

∞ The Ward M. Canaday Center ∞  
for Special Collections  
The University of Toledo

Finding Aid

➤ David Ossman Tapes, 1960-1970 ◀

MSS-032

**Size:** 4 Linear Feet

**Provenance:** The University of Toledo Libraries purchased this collection in 1977. Certain letters to Ossman from poets involved in "The Sullen Art" were removed by him prior to the sale of the collection. Literary rights to the items in this collection may be assumed to rest with the creators of those items. Mr. Ossman waived any copyright he possessed in favor of the University of Toledo. The researcher desiring to quote extensively from the materials in this collection should consult the staff of The Ward M. Canaday Center regarding copyright Issues.

**Access:** open

**Collection Summary:** Collection consists of tape recordings of interviews with 44 poets, mostly American, for the radio program "The Sullen Art" (1960-1961); correspondence from those poets and from listeners regarding the program; poetry readings by seven poets for the series "The Poet in New York"; and tapes of the Berkeley Poetry Conference (July 13-23, 1965), including lectures and poetry readings. Featured poets include Allen Ginsberg, Edward Dorn, Robert Edward Duncan, Robert Creeley, Imamu Amiri Baraka, Gilbert Sorrentino, and Paul Blackburn.

**Subject(s):** [Literature](#), [Music](#), [Art](#), [Drama](#), and [Theatre](#)

**Related Collections:**

**Processing Note:**

**Copyright:** The literary rights to this collection are assumed to rest with the person(s) responsible for the production of the particular items within the collection, or with their heirs or assigns. Researchers bear full legal responsibility for the acquisition to publish from any part of said collection per *Title 17, United States Code*. The **Ward M. Canaday Center for Special Collections** may reserve the right to intervene as intermediary at its own discretion.

**Completed by:** Paul M. Gifford and Nancy Burnard December 1986

**Reformatted by:** Brad Sommer, February 2010 ; last updated: November 2015

**David Ossman**  
**Tapes, 1960-1970**

**Introduction**

David Ossman, a poet, critic, and radio show host, recorded and produced several radio programs on poetry in the early 1960s. This collection consists largely of interviews that Ossman conducted in 1960 and 1961 with contemporary "new" poets for a program entitled "The Sullen Art," broadcast on WBAI-FM, New York, N. Y. It also includes tapes of poetry read by the poets in this interview series. The second major component of the collection consists of lectures and readings by participants in the Berkeley Poetry Conference (1965). In addition to the tapes, the collection contains letters from the poets involved in Ossman's project and from listeners to the series.

This collection, narrow in its time frame, yet comprehensive in the selection of its speakers, constitutes a valuable resource for the study of American poetry of the 1950s and early 1960s. Many of the poets interviewed have since become well known and their views as young individuals are certain to hold the interest of researchers.

There are no restrictions on access to this collection. Digital files of the recordings are available.

**Biographical Sketch**

1936, Dec. 6	Born in Santa Monica, Cal.
1954-1955	Student, Pomona College.
1958	B.F.A. (cum laude), Columbia University.
1959	Announcer, WBAI, New York City.
1960-1961	Production director, literary consultant, WBAI, New York City.
1961	Producer-director, actor, literary consultant, KPFK, Los Angeles.
Late 1960s- early 1970s	Part of the Firesign Theatre troupe with Phil Austin, Peter Bergman, and Philip Proctor

Author of:

*An Offering: Without Incense.* [s.l.: n.p.], 1954.

*The Sullen Art: Interviews with Modern American Poets.* New York: Corinth, 1963.

*The Crescent Journals, 1965-1966, with Compass Points and Two Mexican Charms.* [s.l.: n.p.], 1966.

*Set in a Landscape: Poems and Sequences, 1960-1965.* Mexico City: El Como Emplumado, 1966.

*The Rainbow Cafe, Hollywood, 1967.* Isla Vista, Cal.: Turkey Press, 1982.

*The Day-book of the City.* Isla Vista, Cal.: Turkey Press, 1982.

*The Moon-sign Book:* Los Angeles/San Juan. Isla Vista, Cal.: Turkey Press, 1984.

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**Scope and Content Note**

This collection has two main components: a series of interviews conducted for the radio program "The Sullen Art" and the proceedings of the Berkeley Poetry Conference held in July 1965. From the interviews, Ossman edited another program, "American Poetry, 1961." He also recorded some of the poets he interviewed reading their poems and assembled those readings for a series entitled, "The Poet in New York." The content of the Berkeley Poetry Conference also contains both criticism of contemporary poetry, in the form of lectures by major poets, and readings by those poets. David Ossman's collection, then, has a dual value in its discussions of contemporary American poetry and in the readings of poems by contemporary American poets. Of the material in the collection, that in "The Sullen Art" will probably draw the attention of most researchers.

While at WBAI-Pacific Radio in New York City, Ossman developed three types of programs devoted to poetry: readings by poets of note; a series of readings by David Allen of poetry both old and new; and a series of interviews with younger poets, illustrated with readings of their works. It was early in 1960 that the idea of "The Sullen Art" was born. Ossman envisioned it as a continuing series of radio programs "inquiring into the sources and future of contemporary poetry." He took the title for the program from Dylan Thomas's poem, "In My Craft or Sullen Art," since Ossman felt that poets, no matter how involved with the affairs of the world, ultimately created their work alone. He also deliberately chose to interview those younger, non-academic poets categorized as "new" or "beat," sometimes quite erroneously. Ossman set out to show that the new poets were "not a bunch of illiterate, barbaric, slightly-criminal types," as they had often been characterized in the popular press. In doing so, he interviewed over forty poets—some of whom have since achieved considerable fame. Ossman later published fourteen of the interviews in *The Sullen Art: Interviews by David Ossman with Modern American Poets*.

