# Guide to the Franne Lee Papers and Designs, 1969-1997

### \*T-Mss 1999-021

### **Billy Rose Theatre Division**

The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts New York, New York

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# **Descriptive Summary**

Title:	Franne Lee Papers and Designs
Collection ID:	*T-Mss 1999-021
Creator:	Lee, Franne
Extent:	15.5 linear feet; 31 boxes
Repository:	Billy Rose Theatre Division.
	The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

**Abstract:** Franne Lee (1941- ) is a costume and production designer for theater and film, as well as a producer and visual artist. This collection contains designs, correspondence, and other materials related her production designs from the 1970s to the mid-1990s. Also included are materials for original projects on which she collaborated.

### **Administrative Information**

#### Access

Collection is open to the public. Library policy on photocopying will apply. Advance notice may be required.

### **Publication Rights**

For permission to publish, contact the Curator, Billy Rose Theatre Division.

#### **Preferred Citation**

Franne Lee Papers and Designs, \*T-Mss 1999-021, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

### **Custodial History**

The Franne Lee Papers and Designs were donated to the Billy Rose Theatre Division in 1999 by Franne Lee.

### **Processing Information**

The collection was processed and cataloged in 2006.

# **Biographical Note**

Franne Lee was born Franne Newman in the Bronx, New York, on December 30, 1941. An early fascination with the arts would lead to a life-long career as a professional artist, one noted for her innate creativity and sense of irreverence. She has said, "When I was a little girl, I would go to my dad's workshop and pick up discarded stuff from the floor and tables ... I played with them, glued them together, painted them, and furnished my doll house. I was a junker from an early age." She studied art at the University of California, Berkeley, and spent a summer at City College New York, with the intention of becoming a painter. While studying for her M.F.A. in painting at the University of Wisconsin, Franne Lee was recruited to create sets for the theater department. She fell in love with the theater and switched to set and costume design. Franne Lee married Ralph Sandler, than an English professor at the University of Wisconsin, in 1961. A daughter, Stacy, was born in 1962, and a son, Geoffrey, was born in 1964. The marriage ended in 1967.

Franne Lee's professional career began in Philadelphia's Theatre of the Living Arts with productions of *Harry Noon and Night* (1969) and *A Line of Least Existence* (1970), during which she met Eugene Lee, the set designer, with whom she lived and worked for the next ten years. Together they designed the Manhattan Project's highly acclaimed production of *Alice in Wonderland* (1970), directed by Andre Gregory, for which they shared the 1971 Drama Desk Award for most promising new designer. Next followed a production at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, Edward Bond's *Saved* (1970). The Lees began dividing their time between New York and Rhode Island, where they worked with the Trinity Square Repertory Company. After a year in Iran and Paris working with Peter Brook and Jean Monod, the Lees returned to Rhode Island and Andre Gregory's Manhattan Project to design *Endgame* (1972). Next came *Dude* (1972) at the Broadway Theatre in New York. The Lees' son, William Tuttle Lee, was born in 1973.

It was the Lees' collaborations with director Harold Prince for *Candide* (1974) which brought them fame and acclaim, including Tony Awards for costume and set design. From 1974 through 1978, Franne Lee designed costumes for *Love for Love* and *Gabrielle* (1974), *The Skin of Our Teeth* (1975), *Ashmedai* (1976) at the New York City Opera (also with Harold Prince), and *Girl of the Golden West* at the Chicago Civic Opera (1978). During this time, the Lees ventured into television, as the original designers of *Saturday Night Live*, for which they worked from 1975 through 1980. Franne earned an Emmy for set and costume design, and is remembered for such iconic outfits as the Killer Bees and the Coneheads. In addition, the Lees enjoyed another successful collaboration with Harold Prince in his Broadway production of *Sweeney Todd* (1979).

