



The New York Public Library  
Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Guide to the

**Michael Holman collection**

1961-2015 [bulk 1979-2015]

(S) \*MGZMD 423

Compiled by Robyn Hjermsstad, 2017.

## Summary

**Creator:** Holman, Michael

**Title:** Michael Holman collection

**Date:** 1961-2015 [bulk 1979-2015]

**Size:** 8.37 linear feet (21 boxes, 1 oversized folder); 2.62 tb (4,510 computer files)

**Source:** Acquired from Michael Holman, 2015.

**Abstract:** Michael Holman is an American filmmaker, musician, visual artist, writer, and hip-hop impresario. The collection dates from 1961 to 2015 and documents Holman's life and career through photographs, writings, appointment books, contracts, correspondence, articles, fliers, posters, and audio and moving image recordings.

**Access:** Some collections held by the Dance, Music, Recorded Sound, and Theatre Divisions at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts are held off-site and must be requested in advance. Please check the collection records in **the NYPL's online catalog** for detailed location information. For general guidance about requesting offsite materials, please consult: <https://www.nypl.org/about/locations/lpa/requesting-archival-materials>

**Status note:** Electronic records are currently unavailable.

### Conditions Governing Access:

Audiovisual recordings are unavailable pending digitization.

**Conditions Governing Use:** The author/creator retains copyright of materials. For information on obtaining permission to publish, contact the Dance Division at [dance@nypl.org](mailto:dance@nypl.org).

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## Creator History

Michael Holman is an American filmmaker, musician, visual artist, writer, and hip-hop impresario residing in New York City. Holman is best-known as a pioneering figure in the promotion of early American hip-hop, the screenwriter of the film *Basquiat*, and as the founding manager of the breakdancing crew the New York City Breakers. Michael Thomas Holman was born in San Francisco, California. His father was in the United States Army, and the family traveled domestically and internationally throughout Holman's childhood. In 1973, Holman enrolled in the University of San Francisco (USF) to study business administration. The following year he took time off to tour as a performer with the punk band The Tubes. Holman moved to New York City in 1978. During this time, he worked as a junior banker and began immersing himself in the downtown club scene. He met and began collaborating with artists and musicians rather quickly, including Stan Peskett, Fab 5 Freddy, and Jean-Michel Basquiat. In 1979, Holman, Basquiat, and musicians Nick Taylor, Vincent Gallo, Shannon Dawson, and Justin Thyme formed the band Gray. They performed at popular downtown nightclubs including the Mudd Club, CBGB, and Hurrah's, but after the success of Basquiat's first art show in 1981, he quit the band, which disintegrated soon after. Members of the band reunited to perform at Basquiat's memorial service following his death in 1988, and came together once more in 1996 to record music for the film *Basquiat* (written by Holman and directed by Julian Schnabel). In 2011, Holman and Taylor released the band's first ever album, *Shades Of...*, and have since performed at the New Museum and the Parrish Art Museum.

In 1981, Holman met British pop impresario Malcolm McLaren, who was looking for an opening act for an upcoming concert. Holman brought him to an outdoor show in the South Bronx featuring DJ Afrika Bambaataa and the Zulu Nation. McLaren and Holman brought Bambaataa and the Zulus downtown to open for Bow Wow Wow at the Ritz later that year. This marked a pivotal moment in the collective punk, new wave, and hip-hop subculture that flooded downtown New York City throughout the 1980s. The success of the show brought Holman work as a promoter and booking manager at Negril nightclub. His shows featured DJs, emcees, breakdancers, and graffiti artists, including the Floor Masters, a breaking crew from the Bronx. After seeing them perform, he signed on as their manager, recruited some additional dancers, and created the New York City Breakers (NYCB). Along with rival b-boys the Rock Steady Crew, NYCB was integral in the popularization of breakdancing, and were among the first to perform on television. They were featured on *The Merv Griffin Show*, and later on *Good Morning America*, *Soul Train*, *NBC's Salute to the Olympics*, and *Ripley's Believe it or Not*. They also performed at the 50th presidential inaugural gala for President Ronald Reagan in 1985.

