Samois records and t-shirts

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Samois records and t-shirts
Dates: 1975-1983
Collection Number: 2003-37
Creator/Collector: SAMOIS (Organization)
Extent: 2 boxes (0.6 linear feet)
Repository: GLBT Historical Society
San Francisco, California 94103

Abstract: This collection contains records from the influential lesbian sadomasochism (SM) group, Samois. This collection does not represent the organization’s “official” records. Rather, it was assembled by several former members of Samois, many of whom were involved in the production of the group’s publications, What Color Is Your Handkerchief? (1979) and Coming to Power (1981). There are materials related to the two publications; organizational records; leaflets; Samois newsletters and a copy of “Cathexis,” an early lesbian SM newsletter; essays and stories; invitations to early women’s SM parties; and t-shirts.

Language of Material: English

Access
The collection is open for research with the following restriction. Researchers may not publish or publically disclose names or identifying information about individuals for 20 years from the date of donation, unless those individuals have already themselves disclosed, in print or a public forum, their association with these organizations, or unless they are deceased. These restrictions will expire on July 19, 2023. Funding for processing this collection was provided by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC).

Publication Rights
Copyright has not been transferred to the GLBT Historical Society.

Preferred Citation
Samois records and t-shirts. GLBT Historical Society

Acquisition Information

Biography/Administrative History

Scope and Content of Collection
This collection contains records from the influential lesbian sadomasochism (SM) group, Samois. According to Gayle Rubin, Samois, “founded in San Francisco in June 1978 and disbanded in May 1983, was the first known public organization devoted to lesbian sadomasochism (SM), and a key player in the early phases of the feminist sex wars. Samois grew out of the confluence of the feminist, gay and lesbian, sexual freedom, and SM movements of the 1970s.” (Encyclopedia of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender History in America). This collection does not represent the organization’s “official” records. Rather, it was assembled by several former members of Samois, many of whom were involved in the production of the group’s publications, What Color Is Your Handkerchief? (1979) and Coming to Power (1981). The collection contains a copy of What Color Is Your Handkerchief? and a first edition of Coming to Power. Both are very rare. There are also materials related to the two publications; organizational records; leaflets, including a rare pamphlet from a very early (1975) attempt to start a lesbian SM group in the Bay Area; Samois newsletters and a copy of “Cathexis,” an early lesbian SM newsletter; essays and stories; invitations to early women’s SM parties; and t-shirts.

Indexing Terms
Lesbians
Leather
Kink

Container List for the Samois Records and T-Shirts