

Guide to Alvin Ailey photograph by Carl Van Vechten C0485

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March 22, 1955

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Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

C0485

Unit ID

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Unit Date

March 22, 1955

box

1 (folder)

Language

English .

Abstract

Black and white gelatin silver photographic print portrait of the dancer Alvin Ailey by Carl Van Vechten, dated March 22, 1955.

Creator

Van Vechten, Carl, 1880-1964

Extent

.01 Linear Feet 1 photograph

Physical Location

R 72, C 3, S 5

Repository

George Mason University. Libraries. Special Collections Research Center

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

There are no access restrictions.

Use Restrictions

The copyright and related rights status of this collection have not been evaluated (See <http://rightsstatements.org/vocab/CNE/1.0/>)

Acquisition Information

Purchased by Steve Gerber from Schubertiade Music on January 26, 2010.

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Biographical and Historical Information

Alvin Ailey was a pioneering African American dancer who was best known for founding the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre (AAADT). Born in Texas in 1931, Ailey suffered a difficult childhood, and eventually finished out his schooling years in Los Angeles, California. While in Los Angeles, Ailey witnessed dance performances by the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo and the Katherine Dunham Dance Company that changed the trajectory of his life. By 1949 Ailey was studying dance under Lester Horton, and just a year later joined his dance company. Soon after this Ailey went on to a varied and successful career as a dancer and choreographer. Ailey eventually went to dance on Broadway, but his greatest achievement was the founding of the AAADT in 1958. Ailey's most enduring work with AAADT is his dance piece "Revelations," which brought the dance company international renown and acclaim. Ailey is considered a beloved figure and legend in the history of American dance, and AAADT thrives to this day. The company has been described as "'a vital American cultural ambassador to the world' that celebrates the uniqueness of the African-American cultural experience and the preservation and enrichment of the American modern dance heritage" (AAADT website). Alvin Ailey passed away in 1988.

Carl Van Vechten was an acclaimed American photographer and writer who was known for his portraits of famous artists. Born in 1880, Van Vechten was a notable supporter of the Harlem Renaissance and took particular interest in African American and Black culture, which was reflected in his art, though sometimes controversially. Van Vechten photographed many of the artists he met in Harlem, and continued to photograph Black creatives over the course of his career, including Alvin Ailey. Van Vechten died in 1964.

Scope and Content

Black and white gelatin silver photographic print portrait of the dancer Alvin Ailey by Carl Van Vechten, dated March 22, 1955. The photograph features a seated Ailey, presumably in dance costume, holding a woven basket prop. The bottom right corner features a raised stamp that reads "Photograph by Carl Van Vechten[.]" The verso includes a stamp and handwritten notes by Van Vechten.

Related Materials

The Special Collections Research Center holds many other collections and materials on American dance and dance in general.

The Library of Congress holds the and the . The latter contains another copy of the found in this collection.

The Black Archives of Mid-America holds the .

The New York Public Library, Jerome Robbins Dance Division holds the .

Keywords

African Americans

Dance

Photography

Ailey, Alvin

Bibliography

"About Us." Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, accessed June 3, 2021. <https://www.alvinailey.org/>.

Alvin Ailey Biography, Biography.com, April 2, 2014, <https://www.biography.com/performer/alvin-ailey>.

"Carl Van Vechten: Biography and Chronology." Library of Congress, accessed June 3, 2021. <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/van/biography.html>.

Arrangement

This is a single item collection.