Finding Aid to the Western Photography Guild Physique Photographs Coll2014.124

Michael C. Oliveira
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**Language of Material:** English

**Contributing Institution:** ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, USC Libraries, University of Southern California

**Title:** Western Photography Guild Physique photographs

**creator:** Whitman, Don

**creator:** Western Photography Guild

**Identifier/Call Number:** Coll2014.124

**Physical Description:** 0.8 Linear Feet3 binder boxes, 718 photographic prints

**Date (inclusive):** circa 1950-1980s

**Abstract:** Physique photographic prints produced by Don Whitman and sold through his company the Western Photography Guild (WPG). WPG sold photosets through the mail and his first advertisement appeared in *Strength and Health* magazine in 1947.

**Administrative History**

Western Photography Guild was a Denver, Colorado based male physique studio operated by photographer Don Whitman. Prior to serving in World War II, Whitman was a tax accountant and an amateur photographer. During World War II, he served in the Navy, where he met an experienced physique model. The physique model explained the ins-and-outs of the business to Whitman, who decided to capitalize on the business after World War II ended.

Whitman partnered with his brother-in-law, who worked for the photographic reproduction department of the Colorado State Highway Department. They advertised for muscular models in the local paper and received a surprisingly large response. Later in April 1947, they placed the first advertisement for Western Photography Guild in *Strength and Health* magazine.

Whitman's photography was notable for its use of Colorado's mountain landscape as a backdrop, feeding into the mythos of rugged, western masculinity. In addition to photographing his models, Whitman founded the Mr. Colorado bodybuilding contest and served as its director from 1950 to 1972. WPG did not sell full frontal nudes of their models. In 1967, following the favorable Supreme Court ruling on nudity, WPG began selling its "naturale" series of photographs, featuring current and past models in the nude. Whitman continued photographing models into the early 1980s, finally closing the studio in 1989.

Don Whitman died in June 1998.

**Source:**


**Conditions Governing Use**

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**Immediate Source of Acquisition**

Photographs aggregated from collections and donations to the archives.

**Preferred Citation**


**Processing Information**

Collection processed by Brad Bradley, Steve Fritch, Robert Graves, David Hensley, Christian Morales, and Michael C. Oliveira, November 2014.

The WPG numbering system does not appear to be consistant. The majority of the "Series" include numbered sets of different models, each set would then include a number images of the same model. For example Series 2 included 12 different models/sets and each set included a model in different poses. Some "Series" consist of a single model in different poses.

**Scope and Contents**

The collection consists of Western Photography Guild physique photographic prints.

**Conditions Governing Access**

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

**Related Materials**

Western Photography Guild, Studios and Distributors Marketing Materials Collection, Coll2012-170, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, USC Libraries, University of Southern California.
Arrangement
The photographs are arranged by the Western Photography Guild's (WPG) numbering system.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Photographs
Photography of men
Gay erotic photography
Whitman, Don
Western Photography Guild

Series 1 - Series 10
List of Series
Series 1 numbers 1-12 [Phil Lambert, Stan McIntosh, Paul Walsh, Vincent Walsh, Eddie Cornett, Dick Hopkins, Dale Werkley, Norman McDanal, George Kuzara, Ivan Babcock, Dale Rose, Keith Lewin]; Series 2 numbers 1-12, and 18 [John Atkinson (Johnny Atkinson), Gene McNall, Ernie Donathan, Kenny Hoot, Phil Lambert, Stan McIntosh, James McDaniel, Morris Simms, Peter Guadagno, Mike Georgopulos, Ralph Cormier, Jim Browning, Bob Fleer]; Series 3 numbers 1-12 [Phil Lambert]; Series 4 numbers 1-12 [Irwin Horowitz (Irwin Horwitz), Keith Lewin, Bob Santarelli (Bob Santielli), Stan McIntosh, Peter Guadango, Jim O'Brien (Jim Obrien), Ronnie Lenhart, David Smith, Johnny Atkinson (John Atkinson), Phil Lambert]; Series 5 numbers 1-2, 4-12 [Keith Lewin]; Series 6 numbers 1-12 [Pat Burnham, Morris Simms, Ed Williams (Eddie Williams), Irwin Horowitz (Irwin Horwitz), Gene McNall, Bill Keenan, Bill Richardson, Bill Eger, Stan McIntosh, Phil Lambert, Dale Rose, Alan Derby]; Series 7 numbers 1-12 [Stan McIntosh]; Series 8 numbers 1-12 [Paul Walsh, Bob Jennings, Mel Nelson, Merle Shirley, Al Vincent, Bob Vassao, Al Frantz, Art Cluff, Pat Burnam, George Kuzara, Bob Otto, Jim Robertson]; Series 9 numbers 1-12 [Pat Burnham]; and Series 10 numbers 1-12 [Jim Dardanis, Phil Lambert, Bill Severs, Joe Lettera, Larry Fletcher, Irwin Horowitz (Irwin Horwitz), Dale Coonce, Alan Derby, Johnny Rotolante, George Hughes, Claude Gallegos, Roy Bernard].

Series 11 - Series 17
List of Series
Series 11 numbers 1-12 [Phil Lambert, Keith Lewin, George Hughes, Jonny Rotolante, Gene McNall, Bill Neal]; Series 12 numbers 1-13 [Phil Lambert]; Series 13 numbers 1-12 [Ray Royal, Merle Shirley, Keith Neslodek, Bob Waller, Kenny Owens, Pat Burnham, Johnny Schutte, Elmer Wharton, Ralph Acierono, Jim Gates, Keith Lewin, Bob Grenfell]; Series 14 numbers 1-12 [Jim Dardanis]; Series 15 numbers 1-12 [Ray Royal, ? Workman]; Series 17 numbers 1, 3, 9, 11; Series 18 numbers 8, 10; Series 19 number 7.

Series 20 - X4
List of Series
Series 20 numbers 1-12; Series 21 numbers 1-12 [wrestling series and wrestling poses]; Series 22 numbers 7, 8, 11, and 12; Series 23 numbers 1-11; and Series 26 numbers 2,4,5,7-9, and 11-13; Series 27 numbers 3 and 11; Series 29 numbers 1,7, and 11; 32; Series 33 numbers 3 and 6; 36 number 1; 37 numbers 1, 4, and 7; 39 number 5; 44; 45; 49; N 9; N 10; N 13; N 14; N 15; N 18; N 27; N 45; N 86; N 96; X 3; and X4.