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Verasphere Archive, 1995-2009GLC 59

Finding aid prepared by Nell Jehu and Tim Wilson
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2013

Title: Verasphere Archive,

Date (inclusive): 1995-2009

Collection Identifier: GLC 59

Creator: Faulk, David

Creator: Johnstone, Michael, 1955-

Physical Description: 2.0 boxes(1.0 cubic foot)

Contributing Institution: James C. Hormel Gay & Lesbian Center, San Francisco Public Library

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Abstract: The archive contains newspaper clippings, oral histories, videorecordings, and photographs that document the costumes, appearances, and photographs of Mrs. Vera, a drag persona, and her circle of friends.

Physical Location: The collection is stored onsite.

Language of Materials: Collection materials are in English, with one item in Polish.

Access

The collection is available for use during San Francisco History Center hours, with photographs available during Photo Desk hours.

Publication Rights

Copyright retained by Michael Johnstone and David Faulk. Work can be used and copied for educational or research purposes.

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Verasphere Archive (GLC 59), Gay and Lesbian Center, San Francisco Public Library.

Provenance

Donated by Michael Johnstone and David Faulk, December 12, 2008.

Biographical note

"Verasphere" collectively describes Mrs. Vera (David Faulk) and Mr. Tina (Michael Johnstone) and their community of friends. Faulk, a painter, created elaborate costumes, accessories and make-up to develop the persona of Mrs. Vera. The Mrs. Vera Daybook photograph series began in the early 1990s by documenting their appearances with friends at street fairs and clubs. Johnstone is the photographer of the series and notes that the colors in the photographs are un-retouched.

The Mrs. Vera work began as a more light-hearted documentation but with the losses due to AIDS, and the presence of HIV, it has become a vibrant response to the depradations of disease on both the physical and emotional landscapes. With Johnstone's diagnosis of bilateral cytomegalovirus, the work began to change taking on a more serious subtext.

David Faulk and Michael Johnstone are life partners.

Scope and Contents

The archive contains newspaper clippings, oral histories, videorecordings, and photographs that document the costumes, appearances, and photographs of Mrs. Vera, a drag persona, and her circle of friends. Mrs. Vera is the collaboration of gay artist and costume designer David Faulk and his partner photographer Michael Johnstone. The characters Mrs. Vera, Mr. Tina, and their friends are collectively known as the "Verasphere." The photographs of them in various settings is a response to the loss of artists to HIV/AIDS.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into four series: Series 1. Press and Publicity; Series 2. Subject Files; Series 3. Videorecordings; and, Series 4. Photographs.

Subjects and Indexing Terms

Faulk, David

Johnstone, Michael, 1955-

Art and photography.

Costume design--California--San Francisco.

Costume--California--San Francisco.

Drag queens--California--San Francisco.

Gay artists--California--San Francisco.

Photography, Artistic--Exhibitions.

Series 1 **Press and Publicity, 1996-2008**

Physical Description: 34.0 folders

Scope and Contents

Contains press coverage of Mrs. Vera and Mr. Tina, and of exhibitions of the work of Michael Johnstone and David Faulk. The articles by Heidi Thimann and Don Bapst discuss the inspiration behind Mrs. Vera and Johnstone and Faulk's collaboration.

Arrangement

Arranged in chronological order.

Box 1, Folder 1 ***Creampuff* magazine. Fetish timeline, September 16-29, [1996?]**

Box 1, Folder 2 ***San Francisco Bay Times*, July 24, 1997**

Box 1, Folder 3 ***San Francisco Metroplitan*, October 5, 1998**

Box 1, Folder 4 ***Pride Guide*, 2000**

Box 1, Folder 5 **[Polish Magazine] *Igetzer*, 2000**

General note

Four pages of color photos of Mrs. Vera. See Don Bapst article "Tranny Terror" for translation.

