



The New York Public Library
Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Guide to the

Rebecca Lepkoff photographs

1980-1999

*MGZEB 21-0005

Processed by Emily P. Dunne in 2021

Summary

Creator: Lepkoff, Rebecca

Title: Rebecca Lepkoff photographs

Date: 1980-1999

Size: 0.75 linear feet (3 boxes)

Source: Donated by Rebecca Lepkoff in 2012.

Abstract: Rebecca Lepkoff (1916-2014) was a photographer and dancer based in New York City and Vermont. This collection represents Lepkoff's later career work and contains documentation of dancers and choreographers in the 1980s through 1999. Lepkoff was particularly interested in progressive dance and photographed the Movement Research organization extensively.

Preferred citation: Rebecca Lepkoff photographs, *MGZEB 21-0005. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Processed by Emily P. Dunne in 2021

Creator History

Rebecca Lepkoff was a photographer and dancer born in the Lower East Side of New York City in 1916. In the 1930s, she joined the Experimental Dance Group, performed at museums and colleges, and, in 1937 she was offered a scholarship to the Humphrey-Weidman dance school. Continuing her momentum, she was hired as a dancer for the 1939 World's Fair, where she used her earnings to buy a camera. The camera and photography became her new passion, documenting the streets of the Lower East Side in the 1940s and 1950s.

Lepkoff joined the Photo League in 1947 with the shared ideology that photographers should "illuminate and record the communities in which they lived." In 1950, Lepkoff and her husband purchased a farmhouse in Vermont to spend their summers. During this time, Lepkoff documented the community in Pikes Falls, Vermont, including a utopian group called The Nearings. This work was unseen until a

publication and exhibition were organized by the Vermont Historical Society in 1993.

This collection highlights work from later in Lepkoff's career. Her photography turned to explore modern dance in the 1980s and 1990s, particularly the organization Movement Research. Movement Research offered performances, workshops, classes, discussions, and jams to dancers of all skills and ability status. The Mobility Junction Workshop, an annual workshop held as part of the Improv Festival of Movement Research, presented dancers with and without disabilities a venue to perform and collaborate. Lepkoff also continued to examine progressive communities in Vermont. She photographed dancers at The Putney School, a high school that offers intensive workshops for young artists during the summer. This work married her involvement in the experimental dance movement in the 1930s, progressive communities and her photography practice.

Her work was featured in several books, galleries, and museum exhibits, including *A History of Women Photographers* at the New York Public Library in 1996. In addition, Lepkoff's work is included in the National Museum of Art (Washington D.C.), the National Gallery of Canada, and the City of New York City and is represented by the Howard Greenberg Gallery in New York.

Lepkoff lived between New York City and Townshend, Vermont, where she died in 2014.

Scope and Content Note

The Lepkoff photographs date from 1980 to 1999. The collection is comprised of photographic materials related to dance workshops and performances in New York City and Vermont. This collection represents the late stages of Rebecca Lepkoff's photography practice. Notably, this work offers both an extension of her photography projects of the 1970s exploring the hippie culture in Vermont and reconnects with her early interest in experimental dance in the 1930s. In addition to straightforward photography, there are examples of Lepkoff's experimentation with collage, where she arranged 5x7 prints to create a larger montage of the dancers.

Lepkoff processed the negatives and prints at drug stores or commercial labs, therefore the photographs in the collection are glossy 5x7 prints. Some notes on printing qualities and contrast can be found.

The material related to Movement Research includes promotional flyers, notes, and correspondence.

Some prints are not related to dance and include documentation of Lepkoff's artwork in an exhibition at the New York Public Library in 1996 titled, *A History of Women Photographers*.

Lepkoff wrote letter to the editors of the dance publication *Contact Quarterly* in 1996 where she describes the consistency of critics and their initial reservations for pioneering dance to parallel the response to disabled dancers involved in the Movement Research group.

Key Terms

Subjects

Dance companies -- Photographs

Dancers with disabilities

Modern dance -- United States -- 20th century

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Negatives (photographs)

Photographs

Occupations

Photographers.

Names

Lepkoff, Rebecca

Movement Research, Inc.

Container List

Choreographers 1980-1995

- b. 1 f. 1 Nancy Topf 1980-1995
- b. 1 f. 2 Penelope Swope 1981
- b. 1 f. 3 Christine (Christy) Svane 1995
- b. 2 f. 3
- b. 3 f. 1

Workshops & Performances 1982-1999

- b. 1 f. 4 Vermont Movement Workshop 1982-1984
- b. 2 f. 2
- b. 1 f. 5 Steve Paxton Workshops 1990-1991
- b. 2 f. 3
- b. 3 f. 2
- b. 1 f. 6-7 *Movement Research: Mobility Junction Performances + DanceAbility*
- b. 2 f. 3 *Workshops* 1994-1997
- b. 3 f. 3 Contains a 1996 letter to the editors of *Contact Quarterly*.
- b. 1 f. 8 Simone Forti Workshop 1996
- b. 2 f. 3
- b. 3 f. 4
- b. 2 f. 1 *Lux-Flux* 1999
- b. 2 f. 3
- b. 3 f. 5