Sam Shepard:

An Inventory of His Papers at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Shepard, Sam, 1943-
Title:	Sam Shepard Papers
Dates:	1965-2011 (bulk 1983-1987, 2001-2009)
Extent:	30 document boxes (12.6 linear feet), 1 oversize box (osb), 1 oversize folder (osf)
Abstract:	The Sam Shepard Papers consist of notebooks, drafts, publication proofs, screenplays, scripts, production and publicity material, correspondence, printed material, photographs, and awards belonging to the American playwright, author, and actor Sam Shepard.
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-5197
Language:	English, Dutch, French, German, Italian, Norwegian, Swedish
Access:	Open for research Redactions Note: **The production and research materials contain a number of items from which personal information has been redacted or restricted to protect an individual's privacy**. Examples are social security, telephone, and account numbers; the names of medical patients and prisoners; and personnel records. The originals were removed and have been replaced with redacted photocopies, which have an identifying statement at the top.

Administrative Information

Provenance Note The Sam Shepard Papers were purchased by the University of Texas Libraries in 2006. Originally cataloged and opened for research by the Fine Arts Library, in December 2010 the collection was transferred to the Ransom Center, where recent additions to the papers were processed and the entire collection re-cataloged. In November 2011, the Ransom Center purchased material that was previously on deposit at the Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library at the University of Virginia. Additional material was also acquired from Shepard at that time. This material was integrated into the existing arrangement in 2012.

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Acquisition: Purchases and Gifts, 2006-2011 (10-12-001-T, 11-11-005-P, 11-12-010-P, 11-09-015-G)

Processed by: Liz Murray, 2011; Daniela Lozano, 2012

Repository: The University of Texas at Austin, Harry Ransom Center

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Biographical Sketch

Sam Shepard was born Samuel Shepard Rogers VII in Fort Sheridan, Illinois, on November 5, 1943. The son of an army officer, he spent his childhood living on different military bases, along with his mother, who was a teacher, and his two sisters. The family lived in South Dakota, Utah, Florida, and Guam, and eventually settled in Duarte, California, where they lived on an avocado ranch. He began acting and writing poetry while in high school, and worked as a stable hand at a horse ranch. After graduating in 1960, he attended Mount San Antonio Junior College to study agriculture. He quit school after one year to join a traveling theater group, the Bishop's Company Repertory Players.

In 1963, Shepard left the theater group and moved to New York to pursue an acting career. He shared an apartment with his old high school friend, Charles Mingus, Jr., son of the legendary jazz musician, who helped him get a job at jazz club, The Village Gate. It was there that Shepard met Ralph Cook, founder of the Theatre Genesis, who encouraged him to write plays. Shepard's first two plays, *Cowboys* (1964), and *The Rock Garden* (1964), were avant-garde one-act plays performed at the Theatre Genesis. He quickly attracted a following in what became known as the Off-Off-Broadway movement, being dubbed as "the one to watch." He went on to write several more one-act plays, including the Obie Award winners: *Chicago* (1965), *Icarus' Mother* (1965), and *Red Cross* (1966). He wrote his first full-length play, *La Turista*, in 1967, for which he also received an Obie Award. That same year, Shepard began to play drums with the rock band The Holy Modal Rounders. His musical involvement influenced his writing leading to what are referred to as "the Rock plays," which include the Obie Award winning *Melodrama Play* (1968), *Operation Sidewinder* (1970), and *Mad Dog Blues* (1971).

Shepard married the actress O-Lan Jones in 1969, and they had a son, Jesse Mojo Shepard, in 1970. From 1971 to 1973, the family lived in London, England, where Shepard continued to write plays. Works from this period include *The Tooth of Crime* (1972), which marked a stylistic departure from a modernist to traditional style. Shepard returned to the U.S. in 1974, and settled in San Francisco where he became the playwright in residence at the Magic Theater from 1975 to 1983. Plays written and produced during this time include *Curse of the Starving Class* (1978), considered the first of his plays about family where he uses the domestic drama formula to explore dysfunctional individuals and families. He continued this exploration with *Buried Child* (1978), *True West* (1980), and *Fool for Love* (1983).

