

BECKETT, SAMUEL, 1906-1989.

Martha Dow Fehsenfeld collection of Samuel Beckett letters, 1946-1982

Emory University
Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library
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Descriptive Summary

Creator: Beckett, Samuel, 1906-1989.
Title: Martha Dow Fehsenfeld collection of Samuel Beckett letters, 1946-1982
Call Number: Manuscript Collection No. 1221
Extent: .5 linear ft. (1 box)
Abstract: Collection of letters written to Samuel Beckett with response in his own hand, given to Martha Dow Fehsenfeld in 1987.
Language: Materials entirely in English and French.

Administrative Information

Restrictions on Access

Unrestricted access.

Terms Governing Use and Reproduction

All requests subject to limitations noted in departmental policies on reproduction.

Related Materials in Other Repositories

[Beckett collection](#), University of Reading, Reading, England; [Carlton Lake collection of Samuel Beckett papers](#) and [Samuel Beckett collection](#), Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin; and Samuel Beckett papers, Washington University Libraries, Department of Special Collections.

Source

Gift of Martha Fehsenfeld, 2012. Additions were donated by Fehsenfeld in 2015.

Custodial History

The letters were a personal gift from Samuel Beckett to Martha Dow Fehsenfeld. They were originally contained in a series of manila envelopes with her first name and the origin of the contents inscribed in Beckett's own hand on each envelope.

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Citation

[after identification of item(s)], Martha Dow Fehsenfeld collection of Samuel Beckett letters, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

Appraisal Note

Acquired by Director of the Rose Library, Ginger Smith, as part of the Rose Library's holdings in Irish Literature.

Processing

During processing in 2012, the letters were removed from the original manila envelopes that housed them and were arranged in chronological order. The manila envelopes, mistakenly deemed to be containers, were then separated from the collection and discarded. The manila envelopes were in fact part of the collection, and the decision to separate and discard them was made in error.

Collection Description

Biographical Note

Samuel Beckett (1906-1989), Irish poet, novelist and playwright, was born in Foxrock, Ireland, a suburb of Dublin. He attended the Portora Royal School in Enniskillen and Trinity College Dublin. In 1927, Beckett moved to Paris and taught English at the École Normale Supérieure. In 1930, he published his first poem, "Whoroscope," and returned to Trinity College to teach French. In 1937, he returned to Paris permanently. Beckett continued to publish novels throughout the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. However, it is the plays he produced during this time for which he is perhaps best known. They include *Waiting for Godot* (1953), *Endgame* (1957), *Krapp's Last Tape* (1958) and *Happy Days* (1961). He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1969, and continued to write and publish poems and short stories until his death in 1989.

Martha Dow Fehsenfeld, authorized editor of the letters of Samuel Beckett, is also author of *Beckett in the Theatre* (with Dougald McMillan, 1988). She observed and recorded Beckett's direction of *Footfalls*, *Happy Days*, and *Endgame*, and supervision of *Waiting for Godot*. She was production assistant for *Endgame* directed by Beckett, assistant to the director Alan Schneider for the world premiere of *Ohio Impromptu*, and has performed in Beckett's *Happy Days*, *Footfalls*, and *Rockaby* (directed by Walter Asmus). Fehsenfeld is the originator of The Beckett Festival of Radio Plays broadcast on PBS and CBS, including the first production of *All That Fall* in the United States. She has served on the Advisory Committee of The Beckett International Foundation, University of Reading, England and the board of the Alan Schneider Memorial Fund Theatre Communications Group, New York. Beckett authorized Fehsenfeld to edit his correspondence in 1985. The project became affiliated with Emory University's Laney Graduate School in 1990 and has also received support from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Scope and Content Note

The collection consists of letters written to Samuel Beckett, with response in his own hand, from 1946-1982. These letters are of primary concern to his writings and the production of his plays. Beckett gave the letters to Martha Dow Fehsenfeld.

The majority of the correspondence is between Beckett and a variety of editors, publishers, literary agents, producers, and directors in Germany, France, Great Britain, the United States and Canada. Beckett typically drafted his replies on the back or in the margins of the original letters and many incoming letters in this collection feature such annotations. Beckett's notes are often lengthy and address significant questions regarding his plays, their performances, and his publications. Correspondents represented in the collection include John Barber, Kitty Black, Spencer Curtis Brown, Rosica Colin, Margaret McLaren, and Siegfried Unseld among others.

Arrangement Note

Arranged in chronological order.

Container List

| Box | Folder | Content |
|------------|---------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 | 1 | Chronological index to dated letters |
| 1 | 2 | 1946 |
| 1 | 3 | 1951 |
| 1 | 4 | 1952 |
| 1 | 5 | 1953 |
| 1 | 6 | 1954-1956 |
| 1 | 7 | 1957 |
| 1 | 8 | 1958 |
| 1 | 9 | 1959 |
| 1 | 10 | 1960 |
| 1 | 11 | 1961 |
| 1 | 12 | 1962 |
| 1 | 13 | 1963 |
| 1 | 14 | 1964 |
| 1 | 15 | 1965-1966 |
| 1 | 16 | 1968-1969 |
| 1 | 17 | 1970, 1975 |
| 1 | 18 | 1982 |
| 1 | 19 | Bowles, Patrick-- Translation Notes |
