
Finding aid prepared by Tim Wilson
James C. Hormel Gay & Lesbian Center, San Francisco Public Library
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2010
Title: Leonard Laton Collection of Anthony (Tony) J. Sansone Photographs,
Date (inclusive): 1935, 1955, undated
Collection Identifier: GLC 62
Physical Description: 2.0 folders (20 photographs + 1 volume)
Contributing Institution: James C. Hormel Gay & Lesbian Center, San Francisco Public Library
100 Larkin Street
San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 557-4567
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Abstract: The collection contains original photographs and a book featuring figure studies of Anthony (Tony) J. Sansone, a physique model and dancer from New York. A protégé of Charles Atlas, Sansone was a much sought-after model for photographers and artists during the late 1920s and 1930s.

Physical Location: The collection is stored onsite.
Language of Materials: Collection materials are in English.

Access
The collection is open for research. Please call the San Francisco History Center for hours and information at 415-557-4567.

Publication Rights
All requests for permission to publish or quote from manuscripts must be submitted in writing to the City Archivist. Permission for publication is given on behalf of the San Francisco Public Library as the owner of the physical items.

Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], Leonard Laton Collection of Anthony (Tony) J. Sansone Photographs (GLC 62), Gay and Lesbian Center, San Francisco Public Library.

Provenance
The collection was donated by an anonymous donor, July 2009.

Biographical and Historical note
In July 2009, the Hormel Gay and Lesbian Center received an anonymous donation of 20 black and white photographs and a small book titled Rhythm (Brooklyn, NY: 1935). The photographs and book feature studies of Anthony (Tony) J. Sansone, a physique model and dancer.

The letter accompanying the donation explained that Leonard Laton once owned the book and photographs and gave them to the donor for safe-keeping in the 1950s. Unfortunately, the donor lost track of Laton. Now, decades later, the donor sent the material to the Hormel Center in Laton’s name. The donor describes Laton as a German Jewish gay man who "escaped the Nazi holocaust, fled to Canada and then established citizenship in the United States. He was a gentle, intelligent, cultured person, interested in photography, and nature particularly horticulture."

Anthony (Tony) J. Sansone (1905- ) was a model, gym owner, and dancer. He was born in the United States to Ignazio (Charles) Sansone and Paolina (Pauline) Giardina, both immigrants from Sicily. Other family and friends who immigrated included Angelo Siciliano who became well known as Charles Atlas, body builder, circus strongman, and mail-order entrepreneur. Sansone's early life included dancing with Desha and other modern dance troupes, modeling for several artists, and some stage and film acting.

A protégé of Charles Atlas, Sansone was a much sought-after model for photographers and artists during the late 1920s and 1930s. He worked extensively with Edwin Townsend, Achille Volpe and, in later years, worked some with Lon of New York. Townsend and Sansone collaborated on Modern Classics (1929) and Rhythm (1935). The introduction to Rhythm is by the sculptor Arthur Lee and includes photographs of Lee's bronze sculpture of Sansone.

Later Sansone became a gym owner in New York. He married Rita and had two children, Paulina and Anthony, Jr. For his complete biography, see John Massey's American Adonis: Tony Sansone, the first male physique icon (New York: Universe, 2004). Massey's book places Sansone within the context of the burgeoning physical culture of the early 20th century.

Scope and Contents
The collection contains 20 black and white photographs of Tony Sansone and the book Rhythm. Most of the photographs are nude studies and 10 images are reprinted in Rhythm. One photo is inscribed: "For Leonhard Laton, with every friendly wish, Tony Sansone, 1955."

Arrangement note
There are two folders: one contains photographs in print number order; the other contains the book.
Subjects and Indexing Terms
Lee, Arthur, 1881-1961
Sansone, Anthony J., 1905- -- Pictorial works
Townsend, Edwin F.
Photography of men
Photography of the nude

Folder 1
Photographic prints of Tony Sansone, 1955, undated
Physical Description: 20 black and white prints

Print 114 1955
General note
Inscribed: "For Leonhard Laton, with every friendly wish, Tony Sansone, 1955."

Print 127
Print 209
Print 242
General note
Published in Rhythm p.20.

Print 253
Print 258
General note

Print 277
General note
Published in Rhythm p.38.

Print 279
General note
Published in Rhythm p.29.

Print 288
General note
Edwin Townsend, photographer. Published in Rhythm p.45, American Adonis p.31.

Print 291
General note
Published in Rhythm p.11.

Print 296
General note
Published in Rhythm p.44.

Print 329
General note
Published in Rhythm p.27.
Print 338
General note
Published in Rhythm p.31.

Print 357
General note
Edwin Townsend, photographer. Published in American Adonis p.16.

Print 362
Print 377
Print 378
Print 380
Print 387
Print 390
Folder 2
General note
49 pages. Black and white photographs of Sansone posing and sculptures by Arthur Lee for which Sansone posed. Includes some text.