

Center for Creative Photography

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Finding aid for the
Shelby Lee Adams Collection, 1987-2018

AG 257

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Creator

Shelby Lee Adams

Abstract

Photographic materials, including polaroids, published books and magazine features, along with audiovisual recordings created by photographer Shelby Lee Adams (b. 1950). Mostly consisting of subjects from his native state of Kentucky, in rural isolated hollows tucked in the mountain terrain, Adams documents the people often ignored by majority of society with solemn, starkly lit, yet intimate portraits. Books include those published of Lee's work: *Appalachian Portraits*, *Appalachian Legacy*, *Appalachian Lives*, and *Salt & Truth*. A magazine featuring Shelby Lee Adams includes: *Black & White Magazine*. Other publications, articles and journals include: *Center Quarterly*, *Close to Home*, *SouthBound*, *Photographers*, *Writers*, and *the American Scene*, as well as *In Pursuit of the Human Spirit*, an exhibit brochure. This collection is active and additional materials are expected.

Quantity/ Extent

1 linear feet

Language of Materials

English

Biographical/ Historical Note

Born in Hazard, Kentucky in 1950 Shelby Lee Adams is no stranger to the rural inhabitants that reside in the mountains of the Appalachian region. Residents often misrepresented by media and misunderstood by outsiders, are labeled as poverty-stricken and left in isolation. Yet, as a trusted confidant, who visits nearly every summer, Adams became a friend, showing the Appalachian people in deeper terms. Photographing portraits, Adams typically processes in black and white, sharing an intimate view of individuals who claim to be rich in culture and land. Noteworthy to mention, Adams' plan for proceeds from reproduction and licensing of work is to be donated to the families of those he photographed over 40 years.

Scope and Content Note

The Shelby Lee Adams Collection consists of photographic materials related to the artist's time with residents of Kentucky's isolated Appalachian mountain region. Including several published books of his work, journals and, magazines interview Adams regarding his approach with people photographed. 4x5 polaroids are included as well as a VHS tape of a sermon that Adams attended and photographed labeled *Spring '87*

Wayne's Church. Gallery brochures from his exhibit *In Pursuit of the Human Spirit* round out the collection.

Series one, publications and printed materials, contains publications of Adams' work by way of four books: *Appalachian Legacy*, *Appalachian Lives*, *Appalachian Portraits*, and *Salt & Truth*. Journals containing his work are *Center Quarterly* and *Close to Home*. *SouthBound*, *Photographers*, *Writers*, and *the American Scene* are published books including work by Shelby Lee Adams. *B&W Magazine* also featured an article and cover by Adams.

Series two, photographic materials, contains 17 polaroids, set into 2 groups of 4x5 formatted portraits in black & white.

Series three, audiovisual materials, contains a VHS tape of a sermon attended by Adams, who was present to photograph the use of snake-handling.

Additional materials to be expected.

Arrangement

[Series 1: Publications and printed materials](#)

[Series 2: Photographic materials](#)

[Series 3: Audiovisual materials](#)

Names and Subject Terms

Adams, Shelby Lee [<https://lcn.loc.gov/n93042082>]

Photography [<https://lcn.loc.gov/sh85101206>]

Photographs [<https://lcn.loc.gov/sh85101195>]

Restrictions

Conditions Governing Access

Access to this collection requires an appointment with the Volkerding Study Center.

Conditions Governing Use

It is the responsibility of the user to obtain permission from the copyright owner (which could be the institution, the creator of the record, the author or his/her transferees, heirs, legates or literary executors) prior to any copyright-protected uses of the collection.

The user agrees to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless the Arizona Board of Regents, the University of Arizona, Center of Creative Photography, including its officers,

employees, and agents, from and against all claims made relating to copyright or other intellectual property infringement.

Provenance

This collection was created by Shelby Lee Adams as early as 1983, and negotiated by him to be housed at the Center for Creative Photography. The first set of materials were received in 2019. The collection is active.

Accruals

More materials to follow.

Separated Materials

One copy of each of Shelby Lee Adams' books *Appalachian Legacy*, *Appalachian Lives*, *Appalachian Portraits*, and *Salt & Truth* are available for viewing in the Center for Creative Photography Library located in the Volkerding Study Center.

Preferred Citation

Shelby Lee Adams Collection, 1987-2018. AG 257. Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ.

Processing Information

Processing of first acquisition and creation of finding aid by Melissa Sanson, 2019.

Container List

Series 1: Publications and Printed Material, 1998-2018

Extent: one box.

Box	Folder
1	Appalachian Legacy, 80 b&w photos, 1998
1	Appalachian Lives, 80 b&w photos, 2003
1	Appalachian Portraits, 50 b&w photos, 1993
1	Salt & truth, 80 b&w photos, 2011
1	Photographers, Writers, and the American Scene, 6 b&w photos, 2006
1	Southbound, 5 color photos, 2018
1	Center Quarterly journals featuring Shelby Lee Adams' work, 1988
1	Close to Home, Seven Documentary Photographers feat. Adams, 1989
1	Black & White Magazine featuring Shelby Lee Adams, 2011
1	In Pursuit of the Human Spirit, exhibition brochures, 1988

Series 2: Photographic Material, 1987-2010

Extent: one box, 17 Polaroids.

Box	Folder
1	17- polaroids depicting b&w portraits of Appalachian residents of rural Kentucky

Series 3: Audiovisual Materials, 1987

Extent: one box, 2 VHS tapes.

1	2- VHS tapes of a sermon Shelby Lee Adams photographed in which snake-handling occurred
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