



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Robert Delford Brown Papers,
1964-2009, in the Archives of American Art

Erin Kinhart

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Archives of American Art
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Robert Delford Brown papers
Identifier:	AAA.browrober
Date:	1964-2009
Extent:	3.9 Linear feet 7.98 Gigabytes
Creator:	Brown, Robert Delford
Language:	English .
Summary:	The papers of painter, sculptor, and performance artist Robert Delford Brown measure 3.9 linear feet and 7.98 GB and date from 1964-2009. The papers document his career as an artist and in particular the arts space "church" he founded in New York City, known as The First National Church of Exquisite Panic, Inc. The collection consists of biographical material, correspondence, church records, printed and digital material, photographic material, and video records of performance art. Brown's early career is documented in one scrapbook containing photographs, notes, press materials, and select artwork and documentation of ephemeral and performance artworks.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Donated in 2010 and 2018 by Lynda Roscoe Hartigan who purchased the collection at auction.

Processing Information

The collection was processed to a minimal level and described in a finding aid in 2012 by Erin Kinhart. Born-digital materials were processed by Kirsi Ritosalmi-Kisner in 2019 with funding provided by Smithsonian Collection Care and Preservation Fund. A 2018 addition of artwork was processed in 2019 by Ryan Evans.

Preferred Citation

Robert Delford Brown papers, 1964-2009. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions on Access

Use of original papers requires an appointment. Use of archival audiovisual recordings with no duplicate access copy requires advance notice.

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Biographical Note

Robert Delford Brown (1930-2009) was a painter, sculptor, and performance artist practicing in New York City, N.Y. Brown was a participant in many art happenings in New York during the 1960s and frequently performed in the persona of a religious leader and founder of his own religion and church, The First National Church of the Exquisite Panic, Inc. which functioned as a community arts space.

Brown was born in Portland, Colorado. His family later moved to Long Beach, California, and he received bachelor's and master's degrees at University of California, Los Angeles. He began his career as a Surrealist and Abstract Expressionist painter, and in 1959 moved to New York City. In 1963 he married Rhett Cone. While visiting Paris he met the artist Allan Kaprow who encouraged him to participate in a 1964 performance of Karlheinz Stockhausen's "Originale." This performance served as the inspiration for founding The First National Church of Exquisite Panic, Inc. That same year Brown also gained media attention for his "Meat Show," an installation of raw meat which he created in a refrigerated room at the Washington Meat Market in New York City.

In 1967 Brown selected a former New York City branch library as a home for his church and hired Modernist architect Paul Rudolph to redesign the interior. He called the space "The Great Building Crack-Up" and lived there until 1997, hosting art exhibitions, happenings, and preaching his philosophy known as Pharblongence. During Brown's later career he organized many participatory art events, such as "Collaborative Action Gluings." He moved to Houston, Texas in 1997 and later moved to Wilmington, North Carolina, in preparation for a solo exhibition at the Cameron Art Museum in 2008. Robert Delford Brown died in 2009.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of painter, sculptor, and performance artist Robert Delford Brown measure 3.9 linear feet and 7.98 GB and date from 1964-2009. The papers document his career as an artist and in particular the arts space "church" he founded in New York City, known as The First National Church of Exquisite Panic, Inc. The collection consists of biographical material, correspondence, church records, printed and digital material, photographic material, and video records of performance art. Brown's early career is documented in one scrapbook containing photographs, notes, and press materials.

Biographical material includes a career summary, one diary, one interview transcript, and two interview recordings on videocassette. Correspondence is minimal and includes four letters written by Brown and letters and postcards from others. Printed material consists mostly of books and event announcements documenting Brown's career. Photographs depict his travels in Brazil and China, artwork, and a collaborative event in Paris. Video recordings depict a solo performance art piece and three collaborative performance art events.

Records of the First National Church of Exquisite Panic, Inc. include items produced for events, such as graphics, a t-shirt, "teachings," as well as reproductions of artwork created as part of the church. Also included are founding documents and manifestos.