The Lees divorced in 1980 but collaborated occasionally on projects such as the television film version of *Sweeney Todd*. Franne continued to work in theater and television, and branched into film. Productions from the 1980s to 1990s include *The Mooney Shapiro Songbook* (1981), Shel Silverstein's *Wild Life* (1983), three one-act plays by Elaine May, David Mamet, and Shel Silverstein (1983) for Chicago's Goodman Studio, *Streetheat* (1985), *The Paul Simon Special*, and Edith Wharton specials for PBS, and *Comedy Zone* (1988). Her film work includes John Sayles' *Baby It's You* (1982), Al Pacino's *The Local Stigmatic* (1992) and *Chinese Coffee* (1997), and *Sweet Nothing* (1993). Franne also designed several music videos, including the *Harlem Shuffle* (1986) with the Rolling Stones, and created the sets for Suzanne Vega's *Days of Open Hand Tour*. Franne moved from New York to Los Angeles in 1995, and became more involved in television, designing *Sherman Oakes* for Showtime and *Roseanne* for King World. In 1998 she moved to Nashville and began working on local music videos, commercials, and theater.

Franne Lee's design style reflects her fertile imagination, incorporating vintage items with odds and ends, resulting in highly detailed, sophisticated, witty pieces. She is currently a board member at Plowhaus, an artists' cooperative based in Nashville, Tennessee, where she

continues nurturing her love of art.

# **Scope and Content Note**

The collection contains correspondence, professional papers, and designs related to Franne Lee's work as an award-winning costume and production designer between 1969 and 1997. Production notes and other materials relating to projects on which Lee worked during this period make up about half of the collection, with the rest consisting of designs. The strengths of this collection are the complete costume bibles for Sweet Nothing (1993), the final colorized costume designs with swatches illustrating fabrics and textures for shows such as Candide (1974) and Eating Raoul (1992), large-scale costume plots and set designs, inspiration boards and elevations for various shows, and Lee's correspondence with long-time friends director Harold Prince and producer Bobby Geisler. Of special interest might be the extensive paperwork for Bowling for Horror, a proposed cable television series starring Brian Doyle-Murray, for which only the pilot episode was produced, and which provides insight into the many details involved in developing a show, of which costume design is one component. Also included are many initial pencil sketches, rough costume sketches, set renderings, clippings, programs, a sketchbook, a miniature model of a set, and an autographed vinyl album of Emo Philips' comedy show. This collection provides insights into Lee's working relationships, as well as her method of developing designs and her system of organizing material.

# **Organization**

The collection is organized into six series. They are: Series I: Correspondence, 1969- 1994 and undated Series II: Professional Work Files, ca. 1970-1995

Series II. Horessional Work Piles, ca. 1970-1995

Series III: Production Notes and Materials, 1969-1997 and undated

Series IV: Clippings, 1970-1992

Series V: Designs, 1970-1994 and undated

Series VI: Oversized Materials, 1969-1997 and undated

# **Series Descriptions**

### Series I: Correspondence, 1969-1994 and undated

2 boxes

Arrangement: Alphabetical.

This series contains letters, cards, notes and telegrams from friends and colleagues reflecting Franne Lee's active involvement in the theater world as an award-winning costume and production designer in New York, Rhode Island, Chicago and London. Included are personal notes from many of the people with whom Lee worked, such as David Lynch, Paul Newman, Amanda Plummer, Stephen Sondheim, and Diane Venora, congratulatory telegrams for various awards won, letters regarding participation in conferences on design, and invoices for union dues. Of particular note are the letters from director Harold Prince and producer Bobby Geisler, both long-time friends and colleagues of Lee's.

#### Series II: Professional Work Files, ca. 1970-1995

2 boxes

Arrangement: Alphabetical.

In this series are materials such as resumes, biographical sketches of varying lengths, magazine and newspaper articles about Franne and Eugene Lee, materials from conferences in which Lee participated, papers related to lawsuits, investments, and exhibits, photographs, and several project proposals, including two bound scripts sent to Lee by Bobby Geisler.

#### Series III: Production Notes and Materials, 1969-1997 and undated

12 boxes

Arrangement: Alphabetical by Project Title.

This series contains small-scale costume sketches, preliminary sketches for costumes and sets, clippings for costume inspirations, costume plots, scripts, memos, production notes, contracts, and some correspondence relating to many productions in which Franne Lee was involved. Of particular note are the costume bible for *Sweet Nothing*, materials documenting the development of an original cable television series, *Bowling for Horror* (only the pilot was produced), correspondence regarding *Saturday Night Live*, correspondence, sketches, and financial material on *Sweeney Todd*, and photographs of early designs from the Trinity Square Repertory Company.

#### Series IV: Clippings, 1970-1992

1 box

Arrangement: Alphabetical by Project Title.

