Finding aid for the Finn Wilhelmsen Mardi Gras Indian audio/visual collection 2010.035.r

Finding aid prepared by Norman Lee '06

Frank Mt. Pleasant Library of Special Collections and Archives, Leatherby Libraries
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Title: Finn Wilhelmsen Mardi Gras Indians audio/visual collection.
Identifier/Call Number: 2010.035.r
Contributing Institution: Frank Mt. Pleasant Library of Special Collections and Archives, Leatherby Libraries
Language of Material: English
Storage Unit: 1
Physical Description: 0.42 Linear feet(1 box)
Date (inclusive): 1982-2004
Language of Materials note: The materials in this collection are in English.
Abstract: This collection contains video recordings of the Mardi Gras Indians recorded by Finn Wilhelmsen. Topics include the Mardi Gras Indian's history, society and practices. Filmed by Finn Wilhelmsen beginning in 1986 and ending in 2004.
Location note: Leatherby Libraries
creator: Wilhelmsen, Finn
Immediate Source of Acquisition note
This collection was a gift of Finn Wilhelmsen to Professor Paul Apodaca of Chapman University.
Scope and Contents note
This collection contains video recordings of the Mardi Gras Indians, filmed by Finn Wilhelmsen. In addition to these recordings, there are several papers pertaining to the history and practices of the Mardi Gras Indians. Also included is a copy of one email correspondence from Wilhelmsen to Professor Paul Apodaca of Chapman University.
Conditions Governing Access note
This collection is open for research.
Conditions Governing Use note
There are no restrictions on the use of this material.
Biographical/Historical note
Mardi Gras Indian History: The Mardi Gras Indians are African-American Carnival revelers in New Orleans, Louisiana, who dress up for Mardi Gras in suits influenced by Native American ceremonial apparel. Collectively, their organizations are called "tribes". Many of the tribes also parade on the Sunday nearest to Saint Joseph's Day on March 19 ("Super Sunday") and sometimes at the annual New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival. There are about 38 tribes. They range in size from a half dozen to several dozen members. The tribes are largely independent, but a pair of umbrella organizations loosely coordinate the Uptown Indians and the Downtown Indians.
Mardi Gras Indians have been parading in New Orleans at least since the mid-19th century, possibly before. The tradition was said to have originated from an affinity between Africans and Indians as minorities within the dominant culture, and blacks' circumventing some of the worst racial segregation laws by representing themselves as Indians. There is also the story that the tradition began as an African American tribute to American Indians who helped runaway slaves. These slaves married into the tribes on occasion. An appearance in town of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show in the 1880s was said to have drawn considerable attention and increased the interest in masking as Indians for Mardi Gras. When Caribbean communities started to spring up in New Orleans, their culture was incorporated into the suits, dances and music made by the "Indians". In the late 19th century and early years of the 20th century, the tribes had a reputation for violent fights with each other. This part of Mardi Gras Indian history is immortalized in James Sugar Boy Crawford's "Jock O Mo" (better known and often covered as "Iko Iko"), based on their taunting chants. As the 20th century progressed, physical confrontation gave way to assertions of status by having better suits, songs, and dances. Generations ago when Mardi Gras Indians came through neighborhoods, people used to run away; now people run toward them for the colorful spectacle.
Information retrieved from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mardi_Gras_Indians#History
Finn Wilhelmsen: Born in Oslo, Norway Finn Wilhelmsen was an Associate Professor of anthropology at Chapman University as well as other institutions of higher learning. Wilhelmsen is the author of the book "Salmon spirits and world renewal concepts of the Kwakuitl," published in 1980 and numerous papers on the Mardi Gras Indians, their culture and their traditions. He is the creator of this collection.
Arrangement note
This collection is arranged by material type.
Preferred Citation note
Subjects and Indexing Terms
Mardi Gras Indians (Musical group)

Box 1

Audio-Visual 1986-2004
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: (1 box)
Scope and Contents note
This series contains video recordings of the Mardi Gras Indians, beginning in 1986 and ending in 2004. Topics include the Mardi Gras Indian's history and society. Filmed by Finn Wilhelmsen.

Box 1, Folder 1

Articles 1982-2004
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: (1 folder)
Scope and Contents note
This series contains several papers on the Mardi Gras Indians. Topics include songs, origins and social ramifications of the Mardi Gras Indians.


In addition, this series holds one email from Whilhelmsen to Professor Paul Apodaca of Chapman University.