One scrapbook contains detailed documentation on Brown's career from 1964 to 1974. Included are photographs and press materials for his "Meat Show" event, additional records of the founding of his church, and photographs of various events and happenings at his church. People depicted in the photographs include Brown, Claes Oldenburg, and art critic Mario Amaya, among others.

Artwork includes works on paper incorporating stamps and text from around 2002 to 2008, as well as artwork documentation for ephemeral and performance artworks including *Originale* (1964), *Out of Order Please Use Toilet Down the Hall Across the Lobby* (1965), *Free Striptease with Drum and Bugle Corps Accompaniment* (1966), *The Great Building Crack-Up* (1967), *Mr. Jesus Christ Contest* (1972), *Turd Forest* (1972), and others.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 8 series:

- Series 1: Biographical Material, 1992-2009 (Box 1, 5; 0.7 linear feet, ER01; 2.23 GB)
- Series 2: Correspondence, 1970-2009 (Box 1; 4 folders)
- Series 3: First National Church of Exquisite Panic, Inc. Records, 1968-2000s (Box 1, 4, 5; 0.7 linear feet)
- Series 4: Printed Material, 1964-2008 (Box 1-2; 0.4 linear feet)
- Series 5: Photographic Material, 1965-2009 (Box 2-3; 1.1 linear feet, ER02; 0.785 GB)
- Series 6: Video Recordings of Performance Art, 1994-2005 (Box 3; 0.4 linear feet, ER03-ER05; 4.96 GB)
- Series 7: Scrapbook, 1964-1974 (Box 5; 4 folders)
- Series 8: Artwork, circa 1965-2008 (Oversize 6-7)

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Painters -- New York (State) -- New York
Performance artists -- New York (State) -- New York
Sculptors -- New York (State) -- New York

Types of Materials:

Diaries
Interviews
Photographs
Scrapbooks
Transcripts
VHS (videotape format)
Video recordings

Names:

Amaya, Mario

Oldenburg, Claes, 1929- -- Photographs

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Material, 1992-2009

0.7 Linear feet (Box 1, 5)

2.23 Gigabytes (ER01)

Found here are interviews with Robert Delford Brown and a small amount of biographical documentation. Included are a biographical summary which consists of a brief chronology, list of performances, exhibitions, and publications regarding Brown; one diary containing brief daily entries and illustrations; and notes regarding his life written on large sheets of paper. Also found is a transcript of an interview conducted by Robert C. Morgan; videocassette recordings of an interview conducted by Francesco Conz in Verona, Italy; and recordings of an interview, "I'm a Sweet Old Man Now," conducted by Mark Bloch for Panscan TV.

Box 1, Folder 1	Biographical Summary, circa 1997
Box 1, Folder 2	Diary, 1992
Box 1, Folder 3	Essay, "The Strange Case of Robert Delford Brown (a.k.a. Saint Kittenish), Iconoclast-Part II," by Robert C. Morgan, circa 2004
Box 1, Folder 4-5	Interview Transcript, 2003 April 8
Box 1, Folder 6-8	"Conz Interview," Edited Master, 2002 <i>(1 original videocassette: Betacam, 3 duplicate videocassettes: VHS)</i>
Box 1, Folder 9	"Conz Interview," Unedited Footage, 2002 <i>1 Videocassettes (Betacam)</i>
Box 1, Folder 10-11	"I'm a Sweet Old Man Now: A Visit with Robert Delford Brown at the Great Building Crackup", 1997 <i>(1 original Videocassettes (VHS), 1 duplicate Videocassettes (VHS))</i> <i>Includes born-digital records, see ER01</i>
Folder ER01	"I'm a Sweet Old Man Now: A Visit with Robert Delford Brown at the Great Building Crackup", 1979, Digital Video Recording, 2006 <i>2.23 Gigabytes (One computer file)</i> Duplicate of video in Box 1, Folders 10-11
Box 1, Folder 12	Obituary, 2009
Box 1, Folder 13	Project Proposal, 2000s
Box 5, Folder 1	Notes, 2003 December 16

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Series 2: Correspondence, 1970-2009

4 Folders (Box 1)

Correspondence consists of four letters written by Robert Delford Brown, letters to Brown from art dealer Eugenia Butler, and a series of postcards from artist Victoria Schultz. Also found are digital scans and printed copies of illustrated letters from friend and fellow artist H. C. Westermann.