Holman's own artistic endeavors include filmmaking, screenwriting, television production and multi-media visual arts. He studied film at New York University's Graduate School of Film. He has produced, directed, and shot several small experimental films and wrote the screenplay for *Basquiat*. His short films include *Pesceador* (featuring Jean-Michel Basquiat), *Dream Crush*, *Catch a Beat*, *Money Dog*, *Just Say No*, *Vincent Gallo as Flying Christ*, and *Stilwend*. In 1984, he created the first ever syndicated hip-hop television show, *Graffiti Rock*, starring Run DMC, Kool Moe Dee, and members of NYCB. The show only lasted a single episode, but has been cited as exposing hip-hop to a global audience. He also produced for the Nickelodeon shows *Blue's Clues* and *Eureka's Castle*, and directed the music video for Run DMC's "Christmas in Hollis" in 1987.

Holman has taught screenwriting at Howard University and the School of Visual Arts, as well as classes on writing, directing, and producing children's television at the International Film and Television Workshops in Rockport, Maine and the New School for Social Research. His visual works have been shown at Art Basel (Miami), and at galleries in New York, Paris, and Switzerland. Holman has written articles for *The East Village Eye*, *Artforum*, and *Art Monthly*. His book, *Breaking and the New York City Breakers*, was published in 1984.

## Scope and Content Note

The Michael Holman collection dates from 1961 to 2015 (bulk 1979-2015) and documents Holman's career as a filmmaker, musician, artist, writer, and hip-hop impresario. The collection holds a substantial amount of electronic records, consisting of digital audiovisual works, photographs, scripts, and other writings. Particularly well-represented aspects of Holman's career are his work as a filmmaker and writer, and as a musician in the band Gray. Holman frequently repurposed his films, adding animation and sound, and creating different combinations of video clips for live performances. Interviews with Holman, *Confessions of a Subculturalist*, and *A Story About No One* (also referred to as *A Film About No One* and *A Book About No One*) are autobiographical. Materials that document Holman's involvement in hip-hop include the photographs, fliers, programs, *Graffiti Rock* files, posters, articles, appointment books, contracts, letters, and audio and moving images. Filmmaking files document the writing and filming of his short films; and the writing files contain video and film treatments, commercial scripts, a few notebooks, and other writings by Holman. Researchers interested in his scripts and screenplays should consult both the filmmaking and the writing files. Among the writings held on electronic media are "Third World," "I Get Minez," "Solid Ground" (Larry Carlton, MCA Records), "Forbidden Love," and "N.E. Heartbreak." Commercial scripts are for the promotion of Club Salem, AIDS awareness, and Adidas. Hard copy scripts include those for *Brothers*, *Dream Boy*, and *Love for a Brutal God*. Also present in the writing files is a copy of Holman's *Breaking and the New York City Breakers* and storyboards for his short film *Do the Right Thing*. Filmmaking files contain scripts, research notes, sound reports, and dailies for *Money Dog*; and scripts and other materials for *Old Tin* and *The Suicide Machine*. Video clips, stills, music and other electronic records documenting *Money Dog*, *Pesceador*, and *Old Tin* are currently unavailable. Holman's research notes for the film *Basquiat* are among the paper records, and include notes from interviews he conducted for the film with Esther Balint, Kelly Inman, Suzanne Mallouk, Nick Taylor, Michael Chow, and John Lurie. Scripts, shot lists, content descriptions, photographs, and production schedules make up other materials in the filmmaking files. Materials pertaining to Gray consist of lyrics, notes, flyers, programs, and a screenplay for a musical. Electronic records comprise press releases, song lists, audio tracks, and video of Holman and Taylor at the New Museum in 2011. "Moments of Gray" is video footage of Holman and Taylor discussing the band in a casual setting. Correspondence, letters, and proposals are somewhat limited in quantity, but provide a comprehensive overview of Holman's wide-ranging endeavors. Several incoming letters reflect the success of performances by the New York City Breakers, including a letter from Ronald Reagan. Many of the outgoing letters concern television and film projects and royalties for the Run DMC "Christmas in Hollis" music video (directed by Holman) and *Graffiti Rock*. Of interest are a small number of postcards and writings by Vince Gallo; and a letter from David Byrne requesting the use of *Graffiti Rock* footage. The majority of the correspondence dates from the 1980s to the early 1990s. Letters from the 1960s and 1970s are generally personal in nature. Agreements, project descriptions, press releases, and articles comprise the paper portion of the *Graffiti Rock* files. Also included are interviews (currently unavailable) conducted by Holman in 2014 with individuals affiliated with or influenced by first generation hip-hop culture. The interviews chronicle the lives and careers of several hip-hop pioneers, artists, and writers, and document their opinions on the the sources, evolution, and culture of hip-hop. Among the individuals interviewed are DJ Spinna and MC Kriminul (Jigmastas); Junko (a Japanese b-girl); LA Sunshine; Lisa C.; Sha Rock; Kool Mo Dee; Lee Quiñones; Mr. Wave; Mr. Freeze; Powerful Plex; Bill Adler; Martha Cooper; Lyor Cohen; Raquel Cepeda; and Touré.

