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Guide to the **Sam Staggs papers** 1974-1984 MssCol 2857 ₩Ø[\{ • Åj ædo [, Å@ ÅQ c^\} æa] } æÅÕæ ÅQ -{ \{ æa] } ÅÔ^} c^\ÅQÕÕD&[||^&a] } Å

Compiled by John Stinson, April 1990

Summary

Creator: Staggs, Sam

Title: Sam Staggs papers, 1974-1984

Size: 4.02 linear feet (8 boxes)

Source: International Gay Information Center, 1988

Abstract: Magazine editor. Editor-in-chief (1982-1984) of Modernismo Publications, Ltd. publishers of MANDATE, HONCHO, and PLAYGUY, popular men's magazines.

The papers include correspondence, make-up sheets, tear sheets, and photographs. The correspondence is with free-lance writers, photographers, illustrators, editors and others and reflects the editorial policies and philosophy of Sam Staggs and of his predecessor, John Devere.

Access: Apply to Manuscripts and Archives Division for access at http://www.nypl.org/mssref. Some correspondence restricted until 2055.

Preferred citation: Sam Staggs papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

Creator history

Sam Staggs, magazine editor, was editor-in-chief (1982-84) of Modernismo Publications, Ltd. (MP) publishers of Mandate, Honcho, and Playguy, popular gay men's magazines. MP was founded in 1974 by George Mavety with the publication of Dilettante, a short-lived popular arts magazine which was discontinued, due to an economic recession and declining advertising revenues, in March of 1975. The following month its successor, Mandate, appeared on the newsstands under the editorship of John Devere. Unlike Dilettante which was aimed at a more general audience, Mandate was conceived as a magazine of erotica, news and entertainment for gay men. Each monthly issue, in addition to exhibiting artistic displays of male nudes and erotic fiction, contained reviews of books, motion pictures and sound recordings of interest to the gay community and reported on social, political and cultural events related to the movement for gay liberation. By the time Sam Staggs succeeded to its editorship (following that of Joseph Arsenault who had

succeeded Devere as editor) Mandate claimed a circulation of over 100,000 and enjoyed a reputation as the most important men's magazine in America.

As editor-in-chief Staggs strove hard to raise the intellectual level of Mandate. His dream was to make it the gay equivalent of Playboy, a magazine read by a sophisticated, affluent and well-informed audience who would appreciate it not only for its nudity but for its editorial content and the high quality of its interview and entertainment features as well. Staggs cultivated close and cordial relationships with his writers, gently correcting and advising them on matters of literary substance and style while encouraging the more talented to make more ambitious contributions. Staggs' main editorial effort went into the production of Mandate. Honcho which contained more "hard-core" material appealed to an audience interested primarily in erotica, while Playguy with its "twinkle fiction" appealed to the youth market.

Scope and content note

The papers (1974-84) consist of editorial correspondence, miscellaneous papers, printed ephemera and photographs. The editorial correspondence which relates to all three publications of MP with an emphasis on Mandate consists of an alphabetical file of correspondence received and a file of outgoing correspondence arranged alphabetically by year. The correspondence is mainly with freelance writers, photographers and illustrators, editors of gay magazines, literary agents, publishers, public officials and readers. The correspondence received, which is mainly that of John Devere as editor-in-chief, contains several authors' scripts including the script of an interview with Christopher Isherwood conducted by Victor Bockris. The outgoing correspondence is in the form of carbon copies and is mainly that of Sam Staggs as editor-in-chief. Since the outgoing correspondence contains a large proportion of correspondence with freelance writers, the original carbons have been replaced by photocopies on permalife paper on which the addresses of the freelance correspondents have been blotted out in order to preserve their privacy. The originals have been restricted until 2055. The outgoing correspondence is especially revealing of Staggs' editorial philosophy and of his working relationships with his writers. Included is correspondence sent to public officials and others protesting specific instances of persecution and oppression of gays.

In order to protect the privacy of individual persons correspondence from readers and some correspondence from other persons have been restricted.

The miscellaneous papers consist of incomplete and unsorted make-up sheets for unidentified issues of magazines published by MP; a few records of classified advertisements for several issues of Playguy magazine; and a script of erotic fiction and of erotic poetry. The printed ephemera consists of tear sheets from magazines published by MP and miscellaneous ephemera.

The photographs consist of a topical file arranged by name of photographer and/or subject followed by unsorted photos. Included are glossy prints, motion picture stills, and publicity photos of nude male models, and of personalities in television, dance, theater, and motion pictures. There are also a few contact prints, 35mm slides and Ektachrome color slides.

Arrangement

The Sam Staggs papers are organized into the following series:

I. Editorial correspondenceII. Miscellaneous papersIII. Printed ephemeraIV. Photographs

Key terms

Subjects Gay liberation movement -- Periodicals Gay men -- Periodicals Gays' writings, American Journalism -- Editing Magazine illustration Periodical editors -- United States Publishers and publishing -- New York (State) --New York

Names

Devere, John Staggs, Sam

Special formats

Photographs Slides (photographs) aat

Titles Honcho Mandate

Playguy

Container list

I. Editorial correspondence

- b.115 A-K
- b.116 L-Z
- b.117 Outgoing correspondence
- b.118 II. Miscellaneous papers

III. Printed ephemera

- b.119 Printed ephemera
- b.120 Printed ephemera

IV. Photographs

- b.121 Photographs
- b.122 Photographs