

# Mezey (Phiz) Photographs and Papers

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library

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San Francisco, CA 94102

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URL: <http://www.sfpl.org/sfhistory>

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository:</b>	San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library
<b>Creator - pht:</b>	Mezey, Phiz
<b>Title:</b>	Phiz Mezey Photographs and Papers
<b>ID:</b>	SFP 166
<b>Date [inclusive]:</b>	1950-2005
<b>Physical Description:</b>	16 Cubic Feet 16 cartons, 16 flat boxes and 9 oversize cartons
<b>Physical Location:</b>	The collection is stored on site.
<b>Language of the Material:</b>	Collection materials are in English.
<b>Abstract:</b>	The collection includes approximately 6,402 prints and over 104,000 frames of various negative types by professional photographer Phiz Mezey of predominately of San Francisco from the early 1950s to the early 2000s. Subjects of the photography include Our San Francisco book images; San Francisco Redevelopment Agency Western Addition project; Something That's Happening (STEP) book about desegregation of the Sausalito schools book images; notables (national and local): musicians, artists, authors, public figures, politicians; China (self-assigned project); Lacandon of Chiapas, Mexico; lifestyles 60s and 70s: hippies, street photography, nudes and civil rights actions; protests 1964 – 2004; historic San Francisco; nature: stories about Big Sur, marine mammals, Academy of Science; travel and general: photojournalism, portraits, Mexico.

### Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Phiz Mezey Photographs and Papers (SFP 166), San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

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## Biographical / Historical

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Phiz Mezey (Phiz Mozzeson) was born on August 25, 1925 in Harlem, New York and raised in the Bronx. Mezey set out to be a journalist in her teens, when she began writing for Irish Echo, an Irish American weekly newspaper. During World War II, she was hired by the Office of War Information to write columns on labor and Asia. She received a BA from Reed College and moved to San Francisco in 1948 to pursue her career as a journalist.

Upon arrival in San Francisco, Mezey worked in William Dasonville's photo lab. She changed her medium to photography, largely teaching herself. She developed friendships she developed with the Bay Area photography community: Imogen Cunningham, Wynn Bullock, Ruth Bernhard, Dorothea Lange, Edward Weston, Ansel Adams and Minor White. She began teaching at San Francisco State College but was dismissed in 1950 when she refused to sign a loyalty oath. She and several other faculty resisters were blacklisted for more than 15 years, until

the Loyalty Oath was ruled unconstitutional. In 1953, she wrote and recorded a documentary dramatization of the Rosenberg case called "They Must Not Die" with the San Francisco Labor Theatre. She freelanced and taught photography at San Francisco City College. In 1971 Mezey earned an MA and PhD at San Francisco State University and was reinstated in 1978 as faculty. She was promoted to full professor in 1981 and retired in 1990.

Mezey started out as a photo-essayist but is most known for portraits, including of renown figures like Martin Luther King Jr., James Baldwin, Jimi Hendrix, Rita Moreno and Ruth Asawa. Mezey took Leo McCarthy's campaign photographs. She took an interest in Bay Area political events and conflicts, including the 1968-69 San Francisco State University student strike and the Auto Row protests in 1964, in which civil rights activists took on the Cadillac and other dealerships along San Francisco's Auto Row who discriminated against Black customers.

The California wilderness was another subject Mezey explored. Her images of Yosemite, Mono Lake, The High Sierras, Fort Point and other locations provide a view of California's wilderness and the great outdoors. Mezey traveled extensively all over the globe, street shooting wherever she was. She created a comprehensive visual document China in 1989. Her photographic record of Mexico spans many geographic areas during the late 1980s.

Mezey authored books including: *Something That's Happening* (1968) about the desegregation of the Sausalito School District and *Multi-Image Design and Production* (1988), a textbook. She received grants from the San Francisco Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities. As a freelance journalist, her work was published in journals such as the *Nation*, the *New Republic*, the *New York Times*, *Time* and *Aperture*. Her images were exhibited in institutions and museums worldwide, including the De Young Museum and SF MOMA. Her last solo exhibition was at the San Francisco Public Library in 2013. Phiz Mezey died on May 10, 2020.