Other plays by Shepard include *A Lie of the Mind* (1985), *States of Shock* (1991), *Simpatico* (1993), *Eyes for Consuela* (1998), *The Late Henry Moss* (2000), *Kicking a Dead Horse* (2007), and *Ages of the Moon* (2009). He has received numerous Obie Awards, as well as a Pulitzer Prize in 1979 for *Buried Child*, and a Drama Desk Award, a New York Drama Critics' Circle Award, and an Outer Critics Circle Award in 1986 for *A Lie of the Mind*.

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In addition to his success as a playwright, Shepard has had a prolific acting career. His first role was in 1978 in the film *Days of Heaven*. It was on the set of the film *Frances* in 1982, that he met Jessica Lange, leading him to end his marriage to Jones in 1984. He and Lange have two children together, Hannah Jane and Samuel Walker Shepard.

Shepard has appeared in over thirty movies including *The Right Stuff* (1983), *Country* (1984), *Crimes of the Heart* (1986), *Thunderheart* (1992), *Black Hawk Down* (2001), *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford* (2007), and *Blackthorn* (2011). Shepard's achievements in acting include an Academy Award nomination for *The Right Stuff*, an Emmy Award nomination and Golden Globe nomination for the TV movie *Dash and Lilly* (1999), and a Screen Actors Guild Award nomination for the TV movie *Ruffian* (2008).

His involvement in film also extends to screenwriting and directing. He wrote and directed the films *Far North*, released in 1988, and *Silent Tongue*, which was shown at both the Sundance and Cannes Film Festivals in 1993. He has also collaborated on screenplays with German director, Wim Wenders. They co-wrote *Paris, Texas*, which won the Golden Palm Award at the 1984 Cannes Film Festival, as well as *Don't Come Knocking*, which was entered into the 2005 Cannes Film Festival and starred Shepard in the lead role.

Shepard has also published several short story collections including *Motel Chronicles* (1982), *Great Dream of Heaven* (2002), and *Day Out of Days* (2009). His stories have appeared in the *New Yorker*, the *Paris Review*, and the *New York Times Magazine*.

Sources:

In addition to material found within the Sam Shepard Papers, the following sources were used:

"Sam Shepard." *Contemporary Authors Online*, http://galenet.galegroup.com (accessed 23 October 2012).

"Sam Shepard." *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, http://galenet.galegroup.com (accessed 23 October 2012).

Scope and Contents

The Sam Shepard Papers consist of notebooks, drafts, publication proofs, screenplays, scripts, production and publicity material, correspondence, printed material, photographs, and awards belonging to the American playwright, author, and actor Sam Shepard. The papers document Shepard's various works for stage and screen, his collections of short stories and other writings, and his acting career. The materials date from 1965-2011, with the bulk dating from 1983-1987 and 2001-2009. They are organized into five series: I. Works, 1975-2010, undated; II. Acting, 1982-2011,

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undated; III. Correspondence, 1978-2010, undated; IV. Personal and Career-Related, 1965-2009, undated; and V. Works of Others, 1984-2006, undated.

Series I. Works makes up the bulk of the papers and contains materials associated with Shepard's writings. It is subdivided into two subseries: A. Stage and Screen, 1976-2010, undated; and B. Other Writings, 1975-2010, undated. Materials in each of these subseries are arranged in alphabetical order by title of work, and within each title, by chronological order of creation, from early drafts to finished works. When applicable, related material such as production and publicity material, playbills, reviews, and other items follow the drafts.

