



STEVE CONTI COLLECTION OF SASCHA BRASTOFF PHOTOGRAPHS

Coll2006-008

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Date Completed

October 1, 2006



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Descriptive Summary

Title

Steve Conti Collection of Sascha Brastoff Photographs

Creator

Steve Conti

Extent

Number of items: 15 photographs

Date

Circa 1940-circa 1965

Repository

ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California

Abstract

15 photographs of artist and designer Sascha Brastoff, primarily in drag, from circa 1940 to circa 1965.



Administrative Information

Access

The collection is open to researchers when ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives is open, and at other times by appointment. There are no access restrictions.

Publication Rights

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Preferred Citation

Box #, sheet #, Sascha Brastoff Photograph Collection, Coll2006-008, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California

Indexing Terms

This collection is indexed under the following terms:

Persons:

Brastoff, Sascha, 1918-1993
Conti, Steve

Subjects:

Gay Artists—United States.

Document Types:

Photographs

Acquisitions Information

Gift of Steve Conti, February 2004.

Processing Information

Collection processed by Michael Palmer, October 1, 2006

Biography

Steve Conti is the co-author, together with A DeWayne Bethany and Bill Seay, of . *Collector's Encyclopedia of Sascha Brastoff* (Paducah, KY: Collector Books, c1995).

Sascha Brastoff, potter, metal sculptor, and jewelry designer, was born Samuel Brostofsky in Cleveland, Ohio, on October 23, 1918. He attended Glenville High School in Cleveland, and took drama classes under the future Hollywood producer Ross Hunter. At age 17, he began studying dance with Edward Caton, and later danced for several seasons with the Cleveland Ballet. Impressed with his artistic abilities, his art teachers formed a small private scholarship to enable him to attend the Western Reserve University School of Art in Cleveland. In 1940, Brastoff moved to New York where he designed window displays for Macy's and joined the Clay Club, where in 1941 he held a one-man show of his terra cotta "whimsies". In 1942, he joined the U.S. Army Air Force, where he designed costumes and scenery for Special Services events to entertain the troops; he also appeared on stage, and became well known for his comic interpretation of Carmen Miranda. In 1944, Brastoff moved to California, where he signed a seven-year contract with 20th Century Fox as a designer and entertainer. In 1947, he opened his first ceramic plant in Los Angeles, selling hand-painted earthenware. In 1952, with backing from Winthrop Rockefeller, Brastoff opened a new factory in Los Angeles. It was destroyed by fire six months later, and in 1953, Brastoff opened a new 35,000-square foot factory and showroom that eventually employed more than 100 people. In 1960, the business began to decline, and in 1962 Brastoff suffered a nervous collapse and left the company, which continued to sell wares under his name until it finally closed in 1973. After several years away from business, Brastoff returned in 1966 with a one-man show of metal sculpture at the Dalzell Hatfield Galleries in Los Angeles. He thereafter designed and produced lines for ceramic, jewelry, and decorative arts companies. As his health declined after 1985, he increasingly curtailed his artistic activities. He died after a long battle with prostate cancer on February 4, 1993.

Sources:

Conti, Steve; Bethany, A. DeWayne; Seay, Bill. *Collector's Encyclopedia of Sascha Brastoff*. Paducah, KY: Collector Books, c1995.

Sascha Brastoff—Wisconsin Pottery Association. 1998.

<http://www.wisconsinpottery.org/brastoff/brastoff.htm>, accessed on September 30, 2006.

Scope and Content

The collection consists of one photograph of Sascha Brastoff in the costume of the title role in *Afternoon of a Faun*, which he danced for the Cleveland Ballet, circa 1940; one photograph taken at a costume party, circa 1950; three photographs of Brastoff in drag, possibly as Audrey Hepburn, circa 1955; nine photographs, labeled "A" through "K" ("A", "B", and "I" are missing), of Brastoff in drag, with processing dates December 1963-March 1964; and one Polaroid photograph of Brastoff in drag, circa 1965.

Container List

Box	Sheet	
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1	1	Sascha Brastoff in costume for <i>Afternoon of a Faun</i> , circa 1940.
1	2	Sascha Brastoff with two young men in Polynesian attire at costume party, circa 1950.
1	3-4	Sascha Brastoff in drag, possibly as Audrey Hepburn, circa 1955.
1	5-7	Sascha Brastoff in drag, December 1963-February 1964.
1	8	Sascha Brastoff in drag outdoors decorating pot, circa 1965.