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## Scope and Contents

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The collection includes approximately 6,402 prints and over 104,000 frames of various negative types by professional photographer Phiz Mezey of predominately of San Francisco from the early 1950s to the early 2000s. The papers portion includes Mezey's books, book proposals, writing and prints for unpublished work, letters and documents, interview notes, business correspondence, and model releases. The materials include a collection of paintings, photographs, wood cuts and a serigraph by other artists. A record made of a reading of a play written by Mezey is included. Subjects of the photography include Our San Francisco book images; San Francisco Redevelopment Agency Western Addition project; Something That's Happening (STEP) book about desegregation of the Sausalito schools book images; notables (national and local): musicians, artists, authors, public figures, politicians; China (self-assigned project); Lacandon of Chiapas, Mexico; lifestyles 60s and 70s: hippies, street photography, nudes and civil rights actions; protests 1964 – 2004; historic San Francisco; nature: stories about Big Sur, marine mammals, Academy of Science; travel and general: photojournalism, portraits, Mexico.

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## Arrangement

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The collection is arranged in two series: Series 1: Photographs (PROCESSED) and Series 2: Papers (UNPROCESSED).

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Statement

San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library

100 Larkin Street  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
[sfhistory@sfpl.org](mailto:sfhistory@sfpl.org)

URL: <http://www.sfpl.org/sfhistory>

## Conditions Governing Access

The collection is partially processed and available for use during Photo Desk hours. Series 1: Photographs is PROCESSED and open for research. Series 2: Papers is UNPROCESSED and you must contact the Photo Curator for access.

## Publication Rights

San Francisco Public Library holds copyright to the majority of the Phiz Mezey photographs. The heirs manage rights to some. All requests for permission to publish from photographs must be submitted in writing to the Photo Curator. Permission for publication is given with San Francisco Public Library as the copyright holder.

## Provenance

Phiz Mezey Photographs and Papers were with the photographer Phiz Mezey until her death in 2020. Mezey's daughters Judith Mozesson and Rachel Mozesson took custody of the collection in 2020. After organizing the collection, the Mozzeson sisters donated the collection to the San Francisco Public Library, June 2023.

## Processing Information

Processed by Christina Moretta in 2023.

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## Controlled Access Headings

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- Documentary photography
- Anti-war demonstrations -- California -- San Francisco Bay Area -- Photographs.
- Protest movements -- California -- San Francisco Bay Area
- Documentary photography -- California -- San Francisco -- 20th century
- Nature photography
- Documentary photography -- China
- Documentary photography -- Mexico
- Photographic prints.
- Transparencies
- color slides.
- Mezey, Phiz

Box	File/Folder Name	Date/s	Notes
	<b>SERIES 1: PHOTOGRAPHS</b>	<b>1950-2005</b>	<b>SCOPE:</b> Photographic prints, negatives with contact sheets and color slides from 1950-2005 taken by professional photographer Phiz Mezey. <b>ARRANGEMENT:</b> by photographic prints, negatives and slides. Photographic prints arranged by tier assigned by photographer, then by date. Negatives arranged chronologically. Color Slides arranged by subject assigned by photographer
Box 1	<i>Prints - Tier 1</i>		
Box 1	<i>SF Book</i>		
Box 1	"Our San Francisco" (1958.040 - 1960x.159)	1958-1960	Includes Twin Peaks School; Mr. & Mrs. Lloyd Ackerman
Box 1	"Our San Francisco" (1960.019 - 1963.281)	1960-1963	Includes John Collier; Lev Shorr; Stern Grove; Palace of Fine Arts
Box 1	"Our San Francisco" (1964.034 - 1964.186)	1964	Includes Steinhardt Aquarium; Richmond District; Erik and Lori Weber; Kira Hahn
Box 1	"Our San Francisco" (1964.193 - 1964.273)	1964	Includes Steinhardt Aquarium; Stern Grove; Erik and Lori Weber
Box 1	<i>WA Redevelopment</i>		
Box 1	Western Addition - Webster Synagogue (1955)	1955	Includes McAllister Ritual Butcher
Box 1	Western Addition (1961.001WA - 1961.009WA)	1961	Includes Saint Beulah Church; "We Are Here To Stay"
Box 1	Western Addition (1961.010WA - 1961.040WA)	1961	Includes Strickly Kosher; Rev. G.L. Bedford
Box 1	Western Addition (1961.052WA - 1961.068WA)	1961	Includes Geary Blvd.; YMCA building; American Theater Marquee; Coffee Shop Chop Suey
Box 1	Western Addition (1961.077WA - 1961.091WA)	1961	

