



The New York Public Library
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

Grandassa Models collection

1963-1968

Sc MG 822

Summary

Creator: Grandassa Models (Firm)

Title: Grandassa Models collection

Date: 1963-1968

Size: 0.01 linear feet (1 folder)

Source: Gift from unknown donor.

Revision History: Finding aid updated by Lauren Stark.

Abstract: The Grandassa Models Collection consists of printed material regarding the formation of fashion shows that featured these models and included African dancers and theatrical performances. Included are flyers, brochures, and posters that promoted the fashion shows and also featured the AJSASS Repertory Theatre and the Dinizulu African Dance Company. In the collection are two booklets published by AJASS, the "Naturally '63 Portfolio" and "Color Us Cullud! The Official American Negro Leadership Coloring Book" (late 1963) by Cecil Elombe Brath, which was critical of most of the civil rights leaders at that time.

Preferred citation: [Item], Grandassa Models collection, Sc MG 822, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English

Creator History

The Grandassa Models were a group of African American female models whose Afrocentric fashion shows were instrumental in promoting the "Black Is Beautiful" slogan. The fashion shows were created and produced by the African Jazz-Art Society and Studios (AJASS), an organization founded in 1956 by a group of young artists, designers, and jazz lovers. These shows emphasized natural hairstyles, particularly the Afro, as well as Afrocentric clothing and jewelry, and were held in various cities in the United States until 1980 and during ten-year intervals from 1982. AJASS also produced jazz concerts coupled with art exhibitions and cultural presentations that incorporated African nationalist themes. The productions, which started in Harlem, are considered to be the beginning of the Black Arts Movement.

AJASS organizers, the writer and activist Elombe Brath, his brother Kwame Brathwaite, the photographer, and others produced the "Naturally '62" show with the Grandassa Models, subtitled "the original African coiffure and fashion extravaganza designed to restore our racial pride and standards".

Scope and Content Note

The Grandassa Models Collection consists of printed material regarding the formation of fashion shows that featured these models and included African dancers and theatrical performances. Included are flyers, brochures, and posters that promoted the fashion shows and also featured the AJSASS Repertory Theatre and the Dinizulu African Dance Company. In the collection are two booklets published by AJASS, the "Naturally '63 Portfolio" and "Color Us Cullud! The Official American Negro Leadership Coloring Book" (late 1963) by Cecil Elombe Brath, which was critical of most of the civil rights leaders at that time.

Key Terms

Subjects

Advertising -- Fashion
African American models
African Americans in the performing arts
Black arts movement
Black nationalism
Fashion drawing
Theatrical posters

Names

Brath, Elombe, 1936-2014
Brathwaite, Kwame, 1938-
African Jazz-Art Society and Studios
Grandassa Models (Firm)