

Guide to the Ken Campbell archive

MSS 25



YCBA Library Court. Photograph by Richard Caspole, YCBA, 2016.

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Department of Rare Books and Manuscripts
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<https://britishart.yale.edu/about-us/departments/rare-books-and-manuscripts>

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Yale Center for British Art, Rare Books and Manuscripts
Department of Rare Books and Manuscripts
1080 Chapel Street
P. O. Box 208280
New Haven, CT 06520-8280
203-432-2814
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CALL NUMBER: MSS 25

CREATOR: Campbell, Ken, 1939-2022

TITLE: Ken Campbell archive

DATES: 1975–2003

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 30 linear feet

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The collection spans the years 1975-2003 and reveals Ken Campbell's creative process throughout his career as a book artist. The bulk of the collection contains Ken Campbell's artist book materials and separate prints which relate to several of his books. Proofs, extra sheets, letterpress forms, zinc etching plates, photographs, negatives and dummies document Campbell's creative process.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/ycba.mss.0025>

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Yale Center for British Art, Gift of Ken Campbell

Conditions Governing Access

This collection is unprocessed and may not be available for immediate access.

Conditions Governing Use

The collection is the physical property of the Yale Center for British Art. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the Curator of Rare Books and Manuscripts.

Preferred Citation

Ken Campbell Archive, Yale Center for British Art, Gift of Ken Campbell

Related Materials

Additional archival material about Ken Campbell can be found in the British Library Sound Archives at <http://sounds.bl.uk/Arts-literature-and-performance/Art-photography-and-architecture>.

Also see other books by Ken Campbell, in the Yale Center for British Art Collection, which include: *AbaB*, *Fire dogs abstract*, *'sWings*, *'sWings*, *Wall*, and *Hadrian's Dream*.

See also Campbell's etching *Blake Said*, Department of Prints and Drawings, B1997.9.

Biographical / Historical

Born in 1939, artist and poet Ken Campbell trained as a letterpress printer and then as a graphic designer in the early 1960s at the London College of Printing. Campbell has taught graphic design, typography, and the "visual display of language" at art schools in Britain, Canada and the United States since 1966, but the focus of his work has been artist's books since the mid-1970s. He believes that the turning point in his career came when he finished *Father's Hook* (1977), a poetic tribute to his dock-working father.

Ken Campbell writes, designs and prints his books by letterpress, with the occasional use of etching, embossing, hand work and, latterly, digital techniques. Campbell's unconventional materials and methods contradict the traditional letterpress printing technique that Campbell employs to make his books. Pages are often run through the press multiple times, saturating the sheets with printer's ink. His printing combines use of conventional type with printer's ornaments, rules and borders, and materials such as wood, linoleum, and torn and cut pieces of metal. The effect of his work has been described as "darkness shot through with light." In his own words, he aims to "find the form of the book on the bed of the press during its making; while texts, images and procedures find appropriate dramatic weight in the improvised final work."

Since 1975 Ken Campbell has created two dozen artists' books. He has exhibited at numerous galleries and museums and in 2009 he was invited to speak about his work at the Library of Congress. Complete sets of Campbell's works are represented in the collections of the British Library, the Herzog-August Bibliothek, the Rare Books Division of the Library of Congress, the New York Public Library, and the Yale Center for British Art.

Scope and Contents

The collection spans the years 1975-2003 and reveals Ken Campbell's creative process throughout his career as a book artist. The bulk of the collection contains Ken Campbell's artist book materials and separate prints which relate to several of his books. Proofs, extra sheets, letterpress forms, zinc etching plates, photographs, negatives and dummies document Campbell's creative process.

The collection also includes materials about Campbell's unpublished book *Dear Judas*. Also in the collection are photographic materials documenting the production and installation of two sculpture works, *Bibliophagy* and *A M O R O M A (I love Rome or the scent of love)*.

Printed material includes exhibition catalogs, invitations, postcards and prospectuses, writings about Campbell or writings contributed in part by Campbell. Also of note are a collection of audio cassette tape recordings and the transcript from Campbell's interview with National Life Stories. Campbell's discussion of his life and work in this interview served as a foundation for an exhibition at the Yale Center for British Art, *The Word Returned*.

Ken Campbell: selected literature

- Benveniste, Asa. Hadrian's dream. London : Circle Press, designed and printed by Ken Campbell, 1990.
- Campbell, Ken. Execution: the book: an exhibition of limited edition artists' books, related prints and small sculpture. London : Ken Campbell, 1990.
- Campbell, Ken. A few ways through the window : notes on the exhibition of books, related prints and sculpture. Oxford [England] : Museum of Modern Art, 1990.
- Campbell, Ken. Ken Campbell : an artist's books, 1978-1990. [London?] : Ken Campbell, 1990.
- Campbell, Ken. Ken Campbell : an artist's books, 1978-1994. [London?] : Ken Campbell, 1994.
- Campbell, Ken. The maker's hand: twenty books by Ken Campbell. London: Ken Campbell, 2001.
- Chambers, David. "Ken Campbell : an artist's text and image." In Matrix 16. [Andoversford, Gloucestershire] : Whittington Press, 1996.
- Dimunation, Mark. Breaking rules : the insistent vision of Ken Campbell. In Parenthesis 22. Fine Press Book Association, Spring 2012.
- Fairman, Elisabeth. The word returned: artist books by Ken Campbell. New Haven, Connecticut : Yale Center for British Art, c1996.
- Ken Campbell : an artist's books. [website] <http://www.brokenrules.co.uk/>

