Abstract: The Berkeley, California-based Sombre Reptiles Press was founded in 1978 by poet Jerry Ratch and artist Mary Ann Hayden. This small collection consists of approximately one linear foot of material related to the operation of the press and the publication of its works, spanning the dates 1977 and 1994, with the bulk of the material dating from 1977 to 1982.
Descriptive Summary

Identification: MSS 560
Creator: Sombre Reptiles (Firm)
Title: Sombre Reptiles Press records
Bulk Dates: 1978-1982
Extent: 1 linear foot and oversize removals (1 box)
Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Citation: MSS 560, Sombre Reptiles Press records, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware.

Shelving Summary: Box 1: Shelved in SPEC MSS record center cartons; Removals shelved in SPEC MSS oversize boxes (32 inches)

Location: Special Collections Department, University of Delaware Library Newark, Delaware 19717-5267 Phone: 302-831-2229 Fax: 302-831-6003 URL: http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/


Access Restrictions: The collection is open for research.

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Historical Note

The Berkeley, California-based Sombre Reptiles Press was founded in 1978 by poet Jerry Ratch and artist Mary Ann Hayden. The award-winning press published eighteen books of prose and poetry between 1978 and 1984. Sombre Reptiles's work often features Hayden’s original artwork and illustration, as well as stylistic elements designed by Hayden that seem to be characteristic of the press: horizontal lines resembling blocked-out text, and the playful use of horizontal numbers, particularly the numeral "2." With works by Hayden and Ratch and authors such as Darrell Gray, Alastair Johnston of The Poltroon Press, Kathleen Fraser, Jerry Estrin, Robert Peters, and Michael Wolfe of the Tombuctou Press, the collection represents the position Sombre Reptiles held as an integral participant in the circle of small-press printers in the Berkeley area in the mid- to late-1970s and 1980s

Sources:

Historical information derived from the collection.
Scope and Content Note

The Sombre Reptiles Press records consists of approximately one linear foot of material related to the operation of the Press and the publication of its works. Spanning the dates 1977 and 1994, with the bulk of the material 1977-1982, the collection includes published books, broadsides, ephemera, layouts, paste-ups, announcements, cards, typescripts, artwork, manuscripts, page proofs, galley proofs, and correspondence. The collection demonstrates the press’s artistic range and its participation in the circle of private presses in the variety of authors represented who also owned or ran their own presses.

The collection is divided into four series: I Works by Sombre Reptiles Press; II. Administrative files and press history; III. Artwork; and IV. Prints and publications by other presses. Series I. comprises materials contributing toward the publication of several Sombre Reptiles Press works and includes manuscripts, artwork, proofs, dummies, layouts, and paste-ups, in addition to the published books, which have been removed for cataloging in Special Collections.

Series II. contains items pertaining to the background and business operations of the press, such as correspondence, particularly with authors, awards, and journals in which the press’s authors or owners have been featured.

Series III. features artwork by Mary Ann Hayden not included in the collection’s represented publications, including color prints, broadsides, and an etching. Also included in this series is artwork given to Hayden.

Series IV. comprises items and projects not directly related to the work of Sombre Reptiles, and includes items given to Ratch and Hayden, as well as side design projects of Hayden’s.

Many of the printed works included with the collection have been removed for cataloging with imprints in Special Collections. Sombe Reptiles works are searchable via DELCAT's Advanced Search by searching "Sombre Reptiles Press" in the Publisher or Note field.
Selected Search Terms

**Personal Names**

Ratch, Jerry.

Hayden, Mary Ann.

**Corporate Names**

Sombre Reptiles (Firm)

**Topical Terms**

Private presses--California--Berkeley--History--20th century.

Private presses--Sombre Reptiles.

**Form/Genre Terms**

Correspondence.

Manuscripts.

Proofs.

Galley proofs.

Dummies.

Receipts.

Mechanicals (camera-ready copy)

Layouts (composition)

Collages (visual works)

Prints (visual works)

Broadsides (notices)

Etchings (prints)

Prospectuses.

