

Guide to the Frank Poole Bevan Papers

YCAL MSS 537



by H. Dean

2011

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
P. O. Box 208330
New Haven, CT 06520-8330
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CALL NUMBER: YCAL MSS 537

CREATOR: Bevan, Frank Poole, 1903-1976

TITLE: Frank Poole Bevan Papers

DATES: 1914–1971

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 9.1 linear feet (33 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The Frank Poole Bevan Papers consist of theater costume designs, set designs, photographs, and other material documenting the work of Frank Poole Bevan. The papers provide evidence of Bevan's career as a designer and faculty member in the Yale School of Drama. The papers illuminate Bevan's creative life and are useful for studying the history of American costume design in the mid twentieth century.

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

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.bevan>.

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

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Margaret Strauss Bevan (Yale, 1940), 1977-1978. Other material came to the library in small quantities from various sources as indicated on individual folders.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

The Frank Poole Bevan Papers are 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

Frank Poole Bevan Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Processing Information

This papers received a basic level of processing, including rehousing and in some instances minimal organization, at or around the time of acquisition. Further description was carried out in 2011-2012.

As a rule, descriptive information found in the Collection Contents section is drawn in large part from information supplied with the collection and from an initial survey of the contents. Folder titles appearing in the contents list below are often based on those provided by the creator or previous custodian.

This collection includes materials previously identified by the following call numbers: Za Bevan.

This finding aid may be updated periodically to account for new acquisitions to the collection and/or revisions in arrangement and description.

Frank Poole Bevan (1903-1976)

Frank Poole Bevan, American costume and set designer, was born on November 9, 1903 to Walter Scott and Daisy May Poole Bevan in Scranton, Pennsylvania. After graduating from Scranton's Central High School (1921), Bevan attended Lafayette College where he received a Bachelor of Arts in 1925.

Bevan enrolled in the Department of Drama in the Yale School of the Fine Arts (later the Yale School of Drama) in roughly 1927. While a student Bevan worked with producer and director George Pierce Baker on *Overlords* (November 1928) for which he created the costume and set designs. In September 1929 Bevan was appointed Instructor in Costume Design in the Department of Drama. Bevan remained at Yale University throughout his career and held a number of appointments: Assistant Professor, Costume Design (1932-1938), Associate Professor, Costume Design (1938-1950), Associate Professor, Theatrical Design (1950-1956), and Professor, Theatrical Design (1956-1972). In 1930 Bevan studied theatrical design in Germany. Between 1937 and 1940 Bevan worked as a professional designer in New York City where he created costumes for productions such as *The Greatest Show on Earth* (Playhouse Theatre) and *Knickerbocker Holiday* (Ethel Barrymore Theatre). Bevan obtained a Master of Fine Arts degree in 1942 from the Yale School of Drama. On December 22, 1944 Bevan married Margaret Strauss Gnau (1904-1978). Margaret ("Margo") Gnau was also a graduate of the Yale School of Drama where she was awarded a Master of Fine Arts in 1940. Bevan worked as a consultant in Hollywood in the summer of 1947 for *Joan of Arc* starring Ingrid Bergman. In 1956 Bevan was named Associate Dean of the Yale School of Drama, a position he held until 1959. In addition to his teaching responsibilities, Bevan also created costume and set designs for productions at the Yale School of Drama and in New York (including the Metropolitan Opera). Bevan retired in 1971. He died in November 1976.

Scope and Contents

The Frank Poole Bevan Papers consist of costume designs, set designs, photographs, and other material documenting the work of Frank Poole Bevan. The papers provide evidence of Bevan's career as a designer and faculty member in the Yale School of Drama. The papers illuminate Bevan's creative life and are useful for studying the history of American costume design in the mid-twentieth century.