Box	File/Folder Name	Date/s	Notes
Box 1	Western Addition (1961.092WA - 1961.097WA)	1961	
Box 1	Western Addition (1964.017)	1964	Includes St. Francis Square
Box 1	<i>Auto Row</i>		
Box 1	Cadillac Auto Row (1964.155 - 1964.159)	1964	Includes demonstrations; student sit-down; arrests; NAACP
Box 1	Cadillac Auto Row (1964.160 - 1964.176)	1964	Includes demonstrations; student sit-down; arrests; NAACP
Box 1	<i>Protests</i>		
Box 1	Protests (1962 - 1967)	1962-1967	Includes Women for Peace; civil rights; Dr. Carleton Goodlet at anti-Goldwater protest; Vietnam War protests
Box 1	Protests (1969 - 1978)	1969-1978	Includes Free Huey demonstration; peace march at Chestnut and Lyon; Vietnam War protests; AFT strike at Herbert Hoover Junior High; Cesar Chavez at UFW Delano protest; Gay Freedom Day parade
Box 1	Protests (1986-2002)	1986-2002	CSU faculty protest in Sacramento; Ben Linder protest; protest for rights of immigrants (bus signs); peace march with Fort Point Gang
Box 1	Protests (2003- 2004)	2003-2004	Peace march (No Blood for Oil)
Box 1	<i>SFSU Strike</i>		
Box 1	SFSU Strike (1968.080 - 1968.084)	1968	Includes Dr. Carleton Goodlett; Nesbit Crutchfield; Willie Brown
Box 1	SFSU Strike (1968.085 - 1968.100)	1968	Includes Nesbit Crutchfield; Art Bierman
Box 1	<i>STEP</i>		
Box 1	STEP (1966.031 - 1966.199)	1966	Includes Ann Halprin
Box 1	STEP (1967.003 - 1967.069)	1967	
Box 1	STEP (1967.072A - 1968.247)	1967-1968	
Box 1	<i>Lifestyles</i>		

Box	File/Folder Name	Date/s	Notes
Box 1	Lifestyles (1964-1966)	1964-1966	Includes "Pemabo" Peace Garden & Altar of Freedom; Haight Theatre marquee (Michael McClure and Grateful Dead); Jerry Kotler
Box 1	Lifestyles (1966.108 - 1966.129)	1966	Includes Gene Williams of Haight Theatre; I and Thou Coffee House; Danny Rifkin and Rock Scully; Quicksilver Messenger Service Concert
Box 1	Lifestyles (1967 - 1971)	1967-1971	
Box 1	Lifestyles (1972 - 1977/1997)	1972-1977/1997	Includes Warner Jepson; Mimi Weiss; John Weir; Summer of Love 30th Anniversary
Box 2	<i>Prints - Tier 1 - Notables</i>		
Box 2	Ruth Asawa & Al Lanier (1954/1964/1982/2005)	1954/1964/1982/2005	Includes SF Art Festival; Ruth Asawa Opening
Box 2	James Baldwin (1963.108 - 1963.111)	1963	Includes UC Berkeley; KPFA interview with Elsa Knight Thompson & John Leonard; KDIA interview with Lewis Freeman & Walter Conway
Box 2	James Baldwin (1963.112 - 1963.117)	1963	Includes Stanford University; KQED filming at Hunters Point; KQED filming at Fillmore with Orville Luster
Box 2	James Baldwin (1963.118 - 1963.124)	1963	Includes Hunters Point; St. Mary's Church; with KQED Director, Dick Moore; with David Major; dancing; smoking
Box 2	Ruth Bernhard (1980.010, S1980.001)	1980	
Box 2	Kay Boyle (1965/1968/1972/1980/1993)	1965/1968/1972/1980/1993	Includes SFSU strike; Kay Boyle Memorial
Box 2	Harry Bridges (1963.219)	1963	
Box 2	Willie Brown (1972/1996/1998)	1972/1996/1998	Includes McGovern campaign with Cesar Chavez; inauguration; with John Burton & John Dearman; Esmeralda St. Slide Dedication

Box	File/Folder Name	Date/s	Notes
Box 2	Benny Bufano (1964)	1964	
Box 2	Wynn Bullock (1968.029 - 1968.030)	1968	
Box 2	Elizabeth Catlett & Francisco Mora (1977.041)	1977	
Box 2	Imogen Cunningham (1964/1966/1975)	1964/1966/1975	Includes birthday celebration at Golden Gate Park; with Ruth Asawa & Al Lanier; with Dione Chase; with Emmy Lou Packard; with Madam Lucien Labaudt
Box 2	Placido Domingo (1988.047 - 1988.048, S1988.048)	1988	Includes Opera in the Park
Box 2	Bill Graham (1969)	1969	Includes office at Winterland
Box 2	Vincent Hallinan (1972/1990)	1972/1990	Includes reception for Orpheum opening with Countess Contadini & Cass Daley; with Vivian Hallinan
Box 2	Jimi Hendrix (1968.070 - 1968.071)	1968	At Winterland
Box 2	Al Hirschfeld (1994.054, 1996.025)	1994/1996	
Box 2	Martin Luther King Jr. (1961)	1961	Includes Western Addition Redevelopment
Box 2	Jessica Mitford (Decca Treuhaff) (1995.005)	1995	Includes Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade
Box 2	Rita Moreno (1962.002, 1962.023)	1962	Women for Peace
Box 2	Juan O'Gorman (1977.027)	1977	
Box 2	<i>Musicians</i> (Charlie Byrd, Cal Tjader)	1976/1977	Includes Byrd at Saratoga Musical Festival (Paul Masson Winery); with Barney Kessel
Box 2	Emmy Lou Packard (1964/1972)	1964/1972	In Mendocino
Box 2	Peter, Paul & Mary (1962)	1962	At The Hungry I
Box 2	<i>Photographers</i> (Laura Gilpin, Ann Noggle, Eliot Porter) (1979)	1979	Includes Gilpin in New Mexico