Subseries A. Stage and Screen primarily contains drafts of Shepard's stage plays and screenplays. There is considerable material for the stage plays *Ages of the Moon*, *Kicking a Dead Horse*, *Fool for Love*, and *A Lie of the Mind*, including revised versions of drafts and production material. *Fool for Love*, which was produced for both stage and screen, and *A Lie of the Mind* were both directed by Shepard and both contain rehearsal scripts and production notes. Of the screenplays in this subseries, *Don't Come Knocking*, *Far North*, and *Paris, Texas* are particularly well represented. Because Shepard also directed *Far North*, there is a considerable amount of production material present, including scripts with camera directions, notes on set design, shooting schedules, and correspondence regarding casting. The material for *Paris, Texas* illustrates the various versions that the story went through and includes some correspondence from his collaborator and the director of the film, Wim Wenders. Several titles reflect his collaboration with others including Joseph Chaikin and T-Bone Burnett. Most of the title pages of the more recent projects are signed by Shepard. Correspondence scattered throughout this series, including a small amount of Shepard's outgoing correspondence, is indexed at the end of the finding aid.

Also of interest in this subseries are twenty-six notebooks containing handwritten notes and ideas related to the plays Shepard wrote, films in which he acted, story ideas, and his travels. These notebooks provide a richly detailed perspective of Shepard's working life, and most cross genres, relating to his work as a writer, actor, and musician. One notebook from 1991 is inscribed to Shepard by Jessica Lange with a personal note about their relationship. More than half of the notebooks are labeled by play title, film, geographic location and/or other identifiers (blues film, fishing play, etc.). Original labels, if present, are transcribed in the container list in single quotes. The notebooks are arranged in rough chronological order. Additional notebooks that contain information relating to only one work are filed with that project.

Subseries B. Other Writings includes drafts and galley proofs for three published short story collections, *Day Out of Days* (2009), *Great Dream of Heaven* (2002), and *Motel Chronicles* (1982), as well as an article, foreword, introduction, poems, song lyrics, stories published in magazines, and tributes. All are arranged alphabetically by title. The three short story collections underwent numerous arrangements and revisions before publication, which is well documented in the papers. *Day Out of Days* and *Motel Chronicles* also include several notebooks containing early handwritten drafts of stories. Nearly all of his writings bear the month/year and state or country abbreviation for the location where the work was composed or revised, as in "6/05 NY."

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Series II. Acting contains scripts from Shepard's acting projects including the films *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford*, *Baby Boom*, *Black Hawk Down*, *Blackthorn*, *Country*, *Crimes of the Heart*, *Mud*, and *Savannah*. The play *A Number*, the TV movie *Ruffian*, and the TV pilot *Tough Trade* are also represented. The scripts are often heavily annotated by Shepard and most include production material. A small amount of visual material is present for two films, *Frances* and *The Right Stuff*.

Series III. Correspondence contains incoming correspondence that spans the years 1978 to 2010. It includes letters from Woody Allen, Michael Attenborough, Michael Almereyda, Judy Boals, Joseph Chaikin, Johnny Dark, Richard Ford, Fiach MacConghail, Jesse Shepard, Peter Stampfel, Bob Wade, Tom Waits, and Wim Wenders, among others. Arranged alphabetically, the correspondence reflects the international scope of Shepard's works and recognition of his literary stature, as evidenced by interest in performing his works and numerous invitations to appear at events worldwide. While friends often wrote to Shepard directly, much of the business correspondence was mediated by his agents Martha Luttrell of ICM (International Creative Management) and Judy Boals, and is documented in this collection through email printouts. A complete index of all correspondent names in this collection is included at the end of the finding aid.