Bevan's designs can be traced from preliminary sketches to final renderings. The papers also include correspondence, fabric swatches, and production photographs, which further reveal the process of transforming Bevan's designs into fully realized costumes and sets. For example, Bevan's costume and set designs for *Faust*, produced by the Yale Department of Drama in 1949, are captured in final renderings and production photographs. Fabric swatches and Bevan's article for *Theatre Arts* also give a sense of his creative process and decision-making for *Faust*. Similarly, correspondence between Bevan and the Metropolitan Opera's Rudolph Bing (general manager) and Horace Armistead (resident designer) regarding *Orfeo ed Eurydice* offer insight into the stylistic and financial concerns influencing the final costumes, and provide a context for his designs. The papers also include one costume drawing by the designer Robert Edmond Jones, which was owned by Bevan.

The papers chronicle Bevan's education and time at Yale University as both a student and faculty member. Bevan's education is represented by his diplomas and early artwork -- such as a painting "After Bakst" emulating costume designer Leon Bakst -- and his notes on a "final lecture" for 1928. Photographs, a student paper, and retirement tributes reflect Bevan's career as a Professor of Theatrical Design. An album documents an exhibition on "The School of Frank Bevan" at the Wright-Hepburn-Webster Gallery in New York in 1971 in honor of Bevan's retirement.

Arrangement

Organized into three series: I. Costume and Set Designs, 1922-1967. II. Other Artwork, 1932-1970. III. Personal Papers, 1914-1971.

Collection Contents

Series I: Costume and Set Designs, 1922-1967

2.09 linear feet (5 boxes)

The series documents Frank Poole Bevan's career as a designer and faculty member with the Yale School of Drama. The bulk of material dates from 1922 to 1967. The series contains Bevan's costume and set designs, ranging from preliminary drawings to final renderings. Fabric swatches, reviews, and production photographs are also part of the series, and help to capture Bevan's creative process and output.

Arranged alphabetically by title of production.

	<i>Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme</i>	
	Costume designs, gouache and watercolor on paper Stored in: Oversize box 14	1936
b.1	Photographs of costume designs with notes	1936
b.1	Photographs of production	1936
b.1	<i>Chantecler</i> , costume designs, gouache on paper	undated
	<i>The Circle of Chalk</i>	
b.1	Photographs of production and Frank Bevan in costume	1943-1945
b.1	Photographs of set	1943-1945
	<i>The Comedy on the Bridge</i> , gouache on paper Stored in: Oversize box 15	1953
	<i>Dido and Aeneas</i> , Yale School of Drama	
	Costume designs, watercolor on paper Stored in: Oversize box 15	undated
b.1	Fabric swatches	undated
b.1	Photographs of production	1953
	<i>Electra</i> , "Klytemnestra," Metropolitan Opera, New York Stored in: Oversize box 15	1938
	<i>Faust</i> , Yale School of Drama	
	Costume designs, gouache on paper Stored in: Oversize box 16	1949
	Set designs, gouache on paper Stored in: Oversize box 17	1949
b.1	Fabric swatches	1949
b.1	Photographs of costume and set designs 2 Folders	1949
b.1	Photographs of production	1949

Faust , Yale School of Drama (continued)

b. 1	Slides of production	1949
b. 2	Photograph negatives	1949
b. 2	"Design for 'Faust I,'" by Frank Bevan, <i>Theatre Arts</i>	1949 July
b. 2	<i>Faust</i> (New York: The Heritage Press) Volume dedicated to Bevan by translator Alice Raphael	1930
	<i>Frantic Physician</i> , costume designs, gouache and watercolor on paper 3 Folders Stored in: Oversize box 18	1934
	<i>The Greatest Show on Earth</i> , Playhouse Theatre, New York Costume designs and photographs, gouache on paper Stored in: Oversize box 18	1937-1938
b. 2	Reviews	1938
	<i>Henry IV</i> , costume designs, watercolor on paper Stored in: Oversize box 18	1943
	<i>Knickerbocker Holiday</i> , Ethel Barrymore Theatre, New York	
b. 2	Script	undated
b. 2	Preliminary sketches for costume designs and photograph from production	1938
	Costume designs, watercolor on paper Stored in: Oversize box 19	1938
b. 2	Reviews	1938
	<i>The Knights of the Round Table</i> Costume designs, gouache on paper Stored in: Oversize box 20	1951
	Set designs, gouache on paper Stored in: Oversize box 21	1951
b. 2	Fabric swatches	undated
b. 2	Photographs from production	1951
	<i>The Merchant</i> Costume designs, gouache on paper Stored in: Oversize box 22	1939
b. 2	Photographs of costume designs	1939
b. 2	Photographs of production	1939
	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> , costume designs, gouache on paper 4 Folders Stored in: Oversize box 23	1961-1962

