Finding aid to the Arch Brown collection Coll2012-146

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Abstract: The collection consists of flyers, press materials, playbills, advertisements, reviews, and occasional administrative records for Arch Brown’s films and plays, 1973-2007. Arch Brown has published and/or produced award-winning plays and film, written theater criticism and essays on media and the arts, and is a founder of the Arch and Bruce Brown Foundation and of G-MAN, the Gay Men’s Arts Network.

Scope and Contents
The collection consists of flyers, press materials, playbills, advertisements, and reviews of Arch Brown films and plays, 1973-2007. The collection includes biographical information, materials regarding the Arch and Bruce Brown Foundation awards for gay-positive art projects, Thorny Theater information, a signed contract for the play News Boy, and an unidentified publicity photograph.

Access
The collection is open to researchers. There are no access restrictions.

Biography
Born and raised in Chicago, Arch Brown attended Northwestern University where he studied under the legendary Alvina Krause and was graduated with a B.S. in Theatre and Television. Almost immediately after graduation, he was invited to move to New York City to join the staff of The Circle in the Square Theatre where he became the Design and Technical Assistant on Children of Darkness, The Quare Fellow and Our Town. During his early years in New York he also designed several musical revues at The Duplex, The Showplace and Upstairs at the Downstairs. He has also worked as a steel warehouse foreman, an insurance adjuster and a model. In retailing he was a display director, a fashion coordinator and a merchandise manager. He was the designer for the D’Arni-Gould Sportswear line. With his life-partner, Bruce Allen Brown, he was a real estate investor in New York City and owner/manager of Sea Park St. Croix, a hotel in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Arch Brown’s still photographs and collages have appeared in Mandate, Honcho, The Village Voice, Michael’s Thing and The Union Seminary Quarterly Review and at The Underground Gallery. His essays and reviews have appeared in The Advocate, The Villager, Manhattan G.A.Z.E. and he had a regular column on “Television and Society” in the New York Native.

He was the founder of G-MAN, The Gay Men’s Arts Network and, in memory of Bruce Brown who died in 1993 of a brain hemorrhage, he sponsors The Arch and Bruce Brown Foundation which gives grants to gay-positive arts projects based on history. Arch Brown’s double biography of his life with Bruce was recently published in Longtime Companions by Haworth Press.

Brown first came to broad public attention through his films. During gay liberation’s closet-busting first decade, Brown’s homoerotic films (including Four Letters, Pier Groups, The Super, Trips, Harley’s Angels, Longjohns, The Tool Man, After the Fall, The Leather Bond, Dynamite!, All Tied Up, Rough Idea, and Woodshole) achieved an international following and superb reviews. “Over the years, a lesser man could have easily become a disillusioned hack; Arch Brown became a master craftsman.”

“Musclebound is the most spirited, most perceptive, wisest, wittiest, funniest, fastest and cockiest package of male erotica ever. The bath house episode is a masterpiece in skillfully welding the lustful and the comic, building to a climax worthy of the Marx Brothers.” His film The Night Before “A brilliant and intelligent, beautifully crafted Fellini-esque tour de force” was on Variety’s 50 top-grossing films in the nation for 5 weeks. What A Time It Was “…is disarmingly simple and sometimes inspired: The traditional institutions, like Hunter College and the A&P, that keep appearing in the film may be viewed as a metaphor that sees male sex as part of the traditions of American life. Subversion from within, one might imagine.” Brown’s film Tuesday was the only gay film included by the First New York Erotic Film Festival in it’s nation-wide release of winning films. When the distributors were charged with ‘promoting obscenity’, Norman Mailer said, “The film’s socially redeeming value is that it is enchanting.” His film Sunday won first prize in the Park Miller Eros Competition.
Brown also has directed several documentary films on art and culture including a series on English as a Second Language for New York University.

In 1979, at the suggestion of a friend who recognized the wit in his films, Brown turned to playwriting. His first play, News Boy, was produced later that year by The GLINES, went on to a full Off-Broadway mounting at the Player's Theatre and had nine productions across the country over the next 15 years.

Brown’s play, FREEZE! won the 1998 Eric Bentley Playwriting Prize and has already had three full productions. Other published and/or produced plays include; Two Married Men, Samson, Sex Symbols, Brut Farce, Seeing Red, Breakfast with Ferkin and Frank, Doubletalk and Ships That Piss in the Night.

Arch Brown is a voting member of The Dramatists Guild.


Acquisition Information
Date of acquisition unknown.

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