Verasphere Archive, 1995-2009GLC 59

Finding aid prepared by Nell Jehu and Tim Wilson
James C. Hormel Gay & Lesbian Center, San Francisco Public Library
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2013
Title: Verasphere Archive,
Date (inclusive): 1995-2009
Collection Identifier: GLC 59
Creator: Faulk, David
Creator: Johnstone, Michael, 1955-
Physical Description: 2.0 boxes (1.0 cubic foot)
Contributing Institution: James C. Hormel Gay & Lesbian Center, San Francisco Public Library
100 Larkin Street
San Francisco, CA, 94102
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Abstract: The archive contains newspaper clippings, oral histories, videorecordings, and photographs that document the costumes, appearances, and photographs of Mrs. Vera, a drag persona, and her circle of friends.
Physical Location: The collection is stored onsite.
Language of Materials: Collection materials are in English, with one item in Polish.
Access
The collection is available for use during San Francisco History Center hours, with photographs available during Photo Desk hours.
Publication Rights
Copyright retained by Michael Johnstone and David Faulk. Work can be used and copied for educational or research purposes.
Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], Verasphere Archive (GLC 59), Gay and Lesbian Center, San Francisco Public Library.
Provenance
Donated by Michael Johnstone and David Faulk, December 12, 2008.
Biographical note
"Verasphere" collectively describes Mrs. Vera (David Faulk) and Mr. Tina (Michael Johnstone) and their community of friends. Faulk, a painter, created elaborate costumes, accessories and make-up to develop the persona of Mrs. Vera. The Mrs. Vera Daybook photograph series began in the early 1990s by documenting their appearances with friends at street fairs and clubs. Johnstone is the photographer of the series and notes that the colors in the photographs are un-retouched.
The Mrs. Vera work began as a more light-hearted documentation but with the losses due to AIDS, and the presence of HIV, it has become a vibrant response to the deprivations of disease on both the physical and emotional landscapes. With Johnstone's diagnosis of bilateral cytomegalovirus, the work began to change taking on a more serious subtext.
David Faulk and Michael Johnstone are life partners.
Scope and Contents
The archive contains newspaper clippings, oral histories, videorecordings, and photographs that document the costumes, appearances, and photographs of Mrs. Vera, a drag persona, and her circle of friends. Mrs. Vera is the collaboration of gay artist and costume designer David Faulk and his partner photographer Michael Johnstone. The characters Mrs. Vera, Mr. Tina, and their friends are collectively known as the "Verasphere." The photographs of them in various settings is a response to the loss of artists to HIV/AIDS.
Arrangement
The collection is arranged into four series: Series 1. Press and Publicity; Series 2. Subject Files; Series 3. Videorecordings; and, Series 4. Photographs.
Subjects and Indexing Terms
Faulk, David
Johnstone, Michael, 1955-
Art and photography.
Costume design--California--San Francisco.
Costume--California--San Francisco.
Series 1  Press and Publicity, 1996-2008

Physical Description: 34.0 folders

Scope and Contents
Contains press coverage of Mrs. Vera and Mr. Tina, and of exhibitions of the work of Michael Johnstone and David Faulk. The articles by Heidi Thimann and Don Bapst discuss the inspiration behind Mrs. Vera and Johnstone and Faulk’s collaboration.

Arrangement
Arranged in chronological order.

Box 1, Folder 1  Creampuff magazine. Fetish timeline, September 16-29, [1996?]
Box 1, Folder 2  San Francisco Bay Times, July 24, 1997
Box 1, Folder 3  San Francisco Metropolitain, October 5, 1998
Box 1, Folder 4  Pride Guide, 2000
Box 1, Folder 5  [Polish Magazine] Igetzer, 2000

General note
Four pages of color photos of Mrs. Vera. See Don Bapst article “Tranny Terror” for translation.

Box 1, Folder 6  Bay Area Reporter. Listing and review of GLBT Historical Society show, December 13 and 20, 2001
Box 1, Folder 7  San Francisco Bay Times, December 27, 2001
Box 1, Folder 8  Mardi Gras Guide (Australia), 2002
Box 1, Folder 9  Pride Guide, 2002
Box 1, Folder 10  San Francisco Chronicle, July 1, 2002
Box 1, Folder 11  The Advocate, February 18, 2003
Box 1, Folder 12  Pride Guide, 2003
Box 1, Folder 13  Folsom Street Fair Guide, 2003
Box 1, Folder 14  FG. Mardi Gras Guide (Sydney, Australia), 2005
Box 1, Folder 15  Bay Area Reporter. Easter, photo of Mrs. Vera misidentified as Sister Roma, March 31, 2005
Box 1, Folder 16  San Francisco Bay Times. Visual Aid Sweet 16 press and review, June 16 and 30, 2005
Box 1, Folder 17  QAR [www.queer-arts.com]. “Seeing Mrs. Vera: The Collaborative Work of Michael Johnstone and David Faulk” by Heidi Thimann, 2005
Box 1, Folder 18  QAR [www.queer-arts.com]. “This Mortal Makeup: Images from Mrs. Vera’s Daybook by Michael Johnstone” by Don Bapst, 2005
Box 1, Folder 19  Pride Guide, 2005
Box 1, Folder 20  Bay Area Reporter, November 10, 2005
Box 1, Folder 21  San Francisco Bay Times, December 1, 2005
Box 1, Folder 22  San Francisco Chronicle, June 11, 2006
Box 1, Folder 23  Bay Area Reporter, June 29, 2006
Box 1, Folder 24  Pride Guide, 2006
Box 1, Folder 25  San Francisco Bay Times. Visual Aid / Bjorn fundraiser, August 3, 2006
Box 1, Folder 26  San Francisco Bay Times. Photo and quote--Dore Alley Fair, August 3, 2006
Box 1, Folder 27  San Francisco Chronicle. DeYoung Museum, September 16, 2007
Box 1, Folder 28  Bay Area Reporter. “Remember Jerome” review, October 11, 2007
Box 1, Folder 29  Pride Guide, 2008
Box 1, Folder 30  San Francisco Examiner. Photo from Cafe Weimar at SFMOMA, February 19, 2008
Box 1, Folder 31  San Francisco Bay Times, “Magnet Presents Michael Johnstone’s 12 Snapshots of Mrs. Vera” by Sister Dana Van Iquity / Dennis McMillan, April 10, 2008
Box 1, Folder 32  
San Francisco Examiner. Pride photo of Michael and David, June 30, 2008