<i>Orfeo ed Eurydice</i> , Metropolitan Opera, New York		
b. 3	Correspondence with Metropolitan Opera	1954
	Costume designs, gouache on paper <i>2 Folders</i> Stored in: Oversize box 24 Includes fabric swatches	1954
b. 3	Fabric swatches	undated
b. 3	Programs	1954-1955
b. 3	Reviews	1955
<i>Overlords</i> , Yale University Theatre, Yale School of Drama		
	Costume designs, watercolor and pencil on paper <i>5 Folders</i> Stored in: Oversize box 24 and 25	1928
	Costume and set designs, watercolor on paper Stored in: Oversize box 24	1934
b. 3	<i>Prometheus Bound</i> , production photographs	1939
	<i>Psyche</i> , "Psyche: Act 4," watercolor on paper Stored in: Oversize box 24	1940
b. 5	<i>Rosamunde</i> , notes and costume designs <i>74 Folders</i>	1933
<i>Der Rosenkavalier</i>		
	Costume designs, watercolor on paper Stored in: Oversize box 26	1947
b. 3	Costume designs, gouache on paper	undated
b. 3	Photographs of Risë Stevens in costume as Rosenkavalier	undated
b. 3	<i>Salomé</i> , preliminary costume designs	1938
	<i>The Searcher</i> , Yale University Theatre, Yale School of Drama tempera on paper Stored in: Oversize box 26	1930
b. 3	<i>The Skin of Our Teeth</i> , scripts and clippings <i>2 Folders</i>	circa 1942
	<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i> , costume designs, watercolor on paper Stored in: Oversize box 26	1955
b. 3	<i>Toad of Toad Hall</i> , costume designs, watercolor on paper	1947
<i>Venice Preserved</i>		
b. 3	Costume designs and photographs of actors in costumes, gouache on paper <i>4 Folders</i> Includes fabric swatches	1933

Venice Preserved (continued)

	Costume design for Aquilina, gouache on paper Stored in: Oversize box 26 Includes fabric swatches	1933
b. 3	Photographs of actors wearing costumes and of production	1933
	<i>The Winter's Tale</i> , Yale University Theatre, Yale School of Drama	
	Costume designs, gouache on paper <i>2 Folders</i> Stored in: Oversize box 27	1931
b. 4	Costume designs and photographs of actors in costume, watercolor on paper	1931
b. 4	Photographs of production	1931
	<i>Tin Top</i> , set designs Stored in: Oversize box 28	undated
	<i>Barcarolle</i> , costume design by Robert Edmond Jones Stored in: Oversize box 14 13 x 21 inches	1935
b. 4	Various photographs of actors in costume, stage settings, and Bevan's home	undated
	Painting "After Bakst" of houri and an attendant, gouache on paper Stored in: Oversize box 29	1922
b. 4	Costumes for "Fire" and "Water," by William Gleason Adair	1924
b. 4	"Lido Beach Costume," gouache on paper	1926
b. 4	"Blanca Sanchez Sings Madrid is on the Manzanres," gouache on paper	1926
	Studies for costume designs <i>5 Folders</i> Stored in: Oversize box 29	1932-1939
	Studies for costume designs <i>2 Folders</i> Stored in: Oversize box 29	1940-1950
	Studies for costume designs Stored in: Oversize box 29	1951-1967
b. 4	Studies for costume designs (largely classical Greek and Roman styles)	1959
b. 4	Photograph of Bevan in costume as "Carroway Pim" in "Mrs. Pim Passes By"	1928
b. 4	Photographs of Roberta Peters, Risë Stevens, and S. Dillon Ripley, and drawing of Ripley	undated

