

JANE MCCOWAN PHOTOGRAPHS AND PAPERS

Mss. 4645

Inventory

Compiled by
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Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections
Special Collections, Hill Memorial Library
Louisiana State University Libraries
Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University

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Updated 2020

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SUMMARY

Size.	12 linear ft.
Geographic locations.	New York; California
Inclusive dates.	1905-1996, undated
Bulk dates.	1950-1970
Language.	English
Summary.	Photographs and other materials featuring the photography of Jane McCowan, a professional photographer and LSU alumna.
Arrangement.	There is some correlation between negatives, transparencies, and prints. With a few exceptions, the images have not been matched. Photographs and negatives are not individually dated.
Restrictions on access.	Camera restricted to use for classes and exhibits. Negatives cannot be paged without the express permission of the curator.
Related collections.	None.
Copyright.	Physical rights are retained by the LSU Libraries. Copyright of the original materials is retained by the descendants of the creator in accordance with U.S. copyright law.
Citation.	Jane McCowan Photographs, Mss. 4645, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, La.
Stack locations.	156:1-6; 145:61; AA:

BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE

Jane McCowan was born in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1912, the daughter of Helen and Clifford McCowan. At the age of 12, the family moved to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where McCowan would attend Louisiana State University, receiving a Bachelor's degree in 1934. After graduating from LSU, she worked in a portrait studio in Arkansas before moving to New York. There McCowan worked as an assistant in still life photography at the Haven Studio, and received instruction at the New York Institute of Photography. Beginning in 1945, she worked for Macy's department store, helping to create fashion advertisements, and would go on to become a nationally recognized photographer.

After moving to southern California in 1956, McCowan worked independently as a photographer. In 1996, LSU Special Collections mounted an exhibit of her work titled "A Life of Seeing Beautiful: The Photography of Jane McCowan." Her work was also featured in the 2013 exhibit, "Centuries of Style: A Retrospective of Dress." McCowan died on April 6, 1997, in Baton Rouge.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Jane McCowan Photographs consist of photographic prints, negatives, transparencies, advertisements, and publications related to McCowan's career as a professional photographer, working primarily in fashion advertising. The collection dates from 1905-1996, with the bulk of original materials created between approximately 1950 and 1970. Negatives and transparencies include black-and-white negatives of various sizes, 35 mm color slides, 8x10 color transparencies, and a small number of color negatives.

Prints and proofs are mainly professional images from McCowan's work as a photographer at Macy's in the 1950s, as well as fashion shoots in Paris, and for various swimwear advertising campaigns. There are also some personal and family photographs. A significant number of prints are dry mounted. Exhibit photographs include both mounted and unmounted copy prints used for the 1996 LSU Special Collections exhibit, "A Life of Seeing Beautiful: The Photography of Jane McCowan." Artifacts consist of a statuette for the Los Angeles Advertising Women Achievement Awards and a Hasselblad 500C camera.

LIST OF SERIES AND SUBSERIES

Series I. Negatives and Transparencies, 1950-1978, undated

Subseries 1. Negatives, circa 1950-1970

Subseries 2. Transparencies, 1950-1978, undated

Series II. Photographic Prints and Proofs, 1905-1996, undated

Subseries 1. Personal Photographs, 1905-1991, undated

Subseries 2. Fashion and Advertising Photographs, circa 1950-1970

Series III. Exhibit Materials, 1996

Series IV. Printed Materials, 1944-1971

Series V. Artifacts, 1964

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS**Series I. Negatives and Transparencies, 1950-1978, undated****Subseries 1. Negatives, circa 1950-1970**

Includes 5x7 inch and 4x5 inch black-and-white negatives from McCowan's work in fashion advertising at Macy's, as well as some portraits of individuals. 120 format negatives consist of personal photographs of McCowan's family, friends, and European travel, as well as professional photographs including shots of her studio, and for *Parents* magazine. The bulk of the negatives are 8x10 inch black-and-white images of Macy's photo shoots, which depict families, holidays, and other domestic scenes. There are also 8x10 inch negatives of a *Seventeen* magazine cover, photographs of golfers Craig Wood and Bud Geoghegan, among others, and a very small number of color negatives.

Subseries 2. Transparencies, 1964-1978, undated

This subseries consists of around 1,500 35mm color slides, subdivided by McCowan by either photo shoot, location, or subject matter. The majority are professional photographs taken for fashion advertising campaigns, including for swimwear brands *Peter Pan* and *Catalina*. There are also slides from photo shoots with a Miss USA winner (circa 1970), and model Cheryl Tiegs (undated). Other professional images include a Western-themed fashion shoot, photos from the *Dr. Doolittle* set with Rex Harrison (1967), photos of the band *The Electric Prunes* (1966), copies of a portfolio slideshow, fashion page layouts, and production shots belonging to McCowan. A smaller number of these 35 mm slides are personal photographs, featuring her travels during the 1970s to locations such as Acapulco, Greece, Rome, Venice, and Istanbul.

Other color transparencies are 8x10 inch. These include some of the same images found on the 35 mm slides, including the band *The Electric Prunes* (1966), *Peter Pan* swimwear, and fashion shoots in Jamaica and Aruba. Also included are 22 two by two inch black-and-white slides featuring actors and models. Among those identified by McCowan are Natalie Wood, Dick Van Dyke, George Chakiris, Shirley MacLaine, and Shelley Faleray. Glass color slides include 67 personal two by two inch transparencies (undated) arranged by McCowan in their own wooden box, and two cartoon images.