Series IV. Personal and Career Related contains a variety of material documenting Shepard's career and interests. It is arranged in alphabetical order by topic or title. The material includes articles about Shepard in newspapers and magazines, awards, invitations and public appearances, photographs, reviews, and pencil and ink sketches. Awards include four Obie Awards from 1965-1973, and The Laurence Olivier Award nomination for West End Play of the Year for *A Lie of the Mind*. Documentation of Shepard's public appearances include a joint appearance with his son, Jesse, at City Lights Booksellers in 2003, a Gala Tribute to Jessica Lange in 2006, A Tribute to César Vallejo in 2007, and a story told at *Toil and Trouble: Stories of Experiments Gone Wrong* for the storytelling series The Moth in 2008. The photographs range from a 1970 print of Shepard with the band The Holy Modal Rounders, to shots of Shepard fishing, horseback riding, and other informal snapshots. The pencil and ink drawings feature people and scenes from various locations including Arizona, California, Minnesota, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, and Wyoming, from 1985 to 1988; as well as a cross-country train ride in 1989.

Series V. Works of Others includes song lyrics by T-Bone Burnett and a silkscreen print from Kurt Vonnegut's Freedom Portfolio series, inscribed and signed by the author. Also present are writings by Johnny Dark, Shepard's father-in-law from his marriage to O-Lan Jones; selections from Jack Kerouac's *Big Sur*; playscript drafts by Sheila Tousey and Maria Vail based on Shepard's works; a screenplay draft by Michael Almereyda for *Until the End of the World*; a page proof of Ron Kovic's *Around the World in Eight Days*; and the text of Harold Pinter's 2005 Nobel acceptance speech.

Some materials that contain contact information have been restricted to protect the individual's privacy. The originals were removed and have been replaced with redacted photocopies.

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Related Material

The Mel Gussow Collection and the Jonathan Cott Collection of Sam Shepard Audio Interviews at the Ransom Center contain additional Shepard-related material.

Additional Sam Shepard material is housed at The Wittliff Collection of Southwestern Writers at Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas.

Separated Material

Non-manuscript items received with the papers were transferred to appropriate departments within the Ransom Center. Included are numerous books; a music CD for a production of *The Late Henry Moss* in San Francisco in 2000 (CD 0074); DVDs of *Ruffian* and *Wanderlust*; VHSs of *This So-Called Disaster*, November 2002, and Jesse and Sam Shepard at City Lights, April 24, 2003; production clappers from *Far North* and *Silent Tongue*; and a silver business card case engraved "The Late Henry Moss, November 2000" with a paper document enclosed: "Certificate of Death--THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT Sam Shepard IS DEAD--[signed] S. Penn, County Clerk."

Non-manuscript items received with material acquired in 2011 were also transferred to appropriate departments within the Ransom Center and include: numerous books; a Brandeis University Creative Arts Award (1984); two Drama Desk Awards for Outstanding New Play, *A Lie of the Mind* (1985-1986); a Gradiva Award for Best Play, *When the World Was Green (A Chef's Fable)* (1997); two unpublished, non-commercial audio CDs – one labeled "from Toil and Trouble" and is most likely audio from *Toil and Trouble: Stories of Experiments Gone Wrong*, held at The Moth on May 29, 2008; the second labeled with the song titles: *Raining in my Heart*, *Take Your Burden to the Lord*, and *Operator*.

Index Terms

People

Chaikin, Joseph, 1935-2003.

Dark, Johnny.

Lange, Jessica.

Wenders, Wim.

Subjects

Actors--United States--20th century.

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Authors, American--20th century.

Dramatists, American--20th century.

Motion Pictures, American.

Screenwriters.

Theater--United States--20th century.

Document Types

Awards.

Clippings.

Contact sheets.

Correspondence.

Drawings.

Electronic mail.

Ephemera.

Essays.

Galley proofs.

Manuscripts.

Notebooks.

Photographs.

Playbills.

Poems.

Postcards.

Posters.

Programs.

Publications.

Screenplays.

Scripts.

Serials (publications).

Set design drawings.

Short stories.

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Series I. Works, 1975-2010, undated

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Series IV. Personal and Career-Related, 1965-2009, undated

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Series V. Works of Others 1984-2006, undated

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