In this series are newspaper and magazine clippings with reviews of productions on which Franne Lee worked, particularly those for which she received honorable mention, such as *Candide* (1974) and *Sweeney Todd* (1979), and an issue of *The Transylvanian*, the National Rocky Horror Fan Club publication.

## Series V: Designs, 1970-1994 and undated

13 boxes

Arrangement: Alphabetical by Project Title.

The series contains pencil sketches and painted designs for costumes, some with fabric swatches or notes attached, as well as elevations of set designs, large-scale costume plots, and inspiration boards Franne Lee produced for various film and television projects. Of particular interest are the items for *Alice in Wonderland* (1970), *Candide* (1974), *Eating Raoul* (1992), and *Sweeney Todd* (1979). Also of interest are the original designs for the Killer Bee outfit for *Saturday Night Live* (1976) worn by John Belushi.

### Series VI: Oversized Materials, 1969-1997 and undated

1 box

Arrangement: Alphabetical

In this series are mainly oversized clippings relating to various projects on which Franne Lee worked, such as *Love for Love* (1974) and *Sweeney Todd* (1979), as well as the logo design for *Bowling for Horror*, and a sketchbook.

### **Separated Material**

Emo Philips Live from the Hasty Pudding Theater, 1987 (Autographed record album)

Box/Folder	Description
E 4	Evhibite 1088
F. 4	Exhibits, 1988
F. 5	Financial, 1978-1995
F. 6	Legal, 1985-1989
F. 7	Photographs, ca 1974 and undated (Includes one photograph of Franne and Eugene Lee's son, Willie, b. 1974, as an infant.)
F. 8	Programs, 1986-1995 (Not productions on which Franne Lee worked.)
F. 9	Project proposals, 1983-1989 and undated
Box 4	
	Project proposals, ca. 1980 (Hardbound volume containing scripts for two films, <i>In the Boom Boom Room</i> and <i>Streamers</i> , with related materials, sent by Bobby Geisler.)
	eries III: Production Notes and Materials, 1969-1997 and undated
Box 5	
F. 1	Alice in Wonderland, 1970 (Director, Andre Gregory.)
F. 2	Anna, 1982-1993
F. 3	The Ann-Margret Show, 1992
F. 4	Ashmedai, 1976
F. 5	Baby It's You, 1982 (Director, John Sayles.)
F. 6	Barbeque Death Squad from Hell, 1986 and undated (Budget only.)
F. 7	Beauty and the Beast, 1987 and undated
F. 8	Betty's Cartoon Video, undated
F. 9	Blood Wedding, 1989-1992 and undated
F. 10	Bodo, 1983
F. 11	Body Shop, 1994
Box 6	D 1
	Bowling for Horror, 1986-1987 and undated (Pilot for an original cable television series
E 1	created by Franne Lee. ) Background materials
F. 1	Biographical materials
F. 2 F. 3	Casting materials
F. 4	Contact sheets
F. 5	Contracts
F. 6	Correspondence
F. 7	Designs
F. 8	Filming and editing notes
F. 9	Financial
F. 10	Location research
F. 11	Photographs
F. 12	Scripts
F. 13	General Notes
Box 7	
F. 1	Butterfly Entertainment Videos, 1989 and undated
F. 2	Camelot, 1992-1993
	Candide
F. 3	Assorted materials, 1974-1993 and undated
F. 4	Tony Award materials, 1974 (Certificate, envelope, letter, program and note from Harold Prince.)
F. 5	Chinese Coffee, 1997 (Director, Al Pacino.)
F. 6	Come Into My Parlor, 1988
F. 7	Comedy Zone, 1988
Box 8	
F. 1	Crazy Horse, 1982
F. 2	Days of Open Hand Tour, 1990 (Performer, Suzanne Vega.)
F. 3	Dead Ringer, 1981 (Performer, Meat Loaf.)