Besides the original typescript interviews published in *The Sullen Art*, including two not included due to the wishes of the poets involved (Robert Duncan and Cid Corman), the collection includes correspondence, both from poets Ossman interviewed and from listeners to the series, release forms, and some general correspondence.

The Berkeley Poetry Conference, held on the campus of the University of California in July, 1965, came at a time when certain poets were receiving a wider, political audience. The free speech movement there set the tone for much of the political unrest on campuses across the nation later in the decade. Donald Wesling, in an article in *The Nation*, noted the "seemingly programmatic congruence" of free speech with free verse---both proponents came to the issues from a polemical stance. Indeed the content of the lectures by Charles Olson, Allen Ginsberg, and Edward Dorn was, in no small sense, political. Researchers will find the tape recordings of this conference useful, then, for the study of issues not purely literary.

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**Folder List**

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Description</u>
1		Incoming Letters
	1	From Interviewees, 1960-1962
	2	Re: Radio Programs, 1960-1965
	3	General, 1960-1970
	4	Poems by Others, 1963-1964
		The Sullen Art -Draft of Book
	5	Original Copy, n.d. (1 of 2)
	6	Original Copy, n.d. (2 of 2)
	7	Photocopy, n.d. (1 of 2)
	8	Photocopy, n.d. (2 of 2)
	9	Contract With Publisher, 1962
	10	Interviews with Cid Corman and Robert Duncan, n.d.
	11	Standard Release Forms (Radio), 1961-1962
		Reel-to-Reel Tapes
		<i>The Sullen Art</i>
	2	Paul Carroll, 4/14/60
	3	Jack Hirschman, 1960
	4	Jerome Rothenberg, 1960
	5	Robert Bly, 1960
	6	John Logan, 1960
	7a	Gilbert Sorrentino, 1960
	7b	Gilbert Sorrentino, 1960
	8	Robert Duncan, 1960
	9	LeRoi Jones, 1960
	10	Tambimuttu, 1960
	11	Daisy Alden, 1960
2	12	Charles Tomlinson, 1960
	13	Kenneth Rexroth, 1960
	14	Jean Fanchette, 1960
	15	Paul Blackburn, 1960
	16	Judson Jerome, 1960
	17	Anthony Linick, 1960
	18	Jeanne Bagby, 11/1/60
	19	Robert Kelly, 10/14/60
	20	Cid Corman, 10/29/60
	21	Clayton Eschelman, 11/29/60
	22	C. V. J. Anderson, 12/5/60

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<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Description</u>
	23	Tuli Kupferberg, 1960
	24	W. S. Merwin, 1/61
2		Tapes (cont.) <i>The Sullen Art</i>
	25a	Allen Ginsberg: A Conversation With Ann Guidice, 12/20/60
	25b	Allen Ginsberg: A Conversation, 1960
	25c	Allen Ginsberg: A Conversation, 1960
	26	Durward Collins, 1/61
	27	Ursule Molinaro, 1/61
	28	Edward Dom, 2/61
	29a	Wagner College Poets, 3/61
	29b	Wagner College Poets, 3/61
	30	Rochelle Owens, 4/61
3	31	Jackson McLow, 4/61
	32	Carl Larsen, 3/61
	33	Robert Creeley, 5/30/61
	34	Jack Micheline, 5/31/61
	35	Michael Benedikt, 6/61
	36	Margaret Randall, n.d.
	37	Armand Schwemer, n.d.
	38	George Economou, n.d.
	39	Lewis Turco, n.d.
	40	Michael McClure, n.d.
	41	Raymond Federman, 12/19/61
	42	Gene Frumkin, 12/21/61
	43	Gael Turnbull, 12/30/61
	44	James Boyer May, 12/16/61
	45	Barbara Moraff, n.d.
		American Poetry, 1961
	46	Tape 1
	47	Tape 2
		The Poet in New York
	1	Gilbert Sorrentino, 7/18/61
	2	Paul Blackburn, n.d.
	3	LeRoi Jones, n.d.
	4	Jerome Rothenberg, 6/19/61
	5	Robert Kelly, 6/16/61
4	6	Jack Hirschman and Tambimuttu, 6/12/61
	7	Clayton Eschelman, n.d.

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8 Denise Levertov, 10/21/61

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Description</u>
		Berkeley Poetry Conference, July 13-23,1965
1		Charles Olson: Poetry Reading
2		Ed Dorn/Allen Ginsberg: Poetry Readings
3		Charles Olson: Lecture and Poetry Reading
4		Ed Dorn: Poetry Reading
5		Charles Olson/John Weiners: Poetry Readings
6		John Weiners/Gary Snyder: Poetry Readings; Lecture: Gary Snyder
7		Robert Creeley; Poetry Reading and Lecture
8		Allen Ginsberg: Poetry Reading
9		Robert Creeley: Poetry Reading Lecture: Ed Dom
10		Gary Snyder: Poetry Reading Lecture: Robert Creeley
		Miscellaneous Radio Programs
1		Watts Happening in L.A., Written and Read by Rev. Paul Sawyer (10/13/65)
2		New Departures, (Extemporaneous Poetry by Mike Horovitz and Pete Brown (10/64)
3		Richard Grossinger: Poetry Reading (1/68)

NOTE: The material contained in the original reel-to-reel tapes has been digitized. Researchers can access the digital recordings on site at the Canaday Center. Remote access to the recordings cannot be provided.