Appointment books date from 1979 to 2014 and contain detailed entries of Holman's plans and appointments. Holman has inserted notes in the appointment books with additional information about what he was working on at the time.

Photographs consist of prints and negatives of the New York City Breakers, breakdancing battles, and press photographs for Gray. Posters document events such as an exhibit of Andy Warhol and Jean-Michel Basquiat paintings, and Doug E. Fresh's "All the Way to Heaven." Original posters for *Downtown 81* and *Graffiti Rock* are also present. Audio and moving image recordings, though currently unavailable, traverse nearly all of Holman's interests and endeavors. The film and video recordings include footage captured by Holman of various events at clubs in New York City from 1979 through the 1980s including Club 57, Max's Kansas City, Negril, and Danceteria. Film titles include *Dream Crush*, *Catch a Beat*, *Money Dog*, *Just Say No*, *Vincent Gallo as Flying Christ*, and *Stilwend*. Other films consist of various b-roll clips and shots of the downtown hip-hop and art scenes, including footage of Jean-Michel Basquiat. There are several videos of the New York City Breakers including compilations, the 1985 presidential inaugural gala performance, and televised segments. Audio recordings consist of interviews, music recordings, and lectures, including recordings of "Creating Children's TV," taught by Holman at the International Film and Television Workshops in Rockport, Maine. Interviews that Holman conducted for the film *Basquiat* include those with Kenny Scharf, Dan Asher, Diego Cortez, Steven Torton, Annina Nosei, Julian Schnabel, and Suzanne Mallouk. Several recordings of Holman speaking about his life and experiences comprise the "Confessions of a Subculturalist" recordings.

**Arrangement:** The collection is arranged alphabetically by subject or format.

## **Key Terms**

### **Occupations**

Artists (visual artists)  
Impresarios  
Independent filmmakers  
Musicians

### **Subjects**

Break dancing -- New York (State) -- New York  
Hip-hop -- New York (State) -- New York  
New wave music

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Experimental films  
Fliers (printed matter)  
Interviews  
Photographs  
Scripts  
Sound recordings  
Video recordings

### **Titles**

Graffiti Rock  
Money Dog

### **Geographic Names**

New York

### **Names**

Basquiat, Jean-Michel, 1960-1988  
New York City Breakers (Dance group)

## Container List

### Appointment Books

- b. 1 f. 1-6 1979-1983
- b. 2 f. 1-5 1983-1987
- b. 3 f. 1-7 1988-1996
- b. 4 f. 1-8 1997-2005
- b. 5 f. 1-7 2005-2013
- b. 6 f. 1 2013-2014

### Art

- er. 2 1989-2014  
(.98 Gigabytes (102 computer files))
- b. 6 f. 2-4 1991-2015  
Includes artist statements and loan and exhibit documentation.
- b. 20 f. 4-5 Drawings circa 1987, 1992  
Sketches for *Money Dog* and original drawing by Phase II.
- b. 6 f. 5 *A Film About No One* 1998
- er. 1 *A Story About No One* 1997-2010  
(49.68 Gigabytes (341 computer files))

### Biographical

- er. 3 1980s, 1996-1997  
(217 Megabytes (28 computer files))  
Resumes, biographical sketches, and reel lists.
- b. 6 f. 6 Rock and Roll Hall of Fame 2000-2001
- er. 40 Interview with Michael Holman 2008, 2015  
(227.8 Gigabytes (332 computer files))  
This interview chronicles Holman's life and career.
- b. 6 f. 6-8 Children's Television 1989-2004  
Children's television files contain class handouts, articles, notes, and scripts. Researchers should also consult the teaching files for further documentation of Holman's career as an educator of children's television production.
- er. 4 Children's Television 1990, 1996-2004  
(269.8 Megabytes (13 computer files))
- b. 7 f. 1-4 *Confessions of a Subculturalist* 2007-2008
- er. 5 *Confessions of a Subculturalist* 2007-2008  
(163.6 Gigabytes (202 computer files))

### Contracts and Licensing

- b. 7 f. 5-7 Contracts 1983-2015
- er. 6 Contracts 1989-2000  
(90.71 Kilobytes (5 computer files))
- b. 8 f. 1-4 Licensing Deals 1983-2009
- er. 39 Licensing 1991  
(22.51 Kilobytes (2 computer files))

### Correspondence, Letters, and Proposals

- b. 8 f. 5-7 1961-2015

Correspondence, Letters, and Proposals (cont.)