Artist's books by Ken Campbell

- Campbell, Ken. AbaB. [Norwich, England] : [Norwich School of Art], [1984].
- Campbell, Ken. Broken rules and double crosses. [Norwich, England] : Ken Campbell, 1984.
- Campbell, Ken. Dominion. London : Ken Campbell, 2002.
- Campbell, Ken. Execution: the book. [London] : Ken Campbell, 1990.
- Campbell, Ken. Father's garden. [Oxford] : [Ken Campbell], 1989.
- Campbell, Ken. Father's hook. [Bath, England] : [Ken Campbell], c1978.
- Campbell, Ken. A few ways through the window. London : Ken Campbell, 1975.
- Campbell, Ken. Firedogs. [London] : [Ken Campbell], [1991?]
- Campbell, Ken. Firedogs: abstract. London : Ken Campbell, 1991.
- Campbell, Ken. Horse. [Oxford, England] : Ken Campbell, 1985.
- Campbell, Ken. In the door stands a jar. [Oxford, England] : Ken Campbell, 1987.
- Campbell, Ken. A knife romance. [Oxford, England] : [Ken Campbell], [1988]
- Campbell, Ken. Martyrs. [Oxford, England] : Ken Campbell, 1989.
- Campbell, Ken. Night feet on Earth. [Oxford, England] : Ken Campbell, 1989.
- Campbell, Ken. Pantheon. [London] : [Ken Campbell], 2000.
- Campbell, Ken. Skute awabo (Awabo Skute). London : Ken Campbell, 1992.
- Campbell, Ken. -'S wings, -'s wings. [London] : [Ken Campbell], [1998]
- Campbell, Ken. Ten years of Uzbekistan : a commemoration. [London] : Ken Campbell, 1994.
- Campbell, Ken. Terror, Terror: a book of poems are invitations to jump in the lake. London : Ken Campbell, 1977.
- Campbell, Ken. Tilt, the black-flagged streets. [Oxford, England] : Ken Campbell, [1988]
- Campbell, Ken. Wall. [London] : Ken Campbell, 2008.
- Campbell, Ken. The Word Returned. [London] : [Ken Campbell], 1996.
- Campbell, Ken. You all know the words. [London] : [Ken Campbell], 2015.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into six series: I. Artist Book Materials ; II. Sculpture Materials ; III. Separate Prints ; IV. Exhibition Materials ; V: Miscellaneous Printed Materials ; VI: Miscellaeous Correspondence. Parts of the collection vary in size and are stored separately, as noted in the finding aid.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

Art -- Interviews
Artists' books -- Exhibitions
Artists -- Great Britain
Criticism
Poetry and the arts
Poets, English
Sculptors -- Great Britain
Sculpture, British

Genres / Formats

Artists' books
Artists' books -- Great Britain
Artists' proofs
Audiocassettes
Book art
Book designers' mock-ups
Book objects
Digital prints
Etchings (prints)
Exhibition catalogs
Forms (type composition equipment)
Gelatin silver prints
Letterpress printing
Oral histories
Photographs
Photolithographs
Poems
Printing plates
Proofs (printed matter)
Prospectuses
Sculpture (visual work)
Self-portraits
Typography

Names

Ackroyd, Norman, 1938-
Benveniste, Asa
Campbell, Ken, 1939-2022
Catling, B. (Brian)
Chambers, David, 1930-
Courtney, Cathy
Cummings, E. E. (Edward Estlin), 1894-1962
Drucker, Johanna, 1952-
Esteve-Coll, Elizabeth

Ferguson, Joan P.S.
Greenham, Peter, 1909-1992
King, David, 1943-
MacLeod, Morag
Petro, Pamela, 1960-
Robinson, Duncan
Rodchenko, Aleksandr Mikhaïlovich, 1891-1956
Wallrich, Lawrence Allen, 1929-1993

Corporate Bodies

Beardsmore Gallery (London, England)
Brighton Polytechnic. Gallery
British Library. National Sound Archive
Buchhandlung Hugo Frick
Free Church of Scotland
Herzog August Bibliothek
Inner London Education Authority
Modern Art Oxford
Museum of Modern Art (Oxford, England)
National Art Library (Great Britain)
New York Public Library
Norwich School of Art
Norwich School of Art. Gallery
Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh
University of Edinburgh. Department of Celtic and Scottish Studies
University of Wales, Aberystwyth. Arts Centre
Victoria and Albert Museum