Box/Folder	Description
F. 4	The Dominatrix Video, 1984
F. 5	Dude, 1972 (Playbill only.)
F. 6	East Coast Arts Center, 1986 (Script by Shel Silverstein.)
F. 7	Eating Raoul, 1991-1992
F. 8	Emo Philips Live from the Hasty Pudding Theater, 1988 (includes set sketches.)
F. 9	Falsettoland, 1990-1992 (Alternate titles used: 1981 and Falsettos.)
Box 9	
F. 1	Funky Crazy Boogaloo Boy, 1995
F. 2	Girl of the Golden West, undated (Postcard of undated early production.)
F. 3	<i>Gryphon</i> , 1990
F. 4	Harlem Shuffle Video, 1986 (Performers, The Rolling Stones.)
F. 5	Him, 1994 (Copy of script by Christopher Walken.)
F. 6	Hole in the Wall Gang, 1994
F. 7	Hunchback of Notre Dame, 1993
F. 8	Industrial Symphony No. 1, 1989 (Director, David Lynch.)
F. 9	Jack the Ripper, 1986
Box 10	
F. 1	Jungle Jim, 1991-1994
F. 2	Kid Creole Video, 1990
F. 3	Laughing Matters, 1989
F. 4	The Life, 1990-1992
F. 5	The Little Rascals, 1987
F. 6	Live from Studio 8H: 100 Years of America's Popular Music, 1981
F. 7	The Local Stigmatic, 1985-1992 (Director, Al Pacino)
F. 8	Love for Love, 1974 (Ticket stubs and Playbill, with notes, only.)
F. 9	The Man Who Does Everything, 1987
F. 10	The Moony Shapiro Songbook, 1981
Box 11	
F. 1	Nickelodeon: Cartoon Lost and Found, 1989
F. 2	Operation Faust, 1987 (Also referred to as "The Nezansky Project"; script in English and Russian.)
F. 3	Radio City Music Hall, 1984
F. 4	Rock 'N' Roll: The First 5,000 Years, 1982
F. 5	St. John's Tape (HBO Spot), 1987-1988
	Saturday Night Live
F. 6	Correspondence, 1976-1982 (Letters regarding: Star Trek parody, from Gene Roddenberry,
	1978 Emmy nomination, syndication royalties; one fan letter.)
F. 7	General, 1975-1994 (Franne Lee 1975 contract with NBC, unsigned and incomplete; decorated script binder.)
F. 8	The Skin of Our Teeth, 1975 (Playbill only.)
F. 9	Slake's Limbo, undated (Partial contact sheet only.)
F. 10	Slippery People, 1985
F. 11	Start Where You Are #9, (Work agreement only.)
F. 12	Streetheat, 1984-1985
Box 12	
	Sweeney Todd
F. 1	Correspondence, 1979-1985
F. 2	Contracts, 1978-1989
F. 3	Designs and notes, 1978 and undated
F. 4	Financial, 1979-1983
F. 5	Playbills, 1979-1980
F. 6	Tony Award Materials, 1979
Box 13	

Box/Folder	<b>Description</b>
	Sweet Nothing, 1993
F. 1	Correspondence and notes on costume designs (From costume bible, alphabetical by
r. 1	character; cast list included.)
F. 2	Assorted materials (Contact sheets, scripts, notes, general materials.)
<b>Box 14</b>	
F. 1	The Ten Speed Project, 1987 (Idea for an original movie developed by Franne Lee, John Storyk, Chris Verges and Bruce Pross.)
F. 2	Trinity Square Repertory Company, 1969-1970 (Photograph of various unidentified productions, possibly including <i>Old Glory</i> , performed in Providence, Rhode Island; Director, Adrian Hall.)
F. 3	The Thin Red Line, 1989 (Hardbound screenplay by Terrence Malick from novel by James Jones.)
F. 4	Three One-Act Plays, 1983 (Plays by David Mamet, Elaine May and Shel Silverstein; produced at The Goodman Theatre of the Art Institute of Chicago.)
F. 5	Tim Newman Video for MTV, undated
F. 6	Twelve Dreams, 1986
<b>Box 15</b>	
	The White Hotel, undated
F. 1	Script with notes
F. 2	Notes and script with notes
F. 3	Wild Life, 1983 (Three short plays by Shel Silverstein.)
F. 4	The Winter's Tale, 1989 (Public Theater production; Director, James Lapine.)
F. 5	Woodstock: The Last 20 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Show, 1989 (Contact sheet only.)  General production materials (Notes on unidentified productions and general research materials.)
F. 6	Assorted materials, 1979 and undated (Sketches, fabric swatches, drawings, Eugene Lee's
	sketchbook, invoice in French, unidentified contact sheets, parts of scripts.)
<b>Box 16</b>	
F. 1	Interiors and exteriors, undated (Photographs of apartment interiors and building exteriors.)
F. 2	Photographs, 1982-1988 and undated
F. 3	Contracts for unidentified projects
Se	eries IV: Clippings, 1970-1992 and undated
Box 17	
F. 1	Alice in Wonderland, 1970
F. 2	Ashmedai, 1977
F. 3	Baby It's You, 1982
F. 4	Camelot, 1992
F. 5	Candide, 1973-1974
F. 6	Comedy Zone, 1984
F. 7	Days of Open Hand Tour, 1990
F. 8	Dude, 1972
F. 9	East Coast Arts Center, 1985
F. 10	Emo Philips Live from the Hasty Pudding Theater, 1988
F. 11	Girl of the Golden West, 1978
F. 12	Him, 1994-1995 (Letter from Dan dated January 7, 1995 attached.)
F. 13	Hunchback of Notre Dame, 1993
F. 14	Laughing Matters, 1989
F. 15	The Little Rascals, 1987
F. 16	Love for Love, 1974
F. 17	Rock 'N' Roll: The First 5,000 Years, 1982
F. 18	Saturday Night Live, 1976
F. 19	Streetheat, 1984
F. 20	Sweeney Todd, 1979-1989 (Various productions.)