Box 1, Folder 6 ***Bay Area Reporter*. Listing and review of GLBT Historical Society show, December 13 and 20, 2001**

Box 1, Folder 7 ***San Francisco Bay Times*, December 27, 2001**

Box 1, Folder 8 ***Mardi Gras Guide* (Australia), 2002**

Box 1, Folder 9 ***Pride Guide*, 2002**

Box 1, Folder 10 ***San Francisco Chronicle*, July 1, 2002**

Box 1, Folder 11 ***The Advocate*, February 18, 2003**

Box 1, Folder 12 ***Pride Guide*, 2003**

Box 1, Folder 13 ***Folsom Street Fair Guide*, 2003**

Box 1, Folder 14 ***FG. Mardi Gras Guide* (Sydney, Australia), 2005**

Box 1, Folder 15 ***Bay Area Reporter*. Easter, photo of Mrs. Vera misidentified as Sister Roma, March 31, 2005**

Box 1, Folder 16 ***San Francisco Bay Times*. Visual Aid Sweet 16 press and review, June 16 and 30, 2005**

Box 1, Folder 17 **QAR [www.queer-arts.com]. "Seeing Mrs. Vera: The Collaborative Work of Michael Johnstone and David Faulk" by Heidi Thimann, 2005**

Box 1, Folder 18 **QAR [www.queer-arts.com]. "This Mortal Makeup: Images from *Mrs. Vera's Daybook* by Michael Johnstone" by Don Bapst, 2005**

Box 1, Folder 19 ***Pride Guide*, 2005**

Box 1, Folder 20 ***Bay Area Reporter*, November 10, 2005**

Box 1, Folder 21 ***San Francisco Bay Times*, December 1, 2005**

Box 1, Folder 22 ***San Francisco Chronicle*, June 11, 2006**

Box 1, Folder 23 ***Bay Area Reporter*, June 29, 2006**

Box 1, Folder 24 ***Pride Guide*, 2006**

Box 1, Folder 25 ***San Francisco Bay Times*. Visual Aid / Bjorn fundraiser, August 3, 2006**

Box 1, Folder 26 ***San Francisco Bay Times*. Photo and quote--Dore Alley Fair, August 3, 2006**

Box 1, Folder 27 ***San Francisco Chronicle*. DeYoung Museum, September 16, 2007**

Box 1, Folder 28 ***Bay Area Reporter*. "Remember Jerome" review, October 11, 2007**

Box 1, Folder 29 ***Pride Guide*, 2008**

Box 1, Folder 30 ***San Francisco Examiner*. Photo from Cafe Weimar at SFMOMA, February 19, 2008**

Box 1, Folder 31 ***San Francisco Bay Times*, "Magnet Presents Michael Johnstone's 12 Snapshots of Mrs. Vera" by Sister Dana Van Iquity / Dennis McMillan, April 10, 2008**

Box 1, Folder 32 ***San Francisco Examiner*. Pride photo of Michael and David, June 30, 2008**

Box 1, Folder 33 ***San Francisco Weekly*, "Mrs. Vera--The Cindy Sherman of Drag" by Traci Vogel, September 9, 2008**

Box 1, Folder 34 ***SF Weekly*, September 10, 2008**

Series 2 **Subject Files, 1999-2009**

Physical Description: 7.0 folders

Scope and Contents

The series contains the transcripts of oral history interviews of Faulk and Johnstone conducted by Nell Jehu at Faulk's home, San Francisco, California. It also includes the book *Mrs. Vera's Daybook* with color photos, and invitations for exhibitions of Faulk's and Johnstone's work. David Duckworth's paper analyzes the Mrs. Vera Daybook series. "Vera" is an original silk screen sticker by artist Jim Winters.

Arrangement

Arranged alphabetically by title.