Series II. Photographic Prints and Proofs, 1905-1996, undated**Subseries 1. Personal Photographs, 1905-1991, undated**

Personal photographs consist of prints of McCowan, friends, and family. Family photographs include portraits of relatives from the early 20th century. Most are unidentified and undated. Other personal images show Jane on vacation, at home and work (including a party at Clayton Ave in Los Angeles in October 1986; and St. James Place retirement home in Baton Rouge), at birthday parties (1977-1981), and on the 4th of July (1976). There are photographs of the McCowans' homes, including

some taken in Little Rock in 1994, black-and-white photos of a ship and men in uniform (undated), and photographs and proof sheets of damage following the San Fernando earthquake in 1971.

Subseries 2. Fashion and Advertising Photographs, circa 1950-1970

This subseries consists of photographs from McCowan's work as a professional photographer. Images include "behind the camera" shots, most of which are 8x10 inch black-and-white photographs. These prints show McCowan at work during various photo shoots, reflecting the technical equipment used to capture images, as well as the setting in which they were taken. Some of these photographs are labeled 1976, while others are undated, but from a similar time period.

A large number of the photographs in this subseries were taken during McCowan's years as an institutional photographer working for Macy's. Images used for advertisements reflect the stereotypical ideal of mid-century American households, with domestic scenes of children and families in the late 1940s and 1950s. Some of these prints are also found in the finished advertisements that are part of Series III.

Other photographs include numerous 8x10 inch black-and-white prints from a photo shoot in Paris (circa 1950-1959), as well as dry mounted photographs from several photo shoots (circa 1960-1969) featuring women's fashions. There are also a few men's fashion photographs.

McCowan also worked in portraiture, and photographed many actors and models during her years in Los Angeles. These individuals include Ronald and Nancy Reagan, Shirley MacLaine, Natalie Wood, Yvette Mimieux, Raquel Welch, Alex Montoya, and others. The photographs date to the 1950s and 1960s, and are both black-and-white and color.

Series III. Exhibit Materials, 1996

In 1996, LSU Special Collections mounted an exhibit titled *A Life of Seeing Beautiful: The Photography of Jane McCowan*. This series primarily contains copy prints used in the preparation and installation of that exhibit. This includes both color and black-and-white prints, most dry mounted.

There are 15 16x10 inch, or smaller, mounted prints, and 13 8x10 inch, or smaller, mounted prints. There are also around 75 unmounted black-and-white copy prints (most 16x20 inch). These include images of fashion shoots, as well as photographs of advertising copy sheets. These photographs are also found in the collection as negatives, original prints, and print advertisements.

In addition, there is a DVD featuring an interview with Jane, and copies of a poster promoting the 1996 exhibit.

Series IV. Printed Materials, 1944-1971

Printed items consist of publications featuring McCowan's photography, including three *Teen* magazine covers (1961-1962), *Parents'* magazine (September 1951), *Ideabook* (1964-1968, 1974), *Australian Women's Weekly* (September 16, 1950), and various catalogs for swimwear advertising campaigns, such as Catalina Swimwear (1974-1975, 1977), Peter Pan swimwear (1966-1971), and Cole of California (1965: That Scandalous Year).

There are also two photography books: *Horst: Photographs of a Decade* (1944), and *Art and Fashion* (1944). Additional publications contain stories or features on McCowan and her professional work. These include *Sparks*, a Macy's magazine (February 1948), which includes Jane as one of its "Macylebrities;" "The F(eminine) Stop," an article by Virginia McIntire (September 1962); and *The Professional Photographer* (November 1955), with the article "Macy's 'Fashion' Studio" in the Department Store Advertising section. There is also a printed page from Macy's on preparing a position description, and two separate descriptions of McCowan's job there, as she wrote them in 1996.

Also included in this series are print advertisements from McCowan's work at Macy's in the 1950s, many of which feature the institutional photographs found in Series II. There are also a series of advertisements from a Cole of California swimwear advertising campaign, "1965: That Scandalous Year."

Series V. Artifacts, 1964

Included in this series is a statuette for the Los Angeles Advertising Women Achievement Awards. McCowan received the 1st Award for Newspaper Illustration in 1964.

Also part of the series is a Hasselblad 500C camera that belonged to McCowan.

INDEX TERMS

Materials relating to these people, places, and things can be found in the series indicated, as represented by their numbers.

Advertisements.	I-IV
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Macy's (Firm)	I-III
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Wood, Natalie.	II.2

CONTAINER LIST

<u>Stack</u> <u>Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Contents with dates</u>
Series I. Negatives and Transparencies, 1950-1978, undated		
156:1	1-3	Subseries 1. Negatives, circa 1950-1970
		Subseries 2. Transparencies, 1964-1978, undated
156:1-2	4-5	Color transparencies (including 35mm slides)
156:2	6	McCowan's personal slides (2x2 inch)
Series II. Prints and Proofs, 1905-1996, undated		
156:	7-8	Subseries 1. Personal Photographs, 1905-1991, undated
		Subseries 2. Fashion and Advertising Photographs, circa 1950-1970
156:3	9	"Behind the camera," Fashion shoots, circa 1950-1970
	10-11	Paris fashion shoot, circa 1950-1959
156:3-5	12-15	Fashion shoots, circa 1950-1970
156:3	16	Portraits
156:4,6	17-21	Series III. Exhibit Materials, 1996
AA:	--	Disc 1: McCowan interview
156:4-5	23-25	Series IV. Printed Items, 1944-1971
Series V. Artifacts, 1964		
156:1	26	Los Angeles Advertising Women Achievement Awards statuette (1964)
145:61	1	Hasselblad 500C camera