- er. 38 1989-2000  
(297.6 Kilobytes (20 computer files))
  - er. 45 1992-2000  
(336.7 kilobytes (15 computer files))
  - b. 9 f. 1-3 2002-2014
- Filmmaking
- b. 9 f. 4-8 1987-1996  
Materials pertaining to *Basquiat*, *Imagination Machines*, and *Money Dog* (2000 PSI).
  - b. 10 f. 1-8 1987, 2005-2008  
Materials pertaining to *Money Dog*, *Old Tin*, and *The Suicide Machine*.
  - b. 11 f. 1 2007
    - er. 7 Film Footage 2007, 2011  
(17.27 Gigabytes (29 computer files))
    - er. 41 *Money Dog* 2006-2011  
(238.1 Gigabytes (873 computer files))
    - er. 42 *Old Tin* 2008  
(110.9 Megabytes (35 computer files))
    - er. 57 *Pesceador* 2004-2012  
(1.49 Gigabytes (13 computer files))
    - er. 46 Reel 2004-2008  
(8.91 Gigabytes (43 computer files))
    - er. 49 Super 8 Transfer Clips 2004-2013  
(156.5 Gigabytes (92 computer files))
    - er. 51 *The Suicide Machine* 2004  
(121.9 Gigabytes (263 computer files))
  - b. 11 f. 2 Fliers and Programs 1978-2015
  - b. 20 f. 6 Fliers 1979-1982
- Graffiti Rock*
- b. 11 f. 3-6 1983-circa 2013
    - er. 25 2004, 2014  
(318.8 Megabytes (15 computer files))  
Photographs from the interviews and video clips from the show.
- Graffiti Rock Video Interviews*
- er. 8 Mr. Freeze UBC Battle 2014  
(1.72 Gigabytes (6 computer files))
  - er. 9 Bill Adler 2014  
(16.92 Gigabytes (10 computer files))
  - er. 10 Charlie Ahearn 2008, 2014  
(15.40 Gigabytes (33 computer files))
  - er. 11 DJ Spinna and Creme 2008, 2014  
(23.31 Gigabytes (8 computer files))
  - er. 12 Junko, Japanese B Girl 2008, 2014  
(23.66 Gigabytes (14 computer files))
  - er. 13 Kool Mo Dee 2014  
(42.21 Gigabytes (21 computer files))

Graffiti Rock (cont.)

Graffiti Rock Video Interviews (cont.)

- er. 14 **LA Sunshine** 2008, 2014  
(22.27 Gigabytes (38 computer files))
- er. 15 **Lee Quiñones** 2008, 2014  
(39.99 Gigabytes (16 computer files))
- er. 16 **Lil Lep** 2007-2008, 2014  
(40.79 Gigabytes (22 computer files))
- er. 17 **Lisa C** 2008, 2014  
(16.31 Gigabytes (8 computer files))
- er. 18 **Lyor Cohen** 2008, 2014  
(7.05 Gigabytes (15 computer files))
- er. 19 **Marlon and Moe Sunshine** 2007-2008, 2014  
(59.32 Gigabytes (34 computer files))  
See also: L.A. Sunshine (er. 14).
- er. 20 **Martha Cooper** 2014  
(16.29 Gigabytes (10 computer files))
- er. 21 **Moe Sunshine** 2007-2008, 2014  
(46.87 Gigabytes (29 computer files))  
See also: L.A. Sunshine (er. 14) and Marlon and Moe Sunshine (er. 19).
- er. 22 **Mr. Freeze** 2008, 2014  
(31.33 Gigabytes (11 computer files))
- er. 23 **Mr. Wave** 2008, 2015  
(22.34 Gigabytes (35 computer files))
- er. 24 **Nick Taylor** 2014  
(38.89 Gigabytes (16 computer files))
- er. 26 **Powerful Plex** 2014  
(27.23 Gigabytes (10 computer files))
- er. 27 **Raquel Cepeda** 2014  
(47.90 Gigabytes (15 computer files))
- er. 28 **Sacha Jenkins** 2008, 2014  
(13.13 Gigabytes (25 computer files))
- er. 29 **Sha Rock** 2008, 2014  
(16.84 Gigabytes (26 computer files))
- er. 30 **Sharp (Aaron Goodstone)** 2008, 2014  
(27.35 Gigabytes (9 computer files))
- er. 31 **Shocklee** 2014  
(17.82 Gigabytes (7 computer files))
- er. 32 **Steven "Buddha" Leafloor** 2008, 2014  
(46.23 Gigabytes (64 computer files))
- er. 33 **Theodore** 2008, 2014  
(17.99 Gigabytes (27 computer files))
- er. 34 **Touré** 2014  
(14.58 Gigabytes (15 computer files))