Box/Folder	<b>Description</b>
F. 21	Three One-Act Plays, 1983
F. 22	The Winter's Tale, 1989
F. 23	General, 1977-1985 and undated (includes <i>Rocky Horror News Magazine</i> )
	eries V: Designs, 1970-1994 and undated
Box 18	
F. 1	Alice in Wonderland, 1970
F. 2-3	Another Christmas Carol, 1984
F. 4	Ashmedai, 1977
F. 5	Baby It's You, 1982
F. 6-7	Bodo, 1983
Box 19	
F. 1	Camelot, 1993
F. 2-3	Candide, 1974
F. 4-5	Comedy Zone, 1984
F. 6	Crazy Horse, undated (Signed Rosello)
F. 7-8 Roy 20	Dana Gould Show, 1991
Box 20	Dana Gould Show, 1991 (Model)
Box 21	Duna Goula Snow, 1991 (Model)
F. 1-5	Eating Raoul, 1992
Box 22	Luing Ruoui, 1992
F. 1	Fairy Godmother, 1985 (Signed Betsy)
F. 2	General Store, 1987 (HBO Proposal)
F. 3	Girl of The Golden West, 1977 (Alternate Title – La Fanciulla Del West)
F. 4	Him, 1994
<b>Box 23</b>	,
	Him, 1994 (Rolls)
<b>Box 24</b>	
F. 1	The Hunchback of Notre Dame, 1993
F. 2-3	Industrial Symphony No 1, 1989
F. 4	Jungle Jim, 1984
Box 25	
F. 1	Laughing Matters, 1989
F. 2-4	The Life, 1993
F. 5	The Little Prince, undated
F. 6	The Little Rascals, 1987
<b>Box 26</b>	The Macros Chanine Canaback 1001 (Della include META commercial classics)
Box 27	The Moony Shapiro Songbook, 1981 (Rolls, includes META commercial elevation.)
F. 1	The Moony Shapiro Songbook, 1981
F. 2	MTV Proposal, undated
F. 3	Naked Angels Co., (1995)
F. 4	N.Y. Pigeon Project, 1983
F. 5	Rock 'N' Roll: The First 5,000 Years, 1982
Box 28	1000 11 1000 110 1 000 000 1000 1000
	Rock 'N' Roll: The First 5,000 Years, 1982 (Rolls)
Box 29	
F. 1	Saturday Night Live, 1975 (includes Lorne Michaels photograph)
F. 2	Sodalicious, 1991
F. 3-4	Streetheat, 1985
F. 5-6	Suzanne Vega "Tour of Open Hand", 1990
F. 7-8	Sweeney Todd, 1979
Box 30	

# Franne Lee Papers and Designs

Box/Folder Description		
F. 1-4	Twelve Dreams, 1986	
F. 5-7	The Winter's Tale, 1989	
F. 8	Unidentified, 1986	
F. 9	Unidentified, undated	
Series VI: Oversized Materials, 1970-1987 and undated		
Box 31		
F. 1	Alice in Wonderland, 1970	
F. 2	Bowling for Horror, 1986-1987	
F. 3	Love for Love, 1974	
F. 4	Sweeney Todd, 1979 (Clippings.)	
F. 5	Sketchbook, undated	