Guide to the Chester Kessler Papers, 1951-1952

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Note
Arts and Humanities--Art--Photography
Arts and Humanities--Film, Television, and Broadcasting--Film
Geographical (By Place)--California--Bay Area
Guide to the Chester Kessler Papers, 1951-1952

Collection number: MS 167

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Descriptive Summary
Title: Chester Kessler Papers,
Date (inclusive): 1951-1952
Collection number: MS 167
Creator: Kessler, Chester
Extent: 1 document box, 2 flats
Repository: University of California, Santa Cruz. University Library. Special Collections and Archives
Santa Cruz, California 95064

Abstract: This collection contains a storyboard, worksheets, frame drawings, a film and photographs for an animated film The Plague Summer adapted from Kenneth Patchen's novel The Journal of Albion Moonlight, as well as photographs of Kenneth and Miriam Patchen by Chester Kessler.

Physical location: Stored in Special Collections & Archives: Advance notice is required for access to the papers.

Language: English.

Access
Collection is open for research.

Publication Rights
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Preferred Citation
Chester Kessler Papers. MS 167. Special Collections and Archives, University Library, University of California, Santa Cruz.

Acquisition Information
Gift of Robert Emory Johnson, July 1983.

Biography
A photographer and film maker, Chester Monroe Kessler, was born in New Melle, Missouri on May 6, 1919. He moved to Southern California, first pursuing studies in photography at the Art Center School and later in film making and animation at the University of Southern California. In San Francisco he continued developing his photographic technique under Minor
White at the California School of Fine Art. During his life he completed four films and captured portraits of celebrated artists, such as Kenneth Patchen, Jonathan William, Bob Kaufman, David Stacton, and Kenneth Anger.

*The Plague Summer*. 1951; an animated film based on Kenneth Patchen's novel 'The Journal of Albion Moonlight'.

*Columbarium*. 1973; a sequence of images filmed in one of the San Francisco architectural landmarks utilizing Warner Jepson's electronic music as a soundtrack.

*Rondo*. 1976; a portrayal of the Huntington Square cut to the music of Lou Harrison's Suite for violin, piano and small orchestra.


On his 60th birthday, May 16th 1979, Chester Kessler passed away.

**Scope and Content of Collection**

This collection contains a storyboard, various cue chart guides and worksheets, over 190 frame drawings, a film, and still photographs for *The Plague Summer*, an animated film adapted from Kenneth Patchen's novel *The Journal of Albion Moonlight*, that tells the story of a band of characters journeying across landscape assaulted by horrors of war. Archive also includes photographic portraits of Kenneth and Miriam Patchen taken by Chester Kessler in 1952.

**Arrangement**

*The Plague Summer* material has been organized into five series: Biographical, Scripts, Frame Drawings, Photographs and Film.

**Indexing Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

**Subjects**

Kessler, Chester--Archives

Animated films

Photographers

**Other Index Terms Related to this Collection**

Patchen, Kenneth, 1911-1972. Kenneth Patchen archive

**Separated Material**

*The Plague Summer*; a film by Chester Kessler, 1951 - Special Collections, Fi731, DVD 2899

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**Biographical 1983 n.d.**

Physical Description: 1 folder

Scope and Content Note

Contains biographical information on Kessler composed by Robert Johnson in July 1983, and Kessler's program notes to his four films.

Arrangement

No arrangement.

Box-folder 1:1

**Robert Johnson's biographical information on Kessler and Kessler's program notes to four films July 1983, n.d.**

**Scripts [1951]**

Physical Description: 2 folders

Scope and Content Note

Contains written schema for the animated film *The Plague Summer*. The Cue Sheets for Photographing indicate drawing juxtaposed with number of frames to shoot and cut, and times track entries.

Arrangement

Storyboard arranged in page number order.

Box-folder 1:2-3

**The Plague Summer [1951]**
Box-folder 1:2  
Four sets of cue chart guides (typescript p.1-15), (annotated music lines p.1-16), (annotated sound lines p.1-16), (annotated, p.1-14)  
Box-folder 1:2  
Final cue sheet for photographing (holograph p.1-7), (annotated typescript p.1-9)  
Box-folder 1:2  
Sketches and miscellany worksheets  
Box-folder 1:3  
Storyboard with narration, sound effects, and music frame notes (49 p.)  

### Frame Drawings [1951]

- **Physical Description:** 2 boxes  
- **Scope and Content Note**
  - Contains frame drawings, also called 'tableaux' by Kessler, for the animated film *The Plague Summer*. The drawings are painted with two tones, gray and black against a white paper. The sheet corners are annotated.  
- **Arrangement**
  - Tableaux arranged by frame number.

### The Plague Summer [1951]

- **Box 2-3**  
- **Tableaux A-I, 1-89, (No frames 17,19, 42)**  
- **Tableaux 90-190, (No frames 109, or 141)**

### Photographs [1951]-1952

- **Physical Description:** 1 folder of 15 items  
- **Scope and Content Note**
  - Contains six photographs and nine transparencies; portraits and still shots from *The Plague Summer*.  
- **Arrangement**
  - Photographs of the frame tableaux are arranged by a frame number. To differentiate between separate frame shots, a narration line from a storyboard was added for clarity.

### Portraits by Kessler 1952

- **Kenneth Patchen, 8x10, black/white head shot 1952**  
- **Miriam Patchen, 8x10, black/white head shot 1952**  
- **Portrait of Kessler, 5x7, black/white head shot n.d.**

### The Plague Summer [1951]

- **Still Shots:**  
  - Frame tableau 18 / Story board 14 [Narration: The evening slowly turns to black stone and the hammer of God chips at the sky, making stars.]  
  - Frame tableau 61 / Story board 49 [Narration: Now the Mother and babe can ride.]  
  - Frame tableau 179 [Albion Moonlight running]  
- **Negative transparencies:**  
  - Frame tableau 154 / Storyboard 115 [Narration: June 24th. I am alone now. Something is standing in back of me as I write this.]  
  - Frame tableau 155 / Storyboard 116 [Narration: The Door is locked. The windows are barred. I have a sense that it will try to kill me.]  
  - Frame tableau 156 / Story board 117 [Narration: My only weapon is my pen, which I grip in my fist, ready to strike.]  
  - Frame tableau 157 [Albion Moonlight, close up]  
  - Frame tableau 158 [Albion Moonlight writing the first page]  
  - Frame tableau 159 [Albion Moonlight writing, 3 pages]  
  - Frame tableau 160 [Albion Moonlight writing, multiple written pages]  
  - Frame tableau 161/ Storyboard 121 [Narration: The only escape from war is to become a soldier, to lose all touch with your own identity, to become part of one huge, quivering mass of fear and horror.]  
  - Frame tableau 162/ Storyboard 122 [Narration: Full speed ahead to the slaughter house!]
Film 1951

Physical Description: 1 item

Scope and Content Note

DVD copy of 16mm film *The Plague Summer*, 1951 - cataloged separately - DVD 2899 available or viewing.