

Guide to the Cecile Starr Papers Relating to Mary Ellen Bute

GEN MSS 679



by Lisa Conathan

2009

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
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New Haven, CT 06520-8330
(203) 432-2977
beinecke.library@yale.edu
<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

CALL NUMBER: GEN MSS 679

CREATOR: Starr, Cecile

TITLE: Cecile Starr papers relating to Mary Ellen Bute

DATES: 1935-2009

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 5.07 linear feet (11 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The Cecile Starr Papers Relating to Mary Ellen Bute consist of Starr's research files on the filmmaker Mary Ellen Bute and audiovisual recordings of and about Bute. The papers document Starr's research and fundraising to produce a documentary film about Bute (never completed) as well as Starr's work to publicize and distribute Bute's films, especially after Bute's death.

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

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.starr>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to beinecke.images@yale.edu.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder
■■■■ item barcode

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Purchased from Cecile Starr on the Edith and Richard French Fund, 2009.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Boxes 7, 10-11 (audiovisual formats): Restricted fragile material. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.

Conditions Governing Use

The Cecile Starr Papers Relating to Mary Ellen Bute is the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

Preferred Citation

Cecile Starr Papers Relating to Mary Ellen Bute. General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Processing Information

Box 9, folders 102-116 are unused. Original audiocassettes are contained in box 7, folders 74-88.

Cecile Starr (1921-2014)

Filmmaker, critic, and producer Cecile Starr was born July 14, 1921 in Nashville, Tennessee. She studied film at Columbia University, where she taught from 1955-1961. She worked as a consultant and educational coordinator for the Lincoln Center, the New School for Social Research, Hunter College, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the United Nations World Health Organization. She married film producer Aram Boyajian in 1957. Starr died in 2014.

Mary Ellen Bute, 1906-1983

Mary Ellen Bute was a film animator, director and producer. She was a pioneer in adopting electronic techniques for film animation. Early in her career she made animated films in the "visual music" style that synchronized abstract images and music. Her later films were live action and included adaptations of works by James Joyce and Thornton Wilder.

Bute was born in Houston, Texas in 1906. She studied painting at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia and lighting design at Yale University. Her early influences included Leon Theremin and Gerald Warburg and she collaborated with Theremin to produce a paper titled "Light as an art material and its possible synchronization with sound" (1932). Most of Bute's films were produced by Ted Nemeth Studios or Expanding Cinema Studios and her collaborators included Norman McLaren and Melville Webber. Later in life Bute was a founding member of the Women's Independent Film Exchange.

Bute's films include: "Synchrony" (1932 or 1933), "Rhythm in Light" (1934), "Synchrony No. 2" (1935), "Dada" (1936), "Parabola" (1937), "Escape" (1937), "Spook Sport" (1939), "Tarantella" (1940), "Polka Graph" (1947), "Color Rhapsody" (1948), "Imagination" (1948), "New Sensations in Sound" (1949), "Pastorale" (1950), "Abstronic" (1952), "Mood Contrasts" (1953), "The Boy Who Saw Through" (1956, producer), "Passages from James Joyce's Finnegans Wake" (1965-1967), and "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" (1977-1980, unfinished). Bute's projects also include two adaptations of plays: "Lazarus Laughed" by Eugene O'Neill and "Skin of Our Teeth" by Thornton Wilder (both unfinished).

In 1940 Bute married camera operator and painter Theodore (Ted) Nemeth and they collaborated on many of her projects. Ted Nemeth Studios focused on commercial films and Nemeth also handled the distribution of Bute's films. Bute and Nemeth had two sons: Theodore Jr. and James.

Scope and Contents

The Cecile Starr Papers Relating to Mary Ellen Bute consist of Starr's research files on the filmmaker Mary Ellen Bute and audiovisual recordings of and about Bute. The papers document Starr's research and fundraising to produce a documentary film about Bute (never completed) as well as Starr's work to publicize and distribute Bute's films, especially after Bute's death.