Box 1, Folder 14	Letters Written by Robert Delford Brown, circa 2004-2008
Box 1, Folder 15	Letters from Eugenia Butler, 1970-1971
Box 1, Folder 16	Letters from H. C. Westermann (Digital Copies), 1970-1971, 2009
Box 1, Folder 17	Postcards from Victoria Schultz, 2002

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Series 3: First National Church of Exquisite Panic, Inc. Records, 1968-2000s

0.7 Linear feet (Box 1, 4, 5)

Found here are records and items produced as part of Brown's First National Church of Exquisite Panic, Inc. Included are a certificate of incorporation, seal, various written manifestos and doctrines of the church, as well as signs, graphics, and ephemera used as part of the performances and public events. Also found are reproductions and documentation regarding Brown's series of artwork called "Anoter Map to Navada," created as part of his church's philosophies, as well as sheets of paper with "teachings" written in black marker.

Box 1, Folder 18-19	"Another Map to Nevada" Series, 2000s
Box 1, Folder 20	Book, <i>Ikons of the First National Church of Exquisite Panic, Inc.</i> , circa 1992
Box 1, Folder 21	Certificate of Incorporation, 1968
Box 1, Folder 22	Manifesto, Statements, and Doctrines, circa 1992
Box 1, Folder 23-24	Signs and Graphics, 1990s-2000s Oversized items housed in box 5, folder 1
Box 1, Folder 25	Stock Certificates, circa 1968
Box 1, Folder 26	Tax Document, 1986
Box 1, Folder 27	"Teachings", 2003 January 18
Box 1, Folder 28	"Teachings", circa 2000s
Box 4	T-Shirt, circa 1990s
Box 4	Corporate Seal, 1968
Box 4	Buttons and Stickers, circa 1990s
Box 5, Folder 2	Oversized Signs and Graphics, 1990s-2000s Oversized items from box 1, folders 23-24

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Series 4: Printed Material, 1964-2008

0.4 Linear feet (Box 1-2)

Printed material primarily consists of books. Of note are books on Brown's "Collaborative Action Gluings" and "First Class Portraits," as well as a 1992 Fluxus event. Also found is an announcement for his 1964 "Meat Show" installation. One folder of miscellaneous printed material contains fliers, brochures, and exhibition announcements.

Box 1, Folder 29	Announcement for "Meat Show", 1964
Box 2, Folder 1	<i>Collaborative Action Gluings: Robert Delford Brown, 2004</i>
Box 2, Folder 2	<i>First Class Portraits by Robert Delford Brown, 1973</i>
Box 2, Folder 3	<i>Flux-Flag, 1992</i>
Box 2, Folder 4	<i>Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth</i> by R. Buckminster Fuller (Photocopy), 1971
Box 2, Folder 5	<i>A Pictographic History of the Oglala Sioux, 1967</i>
Box 2, Folder 6	<i>RE/Search # 11: Pranks!, 1987</i>
Box 2, Folder 7	Miscellaneous Printed Material, 1973, circa 2004-2008

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Series 5: Photographic Material, 1965-2009

1.1 Linear feet (Box 2-3)

0.785 Gigabytes (ER02)

The bulk of the photographs found here depict Brown's trips to Brazil and China. Also found are photographs labeled as depicting a collaborative art project with artist Victoria Schultz and others in Paris. Slides and digital photographs depict these same subjects as well as Brown's artwork. Also of note are black and white photographs of the interior of "The Great Building Crack-Up." Researchers should note that many additional photographs are included in Series 7: Scrapbook.