Box 1, Folder 35 **Duckworth, David P. "Redemption and Regeneration: Michael Johnstone, David Faulk and the Making of Verasphere" talk delivered at the California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco, California, September 12, 2008**

Box 1, Folder 36 **Invitations for exhibitions, 2003-2008, undated**

Box 1, Folder 37 **Invitations to shows of David Faulk's paintings, 2000-2006**

Box 1, Folder 38 ***Mrs. Vera's Daybook* [book]. Photographs by Michael Johnstone. Signed by Johnstone and David Faulk. #5 of 30, 2007**

Oral history transcripts

Related materials

Researchers are encouraged to see also Box 1 / Folder 44. Oral history DVD recordings.

Box 1, Folder 39 **Faulk, David, January 8, 2009**

Box 1, Folder 40 **Johnstone, Michael, January 8, 2009**

Box 1, Folder 41 **Winters, Jim. "Vera" [silkscreen sticker], 1999**

Series 3 **Videorecordings, 1997-2009**

Physical Description: 3.0 folders(6 discs)

Scope and Contents

Contains documentary footage of Mrs. Vera, Mr. Tina and friends at street fairs and other events in San Francisco. Some footage shows studio and storage spaces and artwork by Faulk and Johnstone. The videographer provides a running commentary. Nell Jehu's oral histories of Johnstone and Faulk provide insight into their work and the evolution of Mrs. Vera and the Verasphere.

Arrangement

Arranged in alphabetical order by title.

Box 1, Folder 42 ***Fabulous* [short documentary on Mrs. Vera's environment and beauty regimen] by Emma King, 1997**

Physical Description: 1 DVD

Box 1, Folder 43 **Love Parade, Folsom Fair, "Remember Jerome" exhibition and event, Sugar Valley [Castro Street Fair], 2007**

Physical Description: 3 DVDs

General note

Documentary chronicles appearances by Mr. Tina and Mrs. Vera at the Folsom Street Fair, Castro Street Fair and Love Parade. Disc 2 contains footage of the Bucheon Gallery exhibition "Remember Jerome--A Large Group Show of Friends and Artists Who Miss Jerome Caja" for Jerome Caja, held October 6, 2007. Johnstone and Faulk both had pieces in the show.

Box 1, Folder 44 **Oral history of Michael Johnstone and of David Faulk, done by Nell Jehu, January 8, 2009**

Physical Description: 2 DVDs

Related materials

Researchers are encouraged to see also Box 1 / Folders 39-40. Oral history transcripts.

Series 4 **Photographs, 1995-2008**

Physical Description: 1.0 box(3 albums)

Access

The photographs are available during Photo Desk hours.

Scope and Contents

The series contains photograph albums of Michael Johnstone, David Faulk and friends (a.k.a. Verasphere) at San Francisco events. It also includes photographs of the costumes and accessories made by David Faulk, and worn by Mrs. Vera.

Arrangement

Faulk and Johnstone arranged the photographs into three albums according to subject. Albums are arranged alphabetically by title.

Box 2, Volume 1 **Mrs. Vera's Daybook series. Selection of 40 colorprints, 1995-2008**

General note

Prints range in size from 8x10-inches to 8x12 inches. Portfolio contains itemized title list, and resumes for Michael Johnstone and David Faulk.

Box 2, Volume 2 **Photograph album of Michael Johnstone, David Faulk and friends (a.k.a. Verasphere) at San Francisco events, 1996-2007**

General note

Photos taken by friend and neighbor Jon Harris. 4x6-inch photographs in roughly chronological order. Itemized list of photographs with event and date. Events include: Open Studios, Halloween, City Hall exhibition, Mrs. Vera's birthday parties, Folsom Fairs, Gay Prides, dinner with Cockettes in 2001, Mrs. Vera's Daybook exhibition, Remember Jerome exhibition, and Glamarama.

Box 2, Volume 3 **Photograph album of the costumes and accessories made by David Faulk, and worn by Mrs. Vera, 1996-2008**

General note

54 4x6-inch color photographs. Each piece is identified with the date of creation, the components and media used, and the place(s) or event(s) where it was worn. Includes a few photographs of Faulk, and of Mrs. Vera and Mr. Tina.