Arrangement

Organized into four series: I. Research Files, 1935-2008. II. Audio Recordings, 1976-2006. III. Video Recordings, 1977-1999. IV. Printed Material, 2008-2009.

Collection Contents

Series I: Research Files, 1935-2008

2.5 linear feet (6 boxes)

Series I consists of Starr's research files on Mary Ellen Bute. Files include correspondence (incoming and copies of outgoing), drafts of writings, copies of printed material, and notes. The topics of the material relate to Mary Ellen Bute, Starr's research on Bute (especially Starr's planned documentary film on Bute), and Starr's work to publicize and distribute Bute's films.

Series I is arranged as received by the Beinecke Library.

b. 1, f. 1	Bute, Mary Ellen	1952-1983
b. 1, f. 2	Nemeth, Ted	1945-2008
b. 1, f. 3	Boyd, Rutherford	1935, undated
b. 1, f. 4	Bruguière, Francis, <i>Light Rhythm</i>	1977-2008
b. 1, f. 5	Dockum, Charles	2004-2007, undated
b. 1, f. 6	Gengaro, Christine Lee	2006
b. 1, f. 7	Production of documentary on Bute	1996-2003
b. 1, f. 8	Fundraising for documentary on Bute	1987-1997, undated
b. 1, f. 9	Hollander, David	2000-2006
b. 1, f. 10	Hall, Wendy Jackson	1994-2003
b. 1, f. 11	Kudláček, Martina	2003-2008
b. 1, f. 12	Leger, Jackie	1990-2000
b. 1, f. 13	Muskat, Lisa	1997-1998
b. 1, f. 14	Shamash, Jessica	1999-2003
b. 1, f. 15	Other possible filmmakers	1997-1999
b. 2, f. 16-17	Naumann, Sandra	2005-2008
b. 2, f. 18	University of Minnesota	1996-1999
b. 2, f. 19	University of Wisconsin	1992-2007
b. 2, f. 20	Interviews with Bute and with others about Bute	1984-2002, undated
b. 2, f. 21	Lion, Margo	1990-2007
b. 2, f. 22	Moritz, William	1996-2002
b. 2, f. 23	Posner, Bruce	1995-2006

b. 2, f. 24	Schoonmaker, Thelma	1996-2007
b. 2, f. 25-26	Basquin, Kit	1994-2006
b. 3, f. 27-28	Basquin, Kit (continued)	1984-1999
b. 3, f. 29	Mollot, Larry	1987-2006
b. 3, f. 30-32	<i>Mary Ellen Bute: Expanding Cinema</i> (planned documentary on Bute), script, draft and notes (copy)	undated
b. 3, f. 33	Note cards	undated
b. 3, f. 34	Essay for Notable American Women, drafts, correspondence and notes	2002-2003
b. 3, f. 35	Women's Film Preservation Fund	1998-2007
b. 4, f. 36	Bute prints and preservation	1998-2007
b. 4, f. 37	Bute holdings	1995-2006
b. 4, f. 38	Pike, Angeline. Creative Film Society	1992-2006
b. 4, f. 39-40	Yale University	1987-2008
b. 4, f. 41	Bute film copyrights	1990-1998
b. 4, f. 42	Finnegans Wake	1999-2008, undated
b. 4, f. 43	Finnegans Wake. U.S. rentals	1982-2002
b. 4, f. 44	Finnegans Wake. Foreign rentals	1996-2001
b. 4, f. 45	Finnegans Wake. Gerry Fialka	2004-2008
b. 4, f. 46	Bute in films of others	undated
b. 4, f. 47	Bute in magazines and newspapers	1981-2003
b. 4, f. 48	Bute in books	2005, undated
b. 4, f. 49	Bute promotion. Television	1977-1994
b. 5, f. 50	Bute "Dope sheet." BBC television program	1999-2001
b. 5, f. 51-52	General correspondence	1982-2008
b. 5, f. 53	Canada	2001-2006
b. 5, f. 54-56	Bute rentals. Shorts	1990-2004
b. 5, f. 57-58	Bute rentals. Shorts. Europe	1991-2004
b. 5, f. 59	Short abstract films	1988-2002
b. 5, f. 60	London. Sketch Gallery	2008
b. 5, f. 61	Programs	2000-2008






b. 5, f. 62	Women's Independent Film Exchange	1980s
b. 6, f. 63	Bute promotion. Foreign	1994-1998
b. 6, f. 64	Institute of Media Archaeology	2006-2007
b. 6, f. 65	Stephanie Maxwell. European tour	1996
b. 6, f. 66-73	Programs	1990-2008