Cut-paper work.

**Occupation**
Printers.
Authors.
Artists.

**Personal Contributors**

Cushman, Don.
Estrin, Jerry.
Gray, Darrell, 1945-
Johnston, Alastair, 1950-
Hayden, Mary Ann.
Ratch, Jerry.
Wolfe, Michael, 1945-

**Materials Cataloged Separately**

Many of the printed works included with the collection have been removed for cataloging with imprints in Special Collections and are searchable via DELCAT.
Arrangement

I. Works by Sombre Reptiles Press
II. Administrative files and press history
III. Artwork
   A. Artwork by Mary Ann Hayden
   B. Artwork by others
IV. Prints and publications by other presses
Detailed Description of the Collection


Comprises materials contributing toward the publication of several Sombre Reptiles Press works and includes manuscripts, artwork, proofs, dummies, layouts, and paste-ups, in addition to the published books, which have been removed for cataloging in Special Collections.

Crabs by Darrell Gray, 1978 [Box 1 F1]

3 items

Written under the pen name Stanley Bummer. Items include copy of booklet signed by Gray, page proofs, and layout materials. See also broadside of Crabs in F20.

NoUse NoUse by Mary Ann Hayden, 1978 [Box 1 F2]

7 items

Paste-up and six colored pencil sketches by Hayden of illustrations used in the book.

Ruby Port: Food Poems by Phillipe Mignon. Translated by Darrell Gray, 1979 [Box 1 F3]

3 items

Photocopy of layout with pencil corrections and accompanying envelope. Includes typescript (2 pages): one poem titled "When the Worm Looks Up" re-titled "How to Spell" and one prose piece titled "Why I Think Metaphor Stinks" by Anton Plumly.

Rose by Jerry Ratch, 1979 [Box 1 F4]

1 item

Signed, unbound copy of booklet. Copy #47 of 47.

Chaucer Marginalia by Jerry Ratch, 1979 [Box 1 F5]

1 item

Unbound copy of limited edition in soft wrappers.

Book of Gestures by Jerry Estrin, 1980 [Box 1 F6]

2 items

Two typescript manuscripts, one with corrections; see also F25 Correspondence (2) for letter relating to Book of Gestures.

2 cross seizings by Mary Ann Hayden and Laura Moriarity, 1980 4 items
Typescript manuscript, circa 1979-1980 [Box 1 F7]
Includes some corrections and notes.

Letter from Moriarity to Hayden and Jerry Ratch, 1979 [Box 1 F7]

"Variations on a set of lines #1", undated [Box 1 F7] (Removed to SPEC MSS oversize boxes (32 inches))
Artist’s proof 2 of 4; numbered 1 of 80. Signed by Hayden.

"Variations on a set of lines #2", undated [Box 1 F7] (Removed to SPEC MSS oversize boxes (32 inches))
Artist’s proof 1 of 6; numbered 1 of 80. Signed by Hayden.

_In Morocco_ by Michael Wolfe, 1980

Typescripts, undated [Box 1 F8]
2 items
Two typescript manuscripts, one heavily corrected. Also includes mock-up of title page.

Photographs, undated [Box 1 F9]
6 items

Proofs (1 of 2), undated [Box 1 F10]
Two sets of typescript proofs documenting extensive revisions made to the text.

Proofs (2 of 2), undated [Box 1 F11]

_Kill Jim_ by Don Cushman, 1981

Each copy of _Kill Jim_ "contains individual sheets of paper handmade by Donald Farnsworth [and] a collage by Mary Ann Hayden." Book of prose poetry, homage to detective fiction.

Proofs and galley proofs, undated [Box 1 F12]
3 items
Includes a set of proofs that may be an early version of _Kill Jim_.

Paste-up, undated [Box 1 F13]

Dummy, undated [Box 1 F14]
Includes tipped in collage by Hayden.
Artwork, undated [Box 1 F15]

3 items

Three collages featuring artwork from *Kill Jim* and copies of the book's prospectus.

