

Yale University Library
Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library

Guide to the Ruth Ford Papers

YCAL MSS 847



by Beinecke Staff and Nora Soto

March 2014. Revised: October 2023

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
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CALL NUMBER: YCAL MSS 847

CREATOR: Ford, Ruth, 1911-2009

TITLE: Ruth Ford papers

DATES: 1935-1999

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 6.6 linear feet (10 boxes) + 1 broadside

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The collection consists of Ruth Ford's correspondence with and topical and production files relating to plays of Edward Albee, Kenward Elmslie, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, James Purdy, Tennessee Williams, and others. Also included are scripts of works submitted to her for her review and/or plays and screenplays in which she acted including plays by Mart Crowley, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, and Tennessee Williams; stage and film production stills and candid and portrait photographs; and printed invitations to parties, openings, and other events at New York City nightclubs. The collection also contains correspondence with Isak Dinesen, George Platt Lynes, Rex Reed, Carl Van Vechten, and Ford's brother Charles Henri Ford.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.fordr>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.fordr>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to beinecke.images@yale.edu.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Acquired by purchase from various sources on multiple funds, 2010-2018. For more information consult the appropriate curator.

Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research.

Processing Information

Collections are processed to a variety of levels, depending on the work necessary to make them usable, their perceived research value, the availability of staff, competing priorities, and whether or not further accruals are expected. The library attempts to provide a basic level of preservation and access for all collections, and does more extensive processing of higher priority collections as time and resources permit.

The collection received preliminary processing at the time of acquisition. Further rehousing and description were carried out in 2014.

The collection is comprised of material formerly classed as Uncat MSS 1231, Uncat MSS 1232, Uncat MSS 1233, Uncat MSS 1239, Uncat ZA File 721, Uncat ZA File 722, Uncat MSS 1248, Uncat MSS 1249, Uncat MSS 1257, Uncat MSS 1259, Uncat MSS 1261, Uncat MSS 1285.

Information included in the Description of Papers note and Collection Contents section is drawn from information supplied with the collection and from an initial survey of the contents. Folder titles appearing in the contents list below are often based on those provided by the creator or previous custodian. Titles have not been verified against the contents of the folders in all cases. Otherwise, folder titles are supplied by staff during basic processing.

This finding aid may be updated periodically to account for new acquisitions to the collection and/or revisions in arrangement and description.

Ruth Ford (1911-2009)

Ruth Ford was born in Brookhaven, Mississippi in 1911. In the 1930s, after graduating from the University of Mississippi with bachelor's and master's degrees, she moved to New York City where she was introduced to writers, musicians, and other artists by her brother Charles Henri Ford, himself a poet and artist living in New York. Ruth Ford was photographed by Carl Van Vechten, Man Ray, and Cecil Beaton, and as a fashion model she appeared in magazines including *Harper's Bazaar*, *Mademoiselle*, and *Vogue*. She had a successful acting career, performing in stage productions including *The Shoemaker's Holiday* (1938), *No Exit* (1946), *Requiem for a Nun* (1959), and *Harold and Maude* (1980). As a film actress, she had roles in over two dozen films, including *Secrets of the Lone Wolf* (1941) and *The Keys of the Kingdom* (1944). On television she appeared in several productions of *The United States Steel Hour* (1954-1961) as well as numerous other series and made-for-television movies. She was well known for the modern-day salons that she held in her apartment in the Dakota apartment building where her guests included Truman Capote, Tennessee Williams, William Faulkner, Stephen Sondheim, Edward Albee, and many others. Her first marriage to Peter van Eyck ended in divorce. She married the actor Zachary Scott in 1952, and they were the parents of one daughter, Shelly Scott. Ruth Ford died in New York City in 2009.

Scope and Contents

The collection consists of Ruth Ford's correspondence with and topical and production files relating to plays of Edward Albee, Kenward Elmslie, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, James Purdy, Tennessee Williams, and others. Also included are scripts of works submitted to her for her review and/or plays and screenplays in which she acted including plays by Mart Crowley, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, and Tennessee Williams; stage and film production stills and candid and portrait photographs; and printed invitations to parties, openings, and other events at New York City nightclubs. The collection also contains correspondence with Isak Dinesen, George Platt Lynes, Rex Reed, Carl Van Vechten, and Ford's brother Charles Henri Ford.