Series II: Audio Recordings, 1976-2006*0.42 linear feet (1 box)*

Series II consists of 1/8-inch audio cassette recordings of interviews and events relating to Mary Ellen Bute. Folder descriptions are based on information on the cassettes and cases.

Box 7 (audiocassettes): Restricted fragile. Use copies may be requested. Please consult with Access Services for more information.

Series II is arranged as received by the Beinecke Library.

b. 7, f. 74,  39002137188703	<p>Camera Three. Finnegans Wake 1 <i>Audiocassette</i> 00:28:33 <i>Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> The program is distorted at times. [Aviary] gen mss 0679 39002137188703.u.mp3</p> <p>Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.</p>	undated
b. 7, f. 75,  39002137188711	<p>Virginia Gibbs Smyth interview about Mary Ellen Bute by Kit Smith Basquin 1 <i>Audiocassette</i> 00:39:59 <i>Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> Audio is unbalanced. High background noise is present. The program is distorted at times. [Aviary] gen mss 0679 39002137188711.u.mp3</p> <p>Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.</p>	1984 August 11
b. 7, f. 76,  39002137188729	<p>Cecile Starr. Joyce Society. Donnell Library 1 <i>Audiocassette</i> 00:27:38 <i>Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> The program is distorted at times. High frequency background noise is present. High background noise is present. [Aviary] gen mss 0679 39002137188729.u.mp3</p> <p>Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.</p>	undated
b. 7, f. 77,  39002137188737	<p>BBC "Dope sheet" 1 <i>Audiocassette</i> 00:08:14 <i>Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> High background noise is present. The program is distorted at times. Audio is unbalanced. Static is present. [Aviary] gen mss 0679 39002137188737.u.mp3</p> <p>Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.</p>	undated
b. 7, f. 78,  39002137188745	<p>Cecile Starr interview with Barbara Moss at Donnell Library. Cecile Starr talk at Donnell 1 <i>Audiocassette</i> 01:12:30 <i>Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> There is a gap in the audio from 01:01:33-01:02:46. The program is distorted at times. High background noise is present. Static can be heard. Audio, at times, sounds hollow or unclear. [Aviary] gen mss 0679 39002137188745 a.u.mp3</p> <p>Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.</p>	2004

b. 7, f. 79, ■■■ 39002137188752	Cecile Starr. Cooper Union; French Lesson <i>1 Audiocassette 01:30:27 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> High amounts of hiss are present. Clicks and pops can be heard. Static is present. [Aviary] gen_mss_0679_39002137188752_a.u.mp3 Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	1989 October 18
b. 7, f. 80, ■■■ 39002137188760	Mary Ellen Bute speaks at the Chicago Art Institute on self and films; Pat Jaffee and C. Starr at the Collective <i>1 Audiocassette 01:01:22 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> High background noise can be heard. Static is present. The program is distorted at times. [Aviary] gen_mss_0679_39002137188760_a.u.mp3 Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	1976 May 7, 1985 December 6
b. 7, f. 81, ■■■ 39002137188778	Bute, Grant, Starr. Am. Film Festival <i>1 Audiocassette 00:53:51 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> High background noise can be heard. Stati is present. Audio, at times, sounds hollow or unclear. There is no audio in the left channel from about 21:30 until the end of the program. [Aviary] gen_mss_0679_39002137188778_a.u.mp3 Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	1979 June 1
b. 7, f. 82, ■■■ 39002137188786	Thelma Schoonmaker. Margo Lion <i>1 Audiocassette 01:00:52 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> Static can be heard. High background noise is present. The program is distorted at times. Audio is unbalanced. There is a fluttering noise in the left channel throughout the program. There is a gap in the audio from 01:00:51-01:03:57. [Aviary] gen_mss_0679_39002137188786_a.u.mp3 Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	undated
b. 7, f. 83, ■■■ 39002137188794	Ted Nemeth, Bruce Posner, Cecile Starr on Bute (1 of 2) <i>1 Audiocassette 01:33:42 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> Static and high background noise are present. The program is distorted at times. [Aviary] gen_mss_0679_39002137188794_a.u.mp3 Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	1984 May 30
b. 7, f. 84, ■■■ 39002137188802	Ted Nemeth, Bruce Posner, Cecile Starr on Bute (2 of 2) <i>1 Audiocassette 00:34:45 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> There is a warble that can be heard on the program. The program is distorted at times. Static is present. [Aviary] gen_mss_0679_39002137188802_a.u.mp3 Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	1984 May 30
b. 7, f. 85, ■■■ 39002137188810	Doris Chase. Hilary Harris. Gordon Hitchens <i>1 Audiocassette 01:05:11 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> Static can be heard. High background noise is present. Audio is unbalanced. The program is distorted at times. [Aviary] gen_mss_0679_39002137188810_a.u.mp3 Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	undated