Box	File/Folder Name	Date/s	Notes
Box 2	<i>Politicians</i> (Jerry Brown: 1978), (George McGovern: 1972)	1972/1978	Includes Brown at UAW negotiation Includes McGovern campaign; with Warren Beatty; with Herb Caen; with Vincent Halinan; with Barbara Rush
Box 2	Malvina Reynolds (1964/1973/1974)	1964/1973/1974	Includes album cover; Civic Center
Box 2	Malvina Reynolds (1975/1976/1980)	1975/1976/1980	
Box 2	Pete Seeger (1977/1978)	1977/1978	Includes Malvina Reynolds Memorial
Box 2	Kay Sekimachi (2004.002 - 2004.003)	2004	
Box 2	Hassel Smith (Artist) (1962/1978)	1962/1978	
Box 2	Smothers Brothers (1988.043)	1988	Includes Paul Masson Winery
Box 2	Jackie Spier (1986.061)	1986	Includes Teachers' Union with Tim Sampson
Box 2	<i>Writers</i> (Molly Ivins, I.F. Stone) (1988.017)	1988	
Box 2	Phil Whalen (1976.005, 1998.030-1988.031)	1976/1988	Includes Poets Meet for Lunch; with Diane DiPrima; with Michael McClure
Box 2	<i>Lacandon</i>		
Box 2	Lacandon - Nahá	1975/1977/1979	In San Cristóbal de las Casas; in Nahá (Chiapas, México)
Box 2	<i>China</i>		
Box 2	China (1989.016 - 1989.018)	1989	Includes Shanghai; Lung Hua Collective; Yining (NE China); Silk Road (NW China)
Box 2	China (1989.019 - 1989.022)	1989	Includes protest in Xian; Lanzhou; near Turfan
Box 2	China (1989.022 - 1989.027)	1989	Includes Jiaohe City ruins; Kashgar; Turfan; Temple of Heaven (Beijing)
Box 2	China (1989.028 - 1989.029)	1989	Includes Kashgar; Silk Road; Urumqi; Yining
Box 3	<i>Prints - Tier 2: Favorites and Local Notables</i> <i>Prints - Tier 3: 1950 - 1960</i>	1950-1960	

<b>Box</b>	<b>File/Folder Name</b>	<b>Date/s</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Box 4	<i>Prints - Tier 3: 1961 - 1971</i>	1961-1971	
Box 5	<i>Prints - Tier 3: 1972 - 1984</i>	1972-1984	
Box 6	<i>Prints - Tier 3: 1985 - 2004</i>	1985-2004	
Box 7	<i>Negatives and Contact Sheets: 1950 - 1962</i>	1950-1962	
Box 8	<i>Negatives and Contact Sheets: 1962 - 1964</i>	1962-1964	
Box 9	<i>Negatives and Contact Sheets: 1965 - 1971</i>	1965-1971	
Box 10	<i>Negatives and Contact Sheets: 1972 - 1975</i>	1972-1975	
Box 11	<i>Negatives and Contact Sheets: 1975 - 1982</i>	1975-1982	
Box 12	<i>Negatives and Contact Sheets: 1984 - 1998</i>	1984-1998	
Box 13	<i>Negatives and Contact Sheets: 1999 - 2005 &amp; Family/Mixed: 1957 - 2005</i>	1999-2005/1957-2005	
Box 14	<i>Color Slides: Subjects: Art - Plants</i>		
Box 15	<i>Color Slides: Subjects: Plants - Travel</i>		
Box 16	<i>Color Slides: Subjects: Travel (Core: China, México-Lacandon, Favorites)</i>		
	<b>UNPROCESSED</b>		
	<b>Oversize prints</b>		Not processed. Approximately 15 flat boxes.
	<b>Papers</b>		Not processed. Approximately 12 cartons.