Gray

- b. 11 f. 7-13 **1978-2013, Undated**
- er. 35 **1993-2013**  
(866.2 Gigabytes (774 computer files))
- b. 12 f. 1 **Undated Lyrics**

Gray (cont.)

- er. 48 Super 8 Transfer Clips -- "Moments of Gray" 2007  
(10.11 Gigabytes (36 computer files))
- b. 12 f. 2 Ignorant Ads 2004
  - er. 36 Ignorant Ads 2004-2008  
(18.06 Gigabytes (212 computer files))
- b. 12 f. 3-4 Kings Court Project 1995-1998
  - er. 37 Kings Court Project 1996-2000  
(145.8 Kilobytes (7 computer files))
- b. 20 f. 1-3 MyTie Circa 1977  
Ties, printed matter, photographs.
- b. 21 f. 1 New York City Breakers 1980s  
Includes a Viewmaster with reels, patch, stickers, and a box used to hold cassettes.
- er. 43 Opera Rehearsal 2011  
(20.86 Gigabytes (26 computer files))
- b. 12 f. 5 Peskett, Stan 1990s  
Photographs
- b. 20 f. 6 1979-1984, 2013
- b. 13 f. 1-8 1980-2004
- b. 12 f. 6 1980s  
Includes a Polaroid photograph of Holman, The New York City Breakers, and Andy Warhol.
- b. 19 f. 1 1980s, 1997, 2015
  - er. 44 1999-2015  
(2.83 Gigabytes (236 computer files))  
Gray at Hurrah's, 1979; family photos; Joey Arias; Grey portraits; Holman dancing with the Tubes; and photographs of The Lewdettes.
  - o. 1 Undated  
Negatives.
  - o. 1 Posters 1981-1996  
Press
- b. 19 f. 2-5 1978-1987  
Full issues of *The East Village Eye* (Summer 1981, Jan. 1982, Oct. 1985, Jan. 1987), *FILE* (General Idea, v.4 issue 1), and Andy Warhol's *Interview* (1981, 1985).
- b. 13 f. 9-10 1981-2009
- b. 14 f. 1-4 1981-2011  
Sound Rally
- b. 14 f. 5-6 1987-2008
- b. 15 f. 1 2007-2009
  - er. 47 2000, 2007  
(32.10 Gigabytes (6 computer files))
- b. 15 f. 2-3 Speaking Engagements
- b. 15 f. 4-9 Teaching 1995-2015
  - er. 50 Teaching 1996-1997  
(15 Kilobytes (3 computer files))
- b. 15 f. 10 The Tubes 1976  
Includes photographs.
- Video Art



Video Art (cont.)

- er. 53 **B-boys 2004-2007**  
(1.99 Gigabytes (28 computer files))
- er. 54 **Faces 2007-2011**  
(31.27 Gigabytes (86 computer files))
- er. 55 **Lights 2011**  
(4.65 Gigabytes (7 computer files))
- er. 56 **Paris -- Agnes B. Gallery 2006**  
(717.3 Megabytes (7 computer files))
- er. 58 **Train Tracks 2006**  
(1.74 Gigabytes (12 computer files))
- er. 59 ***Vince Gallo as Flying Christ* 2004, 2006**  
(9.01 Gigabytes (17 computer files))

Writing

- b. 15 f. 11 **1980s**
- b. 16 f. 1-9 **1980s, 1982-1991**
  - er. 60 **1989-2000**  
(928.4 Kilobytes (26 computer files))
- b. 17 f. 1-12 **2001-2014**
- b. 18 f. 1 **Notebooks**
  - er. 52 **Treatments and Outlines 1989-2000**  
(3.52 Megabytes (80 computer files