- b. 11 f. 12 *Marat Sade Rehearsal Photographs* 2012
- er. 13 *The Market of Vain Desires* 2006-2015  
(14 computer files 553 megabytes)
- b. 11 f. 13 *Marta Minujin Performance Art* 1973-1974  
Photographs.
- b. 6 *Miniature Set*  
Located in the \*T-Cabinet. Available by appointment.
- b. 4 f. 5-6 *Miscellaneous* 1970s, 2000s  
Nicoletta, Dan
- b. 1 f. 12 1994-2010
- b. 2 f. 1 1994-2012
- b. 8 f. 11 2005-2008
- b. 11 f. 14 2017
- b. 11 f. 15 *Nightgowns Posters* 2015  
Starring Sasha Velour. Bushwick, Brooklyn.
- b. 2 f. 2 Oakes, Fletcher
- b. 12 f. 1 Oakes, Fletcher  
Photographs.
- b. 2 f. 3 Oppel, Robert 1970s-1980s, 2007  
Original Photographs
- b. 4 f. 7 1952-1973
- b. 8 f. 12-13 2001-2009
- b. 2 f. 4 Paltridge, Blair 1970s, 2000s  
*Pearls over Shanghai*
- b. 5 f. 3 2000s  
Photographs
- er. 14 2008  
(705 computer files 506 megabytes)
- er. 15 2009  
(113 computer files 1 megabyte)
- er. 16 2009-2010  
(961 computer files 3 megabytes)
- t. 2 *Performance Set List and Line Up*  
Handwritten on canvas.  
Photographs
- t. 2 2000s

Photographs (cont.)

- er. 17 2002  
(12 computer files 25 megabytes)
- er. 18 2005-2006  
(13 computer files 14 megabytes)
- er. 19 2009  
(452 computer files 30 megabytes)
- er. 20 2011  
(48 computer files 147 megabytes)
- er. 21 2012  
(154 computer files 509 megabytes)
- er. 22 2013  
(222 computer files 749 megabytes)
- er. 23 2014  
(136 computer files 468 megabytes)
- er. 24 2015  
(108 computer files 68 megabytes)
- 2015-2016
- b. 12 f. 2 Paris
- b. 12 f. 3 Miscellaneous
- b. 2 f. 5 Postcards 2002-2015
  - t. 2 Posters 2000s
    - o. 1 [1970s]
    - t. 1 1990s
- b. 5 f. 4 2000s  
2002-2017
- b. 10 f. 3 2013-2016
- Prints
  - b. 5 f. 5 2000s
  - b. 8 f. 14-16 2000-2015
  - b. 10 f. 4 2005
  - b. 2 f. 6 Proclamations 2006, 2010
- Programs
  - b. 2 f. 7-8 2002-2012
  - b. 8 f. 17-18 2001-2011
  - b. 9 f. 1-2 2009-2014
  - b. 12 f. 4 2014, 2016-2017
  - b. 12 f. 5 Ridiculous Theater Company Photographs
  - b. 3 f. 1 Roche, Chuck 2006
  - er. 25 *Ruminations* 2015  
(83 computer files 18 megabytes)
  - b. 12 f. 6 *Ruminations Film Stills* circa 2017
  - b. 3 f. 2 Samaha, Lucien
  - b. 12 f. 7 San Francisco Museum of Modern Art 2009

- b. 9 f. 3 Schum, Eric 2004
- b. 9 f. 4-5 Scripts 1987-2012  
Sylvester
- b. 3 f. 3 1970s-1980s
- b. 9 f. 6 1984-1994  
Thrillpeddlers
- er. 26 2014  
(60 computer files 14 megabytes)
- b. 12 f. 8 Autograph Book 2017
- b. 12 f. 9-10 *TranGERELLA* 2017
- b. 3 f. 4 Tricia's Wedding 1980s, 2000s
- b. 3 f. 5 Wise, David 1970s-2004  
*The Witches of Salem*  
2016  
Photographs.
- b. 12 f. 11 2016
- b. 3 f. 6-10 Zines
- b. 3 f. 6-10 1990s-2014
- b. 9 f. 7-10 2003-2015