b. 7, f. 86, [barcode] 39002137188828	<p>Ted Nemeth reading Mary Ellen Bute's biography and Ted Jr.'s <i>Finnegans Wake</i> statement <i>1 Audiocassette 00:47:04 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> The program is distorted at times. Static and high amounts of hiss are present. High background noise is present. There is a gap in the audio from 06:07-07:52 and 44:36-45:23. [Aviary] gen mss_0679_39002137188828.u.mp3</p> <p>Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.</p>	1984 May 30
b. 7, f. 87, [barcode] 39002137188836	<p>William Moritz. Bruce Posner <i>1 Audiocassette 00:40:09 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> High amounts of hiss and background noise are present. There is silence on the tape from 33:08-34:47. There is a buzz on the tape. [Aviary] gen mss_0679_39002137188836.u.mp3</p> <p>Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.</p>	undated
b. 7, f. 88, [barcode] 39002137188844	<p>Peter Haskell speaks at University of Southern California screening of <i>Passages from James Joyce's Finnegans Wake</i> <i>1 Audiocassette 00:57:57 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> The program is distorted at times. Static is present. The program is recorded at a very low level. Audio, at times, sounds hollow or unclear. High amounts of hiss are present. [Aviary] gen mss_0679_39002137188844</p> <p>Includes remarks by Peter Haskell and panel discussion with Peter Haskell, Gerry Fialka and Cindy Keefer.</p> <p>Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.</p>	2006 November 16

Series III: Video Recordings, 1977-1999*1.34 linear feet (2 boxes)*


Series III consists of VHS tape recordings of interviews, broadcasts and demos relating to Mary Ellen Bute. Folder descriptions are based on information on the cassettes and cases.

Boxes 10-11 (audiovisual material): Restricted Fragile. Use copies may be requested. Please consult with Access Services for more information.

Series III is arranged as received by the Beinecke Library.

b. 8, f. 89,  39002137188851	Camera Three, Women in Film, Part III, and Finnegans Wake, Buffalo <i>1 Videocassette (VHS) 01:29:53 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> [Aviary] gen_mss_0679_39002137188851 Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	1977 February, undated
b. 8, f. 90,  39002137188869	Women in Film, Part II <i>1 Videocassette (VHS) 01:00:19 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> [Aviary] gen_mss_0679_39002137188869 Includes Edie Lynch, Cecile Starr, Mary Ellen Bute, Linda Feferman. Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	1977
b. 8, f. 91,  39002137188877	Dope Sheet. Series #3 <i>1 Videocassette (VHS) 00:30:06 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> [Aviary] gen_mss_0679_39002137188877 Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	1999 October
b. 8, f. 92,  39002137188885	Demo reel by Muskat. Rough cut. Not accepted <i>1 Videocassette (VHS) 00:07:01 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> [Aviary] gen_mss_0679_39002137188885 Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	1998 March 20
b. 8, f. 93,  39002137188893	Zack Bowen and Philip Lyman <i>1 Videocassette (VHS) 00:54:56 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> [Aviary] gen_mss_0679_39002137188893 Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	undated
b. 8, f. 94,  39002137188901	Page Johnson, Philip Lyman and Larry Kardish <i>1 Videocassette (VHS) 00:36:55 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> There is a high amount of hum on the tape. There is a break up between camera starts and stops on the tape. [Aviary] gen_mss_0679_39002137188901 Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	undated