Box 2, Folder 8	Robert Delford Brown, circa 2000s
Box 2, Folder 9-17	Brazil, 2003
Box 2, Folder 18-20	Brazil - Negatives, 2003
Box 2, Folder 21	Cats, 1980s-1990s, 1965
Box 2, Folder 22-26	China, 2001
Box 2, Folder 27	China - Negatives, 2001
Box 3, Folder 1-3	"Collaboration with Victoria Schultz and two other women - Paris", circa 2004
Box 3, Folder 4-8	Events, 1990s-2000s
Box 3, Folder 9	Great Building Crack-Up, circa 1970s
Box 3, Folder 10	"Porto Allegre" Negatives and Slides, circa 2003
Box 3, Folder 11-16	Slides, circa 1980s-2000s
Folder ER02	Digital Photographs, 1998-2009 <i>0.785 Gigabytes (90 computer files)</i>

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Series 6: Video Recordings of Performance Art, 1994-2005

0.4 Linear feet (Box 3)

4.96 Gigabytes (ER03-ER05)

Video recordings depict solo and collaborative performance art events created by Robert Delford Brown. Included is a recording of a solo performance art piece "Fried Blood." Three collaborative performance art events involved gathering the public, primarily children, to participate in activities such as pumpkin carving, balloon paintings, and creating a collaged environment out of paper.

Box 3, Folder 19-20	Performance Art by Robert Delford Brown, "Fried Blood", 1994 May 27 <i>(1 original videocassette: U-Matic, 1 duplicate videocassette: Betacam)</i> <i>Contains born-digital materials, see ER03</i>
Folder ER03	"Fried Blood" (1994); "Martian Outpost" (1998), Digital Video Recording, 2005 <i>2.83 Gigabytes (One computer file)</i> Duplicate of a film in Box 3, Folders 19-20, and a film in Box 3, Folders 22-24.
Box 3	Collaborative Performance Art
Folder ER04	"Balloonatic Action Balloony" (2005 March 3), Digital Video Recording, 2005 <i>1 Gigabyte (One computer file)</i>
Box 3, Folder 22-24	"Martian Outpost", 1998 April 14 <i>(1 videocassette: Hi8, 1 duplicate videocassette: Betacam)</i> <i>Contains born-digital records, see ER03</i>
Folder ER05	"Pumpkin Carving", Digital Video Recording, 2004 <i>1.13 Gigabytes (One computer file)</i>

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Series 7: Scrapbook, 1964-1974

4 Folders (Box 5)

One large scrapbook contains documentation on Robert Delford Brown's art events, happenings, and environments from 1964 to 1974. A large portion of the scrapbook documents the "Meat Show" event that Brown created in 1964. Found here are photographs of the installation, press materials, and a list of supplies needed. Also included in the scrapbook are photographs depicting Brown working on projects, events, people such as Claes Oldenburg and Mario Amaya, and interior and exterior views of "The Great Building Crack-Up." Additionally, there are newspaper and magazine clippings, press releases, event announcements, scattered letters, and documentation on the founding of The First National Church of Exquisite Panic, Inc.

Scrapbook materials have been removed from the original album and housed in archival folders. The original order of the documents has been maintained.

Box 5, Folder 3-6

Scrapbook, 1964-1974

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Series 8: Artwork, circa 1965-2008

Artwork includes works on paper incorporating stamps and text from around 2002 to 2008, as well as artwork documentation for ephemeral and performance artworks including *Originale* (1964), *Out of Order Please Use Toilet Down the Hall Across the Lobby* (1965), *Free Striptease with Drum and Bugle Corps Accompaniment* (1966), *The Great Building Crack-Up* (1967), *Mr. Jesus Christ Contest* (1972), *Turd Forest* (1972), and others.

Oversize 6 Works on Paper, circa 2002-2008

Oversize 7 Artwork Documentation Posters, circa 1965-1975

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