Series II: Other Artwork, 1932-1970*2.92 linear feet (7 boxes)*

The series is comprised of a variety of sketches, drawings, and paintings created by Bevan between 1932 and 1970 (note that some material is undated). A large portion of the series consists of drawings of abstracts and clowns. "Miscellaneous drawings" includes some costume designs. One of Bevan's still life paintings portrays his desktop and features one of his designs (signed) alongside fabric samples, paste, measuring tape, and scissors. The series also provides insight into Bevan's artistic work beyond costume design including his interest in Asian art in the 1970s.

b. 6	Sketch of young man	1932
b. 6	Various sketches of fashion and plant	1941-1951
b. 6	Sketches of nudes	1946
b. 6	Sketches of Margaret Strauss Gnau Bevan	1951-1952
b. 6	Sketchbook	1951-1953
b. 6	Sketchbook (includes watercolors)	1953-1955
b. 6	Sketchbook of watercolors	undated
b. 6	Painting of person wearing a fedora	undated
	Painting of masked figure Stored in: Oversize box 30	undated
	Still life paintings <i>8 Folders</i> Stored in: Oversize box 30	undated
	Still lifes and abstracts <i>3 Folders</i> Stored in: Oversize box 29	undated
	Asian landscapes and figure studies <i>4 Folders</i> Stored in: Oversize box 31 Watercolor on paper	1965-1970
b. 6	Sketchbooks of Tao figure studies <i>4 Folders</i>	1970, undated
b. 6	Abstract Tao figure studies <i>3 Folders</i>	undated
	Flower studies and Asian characters, watercolor on paper Stored in: Oversize box 31	undated
	Plant studies, watercolor on paper Stored in: Oversize box 31	undated
	Figure studies, graphite and charcoal on paper Stored in: Oversize box 32	1948-1950

	Paintings of dancers and clowns given as Christmas and birthday cards Stored in: Oversize box 31	1941 and 1954
b. 7	Abstract designs for greeting cards <i>3 Folders</i> Includes cards given by Bevan to Margaret Strauss Bevan	1970s
b. 7	Abstract designs <i>6 Folders</i>	undated
b. 8	Abstract designs <i>8 Folders</i>	undated
b. 9	Abstract designs <i>6 Folders</i>	undated
	Abstract designs Stored in: Oversize box 32	undated
b. 9	Abstract flower designs <i>2 Folders</i>	undated
b. 10	Abstract flower designs <i>8 Folders</i>	undated
b. 11	Plaid designs <i>4 Folders</i>	undated
b. 11	Drawings of clowns <i>4 Folders</i>	undated
b. 12	Drawings of clowns <i>11 Folders</i>	undated
b. 12	Miscellaneous drawings (includes some costume sketches)	1962, undated

Series III: Personal Papers, 1914-1971*0.42 linear feet (1 box)*

The series is comprised of correspondence, photographs, and other documents concerning the personal and professional life of Frank Poole Bevan. Several documents, including diplomas, trace Bevan's student life while at Lafayette College and Yale University. Bevan's work as a lecturer and then faculty member with the Yale School of Drama are reflected in correspondence, printed material, photographs, and other memorabilia. The series also contains some material relating to the Bevan family, such as a family tree, crest, and photographs.

b. 13	Correspondence between Frank Poole Bevan and Frank McMullan (?)	1934-1935
b. 13	Letter from Thornton Wilder to John Evarts	1947 January 8
b. 13	Letter from Frank Poole Bevan to Margaret Strauss Gnaou Bevan	1951 October 16
b. 13	Various correspondents Includes a letter of reference from David Belasco written to George Pierce Baker on Bevan's behalf	1927-1962
	Diplomas and certificates Stored in: Oversize box 33	1921-1970
b. 13	<i>Yale Alumni Magazine</i> with cartoon of Bevan	1951
b. 13	Autograph album presented to Bevan for thirty years of service to the Yale Drama School	circa 1959
b. 13	Volume of letters presented to Bevan on his retirement as a tribute by the Yale Drama Alumni Association and volume of slides, drawings, and photographs from exhibition "The School of Frank Bevan" <i>2 Folders</i>	1971
b. 13	Papers and photographs relating to Bevan's teaching at Yale University, including essay submitted to Bevan by Lee Chin Yang on "Radical Changes of the Chinese Costume," lecture notes, and headshots <i>2 Folders</i>	1928-1949
b. 13	Bevan family genealogy and crest	1932
b. 13	Photographs of Frank Bevan, Bevan family, autographed photographs of actors, and clippings	1914-1954