Arrangement

Organized into seven series: I. Correspondence, production, and topical files. II. Photographs. III. Posters. IV. May 2017 acquisition. V. September 2017 acquisition. VI. June 2018 acquisition. VII. December 2018 acquisition.

Collection Contents

Correspondence, production, and topical files, 1940–1989

	Albee, Edward	
b.1	Correspondence <i>2 Folders</i>	1962-1988
b.1	Clippings	1991, undated
	Bowles, Paul	
b.1	Adaptation of Sartre's <i>No Exit</i> ; script, annotated; with program and clipping	1950, undated
	Crowley, Mart	
b.1	Correspondence and clippings <i>9 Folders</i>	1969-1989, undated
b.1	"A Breeze from the Gulf" script	[circa 1973]
	Curtis, Jackie	
b.1	Correspondence and printed ephemera	1969-1984
	Didion, Joan	
b.1	Notes, production programs, clippings and printed ephemera regarding <i>Play It As It Lays</i> by Joan Didion and John Gregory Dunne	1972
b.1	"Play It As It Lays" filmscript	1971 November 24
	Elmslie, Kenward	
b.1	Correspondence, clippings, and printed ephemera <i>2 Folders</i>	circa 1971-1979
b.1	Postcards	circa 1969-1980
	Plays	
	"The Grass Harp: A Musical Play," book and lyrics by Elmslie Kenward, music by Claibe Richardson, based on the novel by Truman Capote, scripts	
b.1	Scripts <i>3 Folders</i>	[1971?]
b.1	Production programs, heralds, and other ephemera	1971-1977
b.1	Clippings	1971-1972
b.1	"Songs from the Grass Harp," television adaptation, script	1977
	Ferlinghetti, Lawrence	
b.2	Correspondence with Ruth Ford	1962

Ferlinghetti, Lawrence (continued)

b. 2	Correspondence between Ruth Ford and James Laughlin and others regarding Ferlinghetti; with manuscript and typed notes by Ford <i>2 Folders</i>	1962-1964
Scripts		
b. 2	"The Alligation"	1962
b. 2	"Light Bulbs" (four copies)	undated
b. 2	"The Soldiers of No Country"	1962
b. 2	"Three Thousand Red Ants" (four copies)	1962
b. 2	James, Edward Frank Willis, handmade Valentine	undated
b. 2	Jones, Leroi [Amiri Baraka], "The Slave" script	undated
Purdy, James		
b. 2	Correspondence, clippings and printed ephemera <i>2 Folders</i>	1961-1989
Scripts		
b. 2	"Band Music"	1984
b. 2	"Bright Summer Stars"	[1986?]
b. 2	"Children Is All"	1961
b. 2	"Malcolm"; with notes and printed ephemera	1961
b. 2	"Souvenirs"	1984
Walcott, Derek		
"The Charlatan"		
b. 2	Correspondence, contract, clippings and printed ephemera	1874
b. 2	Script (three versions) <i>3 Folders</i>	1974, undated
Williams, Tennessee		
b. 2	Correspondence with Ruth Ford	1945-1975
b. 2	Ruth Ford correspondence regarding Tennessee Williams	1974-1985
b. 2	"Memoirs," typescript with annotations of various numbered pages	undated
Plays		
b. 2	"Creve Coeur" script (two versions) <i>2 Folders</i>	1977-1978
"The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore"		