Box 1, Folder 33  
San Francisco Weekly, "Mrs. Vera--The Cindy Sherman of Drag" by Traci Vogel, September 9, 2008

Box 1, Folder 34  
SF Weekly, September 10, 2008

Series 2 Subject Files, 1999-2009

Physical Description: 7.0 folders
Scope and Contents
The series contains the transcripts of oral history interviews of Faulk and Johnstone conducted by Nell Jehu at Faulk’s home, San Francisco, California. It also includes the book Mrs. Vera's Daybook with color photos, and invitations for exhibitions of Faulk’s and Johnstone’s work. David Duckworth’s paper analyzes the Mrs. Vera Daybook series. "Vera" is an original silk screen sticker by artist Jim Winters.
Arrangement
Arranged alphabetically by title.

Box 1, Folder 35  
Duckworth, David P. "Redemption and Regeneration: Michael Johnstone, David Faulk and the Making of Verasphere" talk delivered at the California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco, California, September 12, 2008

Box 1, Folder 36  
Invitations for exhibitions, 2003-2008, undated

Box 1, Folder 37  
Invitations to shows of David Faulk’s paintings, 2000-2006

Box 1, Folder 38  
Oral history transcripts
Related materials
Researchers are encouraged to see also Box 1 / Folder 44. Oral history DVD recordings.

Box 1, Folder 39  
Faulk, David, January 8, 2009

Box 1, Folder 40  
Johnstone, Michael, January 8, 2009

Box 1, Folder 41  
Winters, Jim. "Vera" [silkscreen sticker], 1999

Series 3 Videorecordings, 1997-2009

Physical Description: 3.0 folders(6 discs)
Scope and Contents
Contains documentary footage of Mrs. Vera, Mr. Tina and friends at street fairs and other events in San Francisco. Some footage shows studio and storage spaces and artwork by Faulk and Johnstone. The videographer provides a running commentary. Nell Jehu’s oral histories of Johnstone and Faulk provide insight into their work and the evolution of Mrs. Vera and the Verasphere.
Arrangement
Arranged in alphabetical order by title.

Box 1, Folder 42  
Fabulous [short documentary on Mrs. Vera's environment and beauty regimen] by Emma King, 1997

Physical Description: 1 DVD

Box 1, Folder 43  
Love Parade, Folsom Fair, "Remember Jerome" exhibition and event, Sugar Valley [Castro Street Fair], 2007

Physical Description: 3 DVDs
General note
Documentary chronicles appearances by Mr. Tina and Mrs. Vera at the Folsom Street Fair, Castro Street Fair and Love Parade. Disc 2 contains footage of the Bucheon Gallery exhibition "Remember Jerome--A Large Group Show of Friends and Artists Who Miss Jerome Caja" for Jerome Caja, held October 6, 2007. Johnstone and Faulk both had pieces in the show.
Box 1, Folder 44

**Oral history of Michael Johnstone and of David Faulk, done by Nell Jehu, January 8, 2009**

**Physical Description:** 2 DVDs

**Related materials**

Researchers are encouraged to see also Box 1 / Folders 39-40. Oral history transcripts.

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**Series 4 Photographs, 1995-2008**

**Physical Description:** 1.0 box(3 albums)

**Access**

The photographs are available during Photo Desk hours.

**Scope and Contents**

The series contains photograph albums of Michael Johnstone, David Faulk and friends (a.k.a. Verasphere) at San Francisco events. It also includes photographs of the costumes and accessories made by David Faulk, and worn by Mrs. Vera.

**Arrangement**

Faulk and Johnstone arranged the photographs into three albums according to subject. Albums are arranged alphabetically by title.

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**Box 2, Volume 1**

**Mrs. Vera's Daybook series. Selection of 40 colorprints, 1995-2008**

**General note**

Prints range in size from 8x10-inches to 8x12 inches. Portfolio contains itemized title list, and resumes for Michael Johnstone and David Faulk.

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**Box 2, Volume 2**

**Photograph album of Michael Johnstone, David Faulk and friends (a.k.a. Verasphere) at San Francisco events, 1996-2007**

**General note**

Photos taken by friend and neighbor Jon Harris. 4x6-inch photographs in roughly chronological order. Itemized list of photographs with event and date. Events include: Open Studios, Halloween, City Hall exhibition, Mrs. Vera's birthday parties, Folsom Fairs, Gay Prides, dinner with Cockettes in 2001, Mrs. Vera's Daybook exhibition, Remember Jerome exhibition, and Glamarama.

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**Box 2, Volume 3**

**Photograph album of the costumes and accessories made by David Faulk, and worn by Mrs. Vera, 1996-2008**

**General note**

54 4x6-inch color photographs. Each piece is identified with the date of creation, the components and media used, and the place(s) or event(s) where it was worn. Includes a few photographs of Faulk, and of Mrs. Vera and Mr. Tina.