"Doon Pit" by Philip Daughtry, 1981 3 items

Typescript manuscripts and letter, circa 1981 [Box 1 F16]

Typescript manuscripts of the poem with corrections signed and dated by Daughtry, January 20, 1981; also includes typed letter to Mary Ann Hayden regarding the note that appears on the broadside concerning the poem’s Celtic dialect.

Poetry broadside, circa 1981 [Box 1 F16] (Removed to SPEC MSS oversize boxes (32 inches))

2 copies

Signed and dated by Daughtry. "One hundred copies designed & printed at Sombre Reptiles Press, Berkeley 1981. The language is Geordie, and Anglisc dialect spoken in Newcastle and much of Northumbria. The last dragon was reported seen at Jarrow Flats, Northumberland, near the poet’s birthplace, circa the eleventh century."

_Celebrities: Margaret Dumont, Dowager of the Marx Brothers Movies [1890-1965]_ by Robert Peters, 1981 [Box 1 F17]

Correspondence with Robert Peters, which includes typescript manuscripts with corrections of "Marlene Dietrich" and a first draft of "Afloat with Robert Mitchum." Also included is a typescript of "Gertrude Stein."

_Chairman_ by Jerry Ratch, 1982

Slides and Chinese papercuts [Box 1 F18]

5 items

Slides of various illustrations of Mao Zedong; set of four Chinese papercuts used for the printing of the illustrations in the book

Dummy [Box 1 F19]

Broadsides 8 items

Various poetry broadsides by Ratch and others. Some of the works by Ratch were printed at other presses as noted.

"Angel, 1508", 1976 [Box 1 F20]
Printed by the Brown Dog Press. Accompanying handwritten note reads: "We used ‘Brown Dog’ briefly, but only made this piece. We didn’t have a press at the time."

"Hot Weather", 1978 [Box 1 F20]
Attributed to Jerry Ratch as "Ratchland." Printed at the Poltroon Press.

Crabs by Darrell Gray, 1978 [Box 1 F20]

"From Lenin's Paintings", 1979 [Box 1 F20] (Removed to SPEC MSS oversize boxes (32 inches))
"Four hundred copies were produced by Cloud Marauder/Sombre Reptiles in August 1979...Graphic and text from the book of the same title, to appear in 1980."

"Helen" by Jerry Ratch, 1979 [Box 1 F20]

"Dover Beach" by Matthew Arnold, 1979 [Box 1 F20]
(3 copies)

"The Art of Dodging" by JoAnn Ugolini, 1980 [Box 1 F20]
(2 copies)

"Sonnet 97" by Jerry Ratch, 1984 [Box 1 F20] (Removed to SPEC MSS oversize boxes (32 inches))
"From The Fall and Winter Sonnets by Jerry Ratch. Fifty copies designed & printed at Sombre Reptiles for Christmas, December nineteen hundred eighty four." Signed by Ratch and Mary Ann Hayden.

Print jobs (1 of 2), undated [Box 1 F21]
Includes a variety of prints, including business cards, greeting cards, prospectuses, and reading announcements

Print jobs (2 of 2), undated [Box 1 F22]

Paper samples, undated [Box 1 F23]
1 item
Japanese paper used in several of the Press's publications.

Series II. Administrative files and press history
Contains items pertaining to the background and business operations of the press, such as correspondence, particularly with authors, awards, and journals in which the press’s authors or owners have been featured.
Correspondence (1 of 2) , circa 1980-1988 [Box 1 F24]

Includes correspondence with authors Michael Wolfe regarding his book *In Morocco*, Kathleen Fraser concerning the 1982 publication *Women Writing Poetry in America: Poetry Broadsides by California Women Printers*, and Jerry Estrin, in addition to general correspondence. Other press business includes finances, orders, notices for readings, postcards, and exhibition information.