Williams, Tennessee > Plays > "The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore" (continued)

b. 2	Contract, correspondence, production program, and other material	1963-1971
b. 2	Script	1963
<i>"A Streetcar Named Desire"</i>		
b. 2	Contracts, telegrams, production programs and other printed ephemera	1848-1949, undated
b. 2	Script	1947 December 3
<i>Suddenly Last Summer</i>		
b. 3	Play published by New Directions, New York	1958
b. 3	Script for reading at tribute to Williams, with event flyer	1984
b. 3	"Which Sea-Gull at What Corner?" typescripts, corrected, and published article in issue of <i>Esquire</i> magazine <i>3 Folders</i>	1972
b. 3	Production programs, clippings, and other printed material about Tennessee Williams	
	Invitations Includes printed cards, flyers, posters for parties, openings, and other events at nightclubs mainly in New York City. Arranged by name of venue.	1979-1990
b. 3	Area	
b. 3	Cat Club	
b. 3	Danceteria	
b. 3	Limelight	
b. 3	Mars	
b. 3	Max's Kansas City	
b. 3	New York, New York	
b. 3	Nirvana	
b. 3	Palladium <i>2 Folders</i>	
b. 3	Private Eyes	
b. 3	Quick	
b. 3	Red Parrot	
b. 3	Red Zone	

Invitations (continued)

b.3	Ritz
b.3	Roxy
b.3	The Saint
b.3	Studio 54
b.3	Tunnel
b.3	Underground
b.3	Visage
b.3	Xenon
b.3	Miscellaneous

Photographs

b. 4	Portrait photographs <i>4 Folders</i> Also stored in: Oversize Box 7	1941-1978
b. 4	"Hollywood Portraits" <i>2 Folders</i>	1941-1945
b. 4	"[Photographs of Ford wearing] Hollywood clothes I designed for myself and more" Also stored in: Oversize Box 7	circa 1940
b. 4	Ford with Dotson Rader	undated
b. 4	Miscellaneous photographs of Ford	1973, undated
b. 4	Candid photographs of Ford and friends	circa 1941-1973
Film stills		
b. 4	<i>Act One</i> (1963); <i>Born for Trouble [Murder in the Big House]</i> (1942); <i>Dragonwyck</i> (1946)	1942-1963
b. 4	<i>The Keys of the Kingdom</i>	1944
b. 4	<i>Play It As It Lays</i>	1972
b. 4	<i>Roaring Frontiers</i>	1941
b. 4	<i>Secrets of the Lone Wolf</i>	1941
b. 4	<i>Wilson</i>	1944
Stage production photographs		
b. 5	<i>American Dream</i>	1962
b. 5	<i>The Aspern Papers</i>	1978
b. 5	<i>The Charlatan</i>	1974
b. 5	<i>The Children of Darkness</i>	[1950?]
b. 5	<i>Clutterbuck</i>	1949
b. 5	<i>The Grass Harp</i>	1971
b. 5	<i>Hunger and Thirst</i>	1969
b. 5	<i>Lovey</i>	1965
b. 5	<i>Requiem for a Nun</i>	1959

Posters

	Poster for poetry event in Vermont featuring Ruth Ford Stored in: Oversize box 7	undated
b. 6 (Broadside)	Window card for <i>A Breeze from the Gulf</i>	1973

Oversize

b. 7 (Oversize) Portrait photographs

b. 7 (Oversize) "[Photographs of Ford wearing] Hollywood clothes I designed for myself and more"

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

Actresses -- United States
Models (Persons) -- United States
Motion picture actors and actresses -- United States
Motion pictures -- Production and direction -- United States
Television actors and actresses -- United States
Television -- Production and direction -- United States

Genres / Formats

Photographs -- United States -- 20th Century
Scripts (documents) -- United States -- 20th Century

Occupations

Actresses -- United States -- 20th Century
Models (Persons) -- United States -- 20th Century

Names

Albee, Edward, 1928-2016
Crowley, Mart, 1935-2020
Dinesen, Isak, 1885-1962
Elmslie, Kenward, 1929-
Ferlinghetti, Lawrence, 1919-
Ford, Charles Henri, 1908-2002
Ford, Ruth, 1911-2009
Lynes, George Platt, 1907-1955
Purdy, James, 1914-2009
Reed, Rex
Van Vechten, Carl, 1880-1964
Williams, Tennessee, 1911-1983