b. 8, f. 95, [REDACTED] 39002137188919	John Bute in Houston, Part I <i>1 Videocassette (VHS) 00:33:00 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> The video is clipped. The program ends abruptly. [Aviary] gen_mss_0679_39002137188919 Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	undated
b. 8, f. 96, [REDACTED] 39002137188927	John Bute in Houston, Part II <i>1 Videocassette (VHS) 01:03:12 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> Video is clipped. The program starts abruptly. There is a breakup in the tape at about 00:15:25. [Aviary] gen_mss_0679_39002137188927 Video of wedding ceremony and celebration begins at 00:15:25. Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	undated
b. 8, f. 97, [REDACTED] 39002137188935	Interview with Thelma Schoonmaker. Unedited <i>1 Videocassette (VHS) 00:26:30 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> [Aviary] gen_mss_0679_39002137188935 Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	undated
b. 8, f. 98, [REDACTED] 39002137188943	Stoney, Jacobs and Mekas <i>1 Videocassette (VHS) 01:29:51 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> Video distortion is visible. The program has a break in the recording at 01:28:28. Recorded on-screen dashes from a tape counter is present. [Aviary] gen_mss_0679_39002137188943 Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	undated
b. 8, f. 99, [REDACTED] 39002137188950	William Moritz and Bruce Posner, Tape 1 <i>1 Videocassette (VHS) 00:36:50 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> The video is clipped. There is a breakup followed by additional programming at about 10:45. [Aviary] gen_mss_0679_39002137188950 Note: Posner comments are at the very end of the tape. Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	undated
b. 8, f. 100, [REDACTED] 39002137188968	William Moritz and Bruce Posner, Tape 2 <i>1 Videocassette (VHS) 00:18:00 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)</i> [Aviary] gen_mss_0679_39002137188968 Note reads: Moritz, not satisfied with the videotape made at Harvard with Starr + Mollot, sent from California his more definitive thoughts about Bute in relation to Fischinger and McLaren. Most informative and interesting. C. Starr 12/21/08 The video begins with a brief image and sound of drums playing prior to the interview. Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.	undated

b. 8, f. 101, 
39002137188976

Bute documentary demo
1 Videocassette (VHS) 00:14:31 Duration (HH:MM:SS.mmm)
[\[Aviary\] gen_mss_0679_39002137188976](#)

undated

Audiovisual material. Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested.
Consult Access Services for further information.

Series IV: Printed Material, 2008-2009*0.42 linear feet (1 box)*

German; English

In German and English.

Series IV consists of printed materials relating to Mary Ellen Bute.

Series IV is arranged as received by the Beinecke Library.

b. 12, f. 130	<i>Farbe – Licht – Musik: Synästhesie und Farblichtmusik</i>	2008
b. 12, f. 131	<i>AUDIO • VISUAL on Visual Music and Related Media</i>	2008
b. 12, f. 132	<i>See This Sound: Versprechungen von Bild und Ton Promises in Sound and Vision</i>	2009
b. 12, f. 133	Other printed material	2009

Restricted Fragile Material

Restricted fragile material. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.

b. 10, f. 117-126 Box 8, folders 89-98

b. 11, f. 127-129 Box 8, folders 99-101

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

Cinematographers
Independent filmmakers
Motion picture producers and directors
Motion pictures
Women motion picture producers and directors

Occupations

Filmmakers

Names

Bute, Mary Ellen
Starr, Cecile