Correspondence (2 of 2) , 1978-1994 [Box 1 F25]


2 items, multiple copies

Includes three copies of the bibliography of Sombre Reptiles the Press printed; includes works 1979-1981. Also includes list of available titles as well as a tear sheet of a listing for Ratch’s Chaucer Marginalia, since the bibliography and the available titles listing for 1980

Journals , 1983, 1991 [Box 1 F27]

2 items

Copies of the journal of the August, 1983, Pacific Center of the Book Arts, featuring a contribution from Mary Ann Hayden and a 1991 issue of Abacus, featuring the work of poet Kathleen Fraser, who collaborated with Hayden for the 1982 publication *Women Writing Poetry in America: Poetry Broadsides by California Women Printers* and with whom Hayden also collaborated for the 1992 From a text. Included with the issue of Abacus are two handwritten Post-It notes from Fraser to Hayden, dated 1993.

Awards , 1981 [Box 1 F28]

2 items

Two certificates from the American Institute of Graphic Arts. One certificate is an award from the AIGA Book Show of 1981 acknowledging Kill Jim, and the other is presented to Hayden by AIGA.


Features artwork by Mary Ann Hayden not included in the collection’s represented publications, including color prints, broadsides, and an etching. Also included in this series is artwork given to Hayden.

Subseries III.A. Artwork by Mary Ann Hayden , 1977-1982, undated

Color prints [Box 1 F29]

2 items

Untitled print , 1977 [Box 1 F29]

Untitled print, undated [Box 1 F29]

Features a grid design similar to the Poltroon Press print, though there is no indication that the two prints are linked.

Poetry broadsides 3 items

Series of three color prints with accompanying text. The prints feature stylistic elements that seem to be characteristic of Sombre Reptiles, horizontal lines resembling blocked-out text, and horizontal numbers, particularly the numeral "2." All three prints are signed and dated by Hayden, two of which include the Sombre Reptiles Press imprint.

"deliberately/empty...lie/the heart..." , 1981 [Box 1 F29]
Numbered 9 of 15; bears Sombre Reptiles Press imprint

"is true he‘s/proud/of/that/he‘s/a/little/Mural" , 1981 [Box 1 F29]
Artist’s proof 3 of 4

"the/Red/leaf/&/its/shadow/sign/of/the Pear" , 1981 [Box 1 F29]
Numbered 14 of 15; bears Sombre Reptiles Press imprint

Etching , 1982 [Box 1 F29]

1 item

Titled "After Blood Wedding #1"; signed and dated by Hayden; numbered 5 of 13

Subseries III.B. Artwork by others , 1978, undated

Artwork by others 2 items

Text is backwards. Inscribed "For Mary Anne...from" signature unclear. The rest of the text reads: "Utility is one aspect (only one:"

Blue color print, undated [Box 1 F30]

Color print/pencil sketch, 1978 [Box 1 F30]

Text reads: "Mata Hari/at work...on yr birthday." Inscribed "For Mary Ann Sept 78." Signature unclear

Series IV. Prints and publications by other presses , 1977-1982
Comprises items and projects not directly related to the work of Sombre Reptiles, and includes items given to Ratch and Hayden, as well as side design projects of Hayden’s.

Alastair Johnston 2 items

*Puberty Rites for Brooke*, 1978 [Box 1 F31]

Dummy with corrections. Inscribed to Jerry Ratch and Mary Ann Hayden. Signed and dated by Johnston, February 7, 1978

"Prose take, Monday, 13 April 1959" by Philip Whalen, 1977 [Box 1 F31] (Removed to SPEC MSS oversize boxes (32 inches))


*Silent Music* by Stephen Ratcliffe, 1980 [Box 1 F32]

2 items

Photocopy of typescript manuscript and a signed letter from Ratcliffe to Hayden.

*Love Poems for Robert Mitchum* by Robert Peters, 1981 [Box 1 F33]

1 item

Photocopied typescript with some corrections. Published by the Poet-Skin Press. Signed and dated by Peters. Inscribed to Ratch and Hayden: "For Jerry [and] Mary Ann--I put this together as a New Years' greeting--Love to all up there/Bob Peters."

*(As) on things which (headpiece) touches the Moslem* by Gail Sher, 1982 [Box 1 F34]

2 items