Oversize and Art Storage

3.67 linear feet (20 boxes)

b. 14	<i>Barcarolle</i> costume design by Robert Edmond Jones (Series I)	1935
b. 14	<i>Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme</i> , costume design (Series I)	1936
b. 15	<i>The Comedy on the Bridge</i> , costume design (Series I)	1953
b. 15	<i>Dido and Aeneas</i> , costume design (Series I)	undated
b. 15	<i>Electra</i> , "Klytemnestra," Metropolitan Opera (Series I)	1938
b. 16	<i>Faust</i> , costume designs (Series I)	1949
b. 17	<i>Faust</i> , set designs (Series I)	1949
b. 18	<i>Frantic Physician</i> , costume designs (Series I) 3 Folders	1934
b. 18	<i>The Greatest Show on Earth</i> , costume designs and photographs (Series I)	1937-1938
b. 18	<i>Henry IV</i> , costume designs (Series I)	1943
b. 19	<i>Knickerbocker Holiday</i> , costume designs (Series I)	1938
b. 20	<i>The Knights of the Round Table</i> , costume designs (Series I)	1951
b. 21	<i>The Knights of the Round Table</i> , set designs (Series I)	1951
b. 22	<i>The Merchant</i> , costume designs (Series I)	1939
b. 23	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> costume designs (Series I) 4 Folders	1961-1962
b. 24	<i>Orfeo and Eurydice</i> , costume designs (Series I) 2 Folders	1954
b. 24	<i>Overlords</i> , costume and set designs (Series I)	1934
b. 24	<i>Psyche</i> , "Psyche: Act 4," costume design (Series I)	1940
b. 25	<i>Overlords</i> , costume designs (Series I) 5 Folders	1928
b. 26	<i>Der Rosenkavalier</i> , costume designs (Series I)	1947
b. 26	<i>The Searcher</i> , costume designs (Series I)	1930
b. 26	<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i> , costume designs (Series I)	1955
b. 26	<i>Venice Preserved</i> , costume design for Aquilina (Series I)	1933
b. 27	<i>The Winter's Tale</i> , costume designs (Series I) 2 Folders	1931
b. 28	<i>Tin Top</i> , set designs (Series I)	undated
b. 29	Studies for costume designs (Series I) 5 Folders	1932-1939

b. 29	Studies for costume designs (Series I) <i>2 Folders</i>	1940-1950
b. 29	Studies for costume designs (Series I)	1951-1967
b. 29	Painting "After Bakst" of houri and an attendant (Series I)	1922
b. 29	Still lifes and abstracts (Series II) <i>3 Folders</i>	undated
b. 30	Painting of masked figure (Series II)	undated
b. 30	Still life paintings (Series II) <i>8 Folders</i>	undated
b. 31	Asian landscapes and figure studies (Series II) <i>4 Folders</i>	1965-1970
b. 31	Flower studies and Asian characters, watercolor on paper (Series II)	undated
b. 31	Plant studies, watercolor on paper (Series II)	undated
b. 31	Paintings of dancers and clowns given as Christmas and birthday cards (Series II)	1941 and 1954
b. 32	Figure studies, graphite and charcoal on paper (Series II)	1948-1950
b. 32	Abstract designs (Series II) <i>3 Folders</i>	undated
b. 33	Diplomas and certificates (Series III)	1921-1970

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

Costume designers -- United States -- 20th
Century -- Archives
Costume design -- United States
Set designers -- United States
Theater -- United States

Genres / Formats

Design drawings -- United States -- 20th
Century
Drawings (visual works) -- United States --
20th Century
Photographs -- United States -- 20th Century

Occupations

Costume designers -- United States -- 20th
Century
Set designers -- United States -- 20th Century

Names

Bevan, Frank Poole, 1903-1976
Jones, Robert Edmond, 1887-1954

Corporate Body

Yale School of Drama