



The New York Public Library
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

Reginald Gay collection of Taylor Mead and related materials

1941-1991 [bulk 1960-1990]

*T-Mss 2000-015

Compiled by Alison Dundy, Palmer School, Long Island University, 2013, 2012

Summary

Creator: Gay, Reginald

Title: Reginald Gay collection of Taylor Mead and related materials

Date: 1941-1991 [bulk 1960-1990]

Size: 1.78 linear feet (4 boxes, 1 oversized folder)

Source: Gift of Nathaniel Crossland, 2000.

Abstract: The Reginald Gay collection of Taylor Mead and related materials documents Mead's multi-faceted public persona as an iconic Beat generation performance artist, poet, and writer. The collection includes a rare, unabridged and unpublished copy of Mead's 1983 manuscript, *Diaries of a New York Youth*, as well as other writings and ephemera. The collection also includes related materials on two other individuals, filmmaker Ron Rice and Fluxus artist Ben Vautier.

Conditions Governing Use: The author/creator retains copyright of materials. For information on obtaining permission to publish, contact the Theatre Division at theatre@nypl.org.

Preferred citation: Reginald Gay collection of Taylor Mead and related materials, *T-Mss Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library.

Processing note: Compiled by Alison Dundy, Palmer School, Long Island University, 2013, 2012 Prior to processing, the collection consisted of a boxed manuscript of *Diaries of a New York Youth*, folders of press clippings, photographs, and miscellaneous materials. Existing folders and groupings have been retained. Materials not in folders have been grouped by document type.

Related Materials:

John Heys papers. Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender periodical collection. Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library (Boss 1-2 (New York: R. Gay, 1966-1967).)

Creator History

Taylor Mead (b. 1924) is a poet, performer, actor, and painter who became a forceful presence in the Beat movements, first in San Francisco and then New York. Mead's *Diaries of a New York Youth* (1983) represented and helped shape popular "counter culture." Only excerpts of this work have been published. A 1999 press release issued by the Gotham Book Mart & Gallery Inc. for an exhibit titled *The Anonymous Diary of a New York Youth Print Portfolio*, notes: "The 'Beat' period in Venice, California was the setting in which Taylor wrote these poems; a scant remainder of a larger body of work which was stolen during a reading some years ago. Taylor considers this an extremely important period in his writing."

Mead made his first film, *The Flower Thief* (1960), with San Francisco underground filmmaker Ron Rice. Mead went on to become an acclaimed actor in Andy Warhol films, including *Tarzan and Jane* (1963), *Lonesome Cowboys* (1969), and *Taylor Mead's Ass* (1964); the Jim Jarmusch film *Coffee and Cigarettes* (2003); and the William Kirkley documentary *Excavating Taylor Mead* (2005). Mead has been a frequent contributor to and subject of underground and mainstream publications on poetry, politics, and culture throughout his career. Mead continues to publish poetry and performs regularly at the Bowery Poetry Club in New York City.

Custodial History

Reginald Gay was the editor of *Boss*, a journal of writing and film culture published in five issues (1966-1979), which often featured Taylor Mead. Gay collected materials by and about Mead as well as works by Fluxus artist Ben Vautier. In 2000, Nathaniel Crossland donated the collection to The New York Public Library in memory of Reginald Gay.

Scope and Content Note

The Reginald Gay collection of Taylor Mead and related materials primarily consists of materials by or about Mead, although the collection also includes materials on two other individuals, Ron Rice and Ben Vautier. The collection is arranged in two main groupings: Taylor Mead materials and Other materials. The Taylor Mead materials document Mead's contributions to twentieth century American culture, particularly the Beat poetry scene and independent film movement, through published and unpublished writings and ephemera. The bulk of the collection consists of a carbon copy of Mead's unabridged, unpublished manuscript, *Diaries of a New York Youth*. Other writings in the collection include two notebooks, which reveal Mead's thoughts and development of themes later seen in his published writing; *Son of Andy Warhol* (1986); and a folder of miscellaneous writings (1941-1989), including a fairy tale Mead wrote and illustrated expressly for the collector, Reginald Gay.

Also a painter, exhibition catalogs document gallery shows of Mead's artwork from 1962 to 1984 as well as other exhibits that featured photographs of Mead or his writing. Ephemera in the collection provides an authentic look and feel for the Beat generation, including fliers for poetry readings and performances; interviews that document Mead's views on the Vietnam War, politics, sexuality, and culture; magazine articles about Mead and his contemporaries; photographs (including one of Mead with Alan Ginsberg); playbills; posters; and press clippings. Playbills for Mead's genre of experimental theater do not look like their mainstream Broadway counterparts, but convey the same essential content about staged theatrical works on card stock, single sheets of paper, and mimeographed, stapled programs. Press clippings include reviews of Mead's performances; some reviews from European performances are in Italian and German. One particularly notable review is an English translation of an article about Mead by the celebrated Italian novelist Alberto Moravia.

In Other materials, documents created by Ron Rice (1935-1964), a San Francisco filmmaker and collaborator of Mead, include an exchange of letters between Rice and Mead disputing the final edit of *The Flower Thief*. Additional materials by Rice mainly pertain to film production and Rice's applications for grants and funding. The collection also contains a subject file on Fluxus artist Ben Vautier (b. 1935).

Books, manuscripts, video, and sound recordings held throughout The New York Public Library can be found by conducting an author search and keyword search for "Mead, Taylor" in the catalog (www.nypl.org/catalog). Additional materials related to Ron Rice can be found in the Jerome Robbins Dance Division by conducting an author search for "Rice, Ron."

Arrangement: The collection is arranged in two groupings: Taylor Mead materials and Other materials. Materials are arranged alphabetically within each grouping.

Key Terms

Subjects

Beat generation
Beat generation -- Poetry
Experimental films -- United States

Occupations

Poets, American

Names

Mead, Taylor
Rice, Ron
Warhol, Andy, 1928-1987

Container List

Taylor Mead Materials

- b. 1 f. 1 Correspondence 1989-1991
- b. 1 f. 2 Exhibition Catalogs 1962-1990, undated
- b. 1 f. 3 Fliers 1963-1990, undated
- b. 1 f. 4 Interviews 1975-1979
- b. 1 f. 5-8 Magazines 1963-1982
- b. 2 f. 1 Notebooks 1962, undated
- b. 1 f. 9 Photographs 1965-1991, undated
 - o. 1 Photographs 1966 (Mounted on cardboard)
Photograph by Paul Hyman.
- b. 1 f. 10 Playbills 1965-1968, undated
- b. 2 f. 2 Posters 1971-1992, undated
- b. 2 f. 3 Press Clippings 1965-1986
- b. 2 f. 4 Press Releases 1977-1992, undated

Writings

- b. 2 f. 5-8 *Diaries of a New York Youth* 1983
Pages 1-800
- b. 3 f. 1-7 *Diaries of a New York Youth* 1983
Pages 801-2200
- b. 4 f. 1-3 *Diaries of a New York Youth* 1983
Pages 2201-2656
- b. 4 f. 4 *Son of Andy Warhol* 1986
- b. 4 f. 5 Miscellaneous circa 1941-1989, undated

Other Materials

- b. 4 f. 6 Rice, Ron 1960-1968, undated
- b. 4 f. 7 Vaultier, Ben 1960-1986, undated