Guide to the
Stormé DeLarverié photographs
1955-2014
SCP 186079

Processed by Emily P. Dunne in 2022.

Summary

Creator: DeLarverié, Stormé, 1920-2014

Title: Stormé DeLarverié photographs

Date: 1955-2014

Size: 1.67 linear feet (4 boxes)

Source: Gift of Lisa Cannistraci and Michele Zalopany, 2014.

Abstract: The Stormé DeLarverié photographs document DeLarverié’s long career as a singer and gay rights activist from the 1950s until her death in 2014. The collection contains personal and professional photographs, including candid pictures of DeLarverié at events and parties, at home and performances, including her role as the Master of Ceremonies for the Jewel Box Review, the first integrated traveling, drag, nightclub act.

Preferred citation: Stormé DeLarverié photographs, Photographs and Prints Division. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Processed by Emily P. Dunne in 2022.

Creator History

This note was originally written by Tiana M. Taliep for the Stormé DeLarverié papers (Sc MG 901) finding aid, published in 2017. Some changes have been made by Emily P. Dunne in 2022.

Stormé DeLarverié was born on December 24, 1920, in New Orleans, Louisiana, to an African American mother and a white father. She is known for being a singer, male impersonator, bouncer, and gay rights activist.

From the mid-1950s through the 1960s, DeLarverié was the master of ceremonies of the Jewel Box Revue, America’s first racially inclusive traveling revue of impersonators. The show was called “25 Men and 1 Girl,” as DeLarverié dressed as a man and the rest of the cast members, all men, dressed as
women. She was one of the most successful male impersonators and drag kings of her day and a prized performer.

DeLarverié was present and participated in the melee at the Stonewall Inn the night of June 28, 1969. DeLaverié's role in the movement lasted long after 1969. For decades, she was a self-appointed guardian and supporter of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community. She was a member of the Stonewall Veterans' Association, holding the offices of Chief of Security, Ambassador, and in 1998 through 2000, Vice President. DeLarverié was well-known in the community and participated in the annual New York City Gay Pride Parade with the Stonewall Veterans and "Stormé's baby," the historic 1969 Cadillac convertible, or the "Stonewall Car." In 2000, DeLarverié received a "Gay Lifetime Achievement Award" from Senior Action in a Gay Environment (SAGE). Often referred to as the "Rosa Parks" of the gay rights movement, DeLarverié was a fierce woman and advocate who stood up for the LGBT community on countless occasions. On May 24, 2014, she passed away in her sleep from a heart attack at the age of 93.

Scope and Content Note

The Stormé DeLarverié photographs contain images removed from the Stormé DeLarverié papers (Sc MG 901) in 2017. This collection includes primarily color and black and white photographs and some negatives arranged into personal and professional groupings. Snapshots of DeLarverié with friends at events and at home are present in the collection, as well as photographs of DeLarverié's time as the Master of Ceremonies for the Jewel Box Revue, a traveling drag show that played in nightclubs throughout the United States. Most of the personal photographs are from the 1970s through 2014, and the bulk of the professional materials are from 1955 to 1969, but also include some photographs of DeLarverié's work with the Stonewall Veterans through the 1990s and 2010s.

The personal collection contains the contents of two photo albums and images that were affixed to DeLarverié's wall. These files contain a combination of candid photographs of friends and images related to DeLarverié's career as a performer and activist. Several photographs from 1992 showing the montage of images arranged on DeLarverié's wall can be seen in the folder Images Arranged on Wall at Home, 1970s-2002.

The personal collection also includes photographs with friends at different events and parties. DeLarverié's birthday was observed on December 24th, and there are several photographs of a joint birthday and Christmas Eve party that was held throughout the years. There are also photographs of DeLarverié at home, with partners, friends, and pets.

The professional grouping contains several professional headshots and photographs of DeLarverié, from 1955 until the 2010s, with images of DeLarverié from every decade during that span of time.

The earliest photographs in this collection date from 1955 through 1969. During this time, DeLarverié toured with other drag performers as the Master of Ceremonies for the Jewel Box Revue. The photographs from this tour provide a visual record of DeLarverié's performances. DeLarverié would channel the male crooners of a bygone era, wearing tuxedos with elaborate cuffs, or 1940s-era zoot suits. The photographs provide images of these performances, as well as a list of the different nightclubs that would host the act. Photographs of other drag performers are also included in the collection, most notably the singer and drag artist Angie Stardust.

A limited number of photographs of DeLarverié's professional life after touring with the Jewel Box Review are included as well, many dating from the 1990s. Photographs in this portion of the collection
include the Stonewall Veterans marching in the New York City Pride March, DeLarverié attending meetups, and more.

Key Terms

Subjects
African American entertainers
African American lesbians
African American musicians
African American singers
Drag kings
Gay bars -- United States
Gay liberation movement
Gay rights -- United States
Lesbian activists
Male impersonators -- United States
Stonewall Riots, New York, N.Y., 1969

Genre/Physical Characteristic
Negatives (photographs)
Photographs

Names
DeLarverié, Stormé, 1920-2014
Jewel Box Revue (Musical group)
Stonewall Rebellion Veterans Association
Container List

Personal

b. 1 f. 1
Photo Album 1976-1984

b. 1 f. 2-3
Photo Album 1976-1980

b. 1 f. 4-5
"Images Arranged on Wall at Home" 1970s-2002
Includes a folder of images labeled "My House, 1992," which depicts photographs of DeLarverie's home, including the images from this folder arranged onto the wall.

b. 1 f. 6
With Friends 1970s-2000s

b. 4 f. 10
Events and Parties 1982-1994

b. 1 f. 6-7
1982-1994

b. 4 f. 10

b. 2 f. 1-2
65th Birthday Party 1985

b. 4 f. 10

b. 2 f. 3
Crazy Nanny's 1990s

b. 2 f. 4
Birthday and Christmas Party 1990s

b. 2 f. 5
Copacabana Nightclub 1992-1993

b. 2 f. 6
AC Awards Show at Claire's 1992

b. 2 f. 7
New York City Pride March 1992

b. 2 f. 8
Sweethearts Ball 1994 February 13

b. 2 f. 9
Softball Game 1994

Professional

b. 3 f. 1-2
Portraits and Headshots 1960-1999

b. 5 f. 1

Nightclub Performances
Several of these performances are of the Jewel Box Review.

b. 3 f. 3
1955-1970s

b. 3 f. 4
Snapshots 1955-1970s

b. 3 f. 5-6
Unbound Scrapbook 1955-1960s

b. 3 f. 7
Apollo Theater 1955-1969

b. 3 f. 8
Hillside Theater 1958

b. 4 f. 1
Lowe's State 1958

b. 4 f. 2
Robert's Show Club 1958

b. 4 f. 3
The Tivoli 1960-1961

b. 4 f. 4
Town and Country 1965

b. 4 f. 5
Other Drag Performers 1950s-1960s

b. 4 f. 6
Angie Stardust 1960s-1970s
Angie Stardust is the stage name for Mel Michaels, another performer at the Jewel Box Review.

b. 4 f. 7
Bathing Suit Competition, Monticello, New York 1957

b. 4 f. 8
"Fat Suit for Hard Copy" 1990s

b. 4 f. 10

b. 4 f. 9
Stonewall Veterans 1995-1999