



The New York Public Library
Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Guide to the

Kaja Gam photographs

1972-1989

*MGZEB 22-0026

Processed by Em Longan in 2022.

Summary

Creator: Gam, Kaja

Title: Kaja Gam photographs

Date: 1972-1989

Size: 0.42 linear feet (1 box)

Source: Donated by Kaja Gam in 1994.

Abstract: Kaja Gam (born 1952) is a Danish-born performance artist, modern dancer, choreographer, and designer. She is the founder of the Awkward Dance Company, and co-founder of The School of Hard Knocks. The Kaja Gam photographs, dated 1972 to 1989, is made up almost exclusively of slides that document Awkward Dance Company rehearsals and performances, set and costume designs, and social events.

Preferred citation: Kaja Gam photographs, *MGZEB 22-0026. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Processed by Em Longan in 2022.

Related Materials:

The Kaja Gam Records, (S)*MGZMD 204, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Creator History

Kaja Gam was born in Denmark in 1952. She earned a Bachelor's degree in film from Copenhagen University before moving to New York City in 1980, where she received a Master's degree in choreography and experimental theater from New York University.

Soon after moving to New York, Gam formed Awkward Dance Company. As artistic director of Awkward, Gam created performance art pieces incorporating film, theater, dance, and sculptural environments. Gam's performances focused on interactions between light, color, and space, drawing inspiration from her filmmaking background. Her works include *Grand Central* (1987), *Joy of Cooking* (1985), and *Translocation 9:16* (1986). Awkward Dance members included Cathy Biro, Teresa Chin, Cyrus Khambatta, Adam Gale, Benoît Lachambre, Katie MacNichol, Laura Meshel, and Cora Sangree. Some former members, such as Khambatta and Lachambre, later went on to found their own dance companies in the early 1990s.

In 1982, Gam joined Nelson Zayas, Brian Moran, Gayle Tufts, Donald Fleming, and Yoshiko Chuma in founding the still-active postmodern dance company, The School of Hard Knocks. Gam was one of the original cast members in Chuma's *Five Car Pile-Up* (1983), and reprised her role in a 1988 performance.

Gam lives in New York City, where she has managed her interior design firm, Kaja Gam Design, since 1993.

Scope and Content Note

The Kaja Gam photographs, dating from 1972 to 1989, are arranged alphabetically by subject. A majority of the images are of Awkward Dance Company performances, set designs, costume designs, and social events. Also included are slides of Yoshiko Chuma's *Five Car Pile-Up*, a piece performed by The School of Hard Knocks with Gam in the ensemble cast. The collection is almost exclusively slides, but also includes prints of rehearsals and negatives from *Joy of Cooking*.

In addition to photographs of performances, the collection also holds images that were projected onto stage backdrops and sets during shows. Some projection slides are entirely hand-drawn, or are photographs that have been altered by scratching away at the image.

Key Terms

Subjects

Dance companies -- Photographs
Modern dance -- United States -- 20th century
Performance art
Women choreographers -- United States -- 20th century

Occupations

Dancers.

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Negatives (photographs)
Photographs
Slides (photographs)

Names

Chuma, Yoshiko
Gam, Kaja
Awkward Dance Company.

Container List

- b. 1 f. 1 Company Social Events 1988
- b. 1 f. 2 *Five Car Pile-Up* 1983
- b. 1 f. 3 *Grand Central* 1987
- b. 1 f. 4-5 *Joy of Cooking* 1985-1986
- b. 1 f. 6 *Rammer* 1985
- b. 1 f. 7 Rehearsals
- b. 1 f. 8 Riggings and Sets
- b. 1 f. 9-10 *Translocation 9:16* 1988-1989
- b. 1 f. 11 *Tres Milan* 1984
- b. 1 f. 12 Various Performance Projection Slides 1972-1978