Robert Chesley papers

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Descriptive Summary
Title: Robert Chesley papers
Dates: 1965-1990
Collection Number: 1993-06
Creator/Collector: Chesley, Robert, 1943-1990
Extent: 14.7 linear feet
Repository: GLBT Historical Society
San Francisco, California 94103
Abstract: The Robert Chesley papers document his life as a playwright, theater critic and sexual outlaw. Chesley died of AIDS in 1990 at the age of 47.
Language of Material: English
Access
Collection is open for research. Funding for processing this collection was provided by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC).
Publication Rights
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Preferred Citation
Robert Chesley papers. GLBT Historical Society
Acquisition Information
Biography/Administrative History
Robert Chesley was born in Jersey City, New Jersey in 1943. He moved to San Francisco in 1976 and became theater critic for the San Francisco Bay Guardian. Chesley's first one-act play, "Hell, I Love You," was produced at Theatre Rhinoceros in 1980. His play "Night Sweat" was the first full-length drama dealing with the AIDS crisis to be produced in New York. It had extended-length and one-act plays. One of his most successful works was "Jerker." It had a long run in New York and generated controversy with the Federal Communications Commission when it was aired on Pacifica Radio's KPFK. Chesley died of AIDS in 1990. The Robert Chesley Award for Lesbian and Gay Playwriting, given annually by Publishing Triangle, is named in his honor.
Scope and Content of Collection
The Robert Chesley papers document his life as a playwright, theater critic and sexual outlaw. The collection is divided into eight series: Correspondence; Journals and "Crazy Books"; Writings, including plays, short stories, novels, and journalism; Writings by Others; Subject Files; Personalia; Photographs and Posters; and Audio. Highlights include nearly 20 years of correspondence and over 10 years of personal diaries, drafts of plays and materials related to his prolific career as a journalist and theater critic, and souvenirs from his sexual encounters. See Container List for more details about each series. There is very little related to Chesley's career as a musical composer. Chesley died of AIDS in 1990 at the age of 47.
Indexing Terms
Gay men
Theater
Journalism
Kink
AIDS (disease)
Diaries
Guide to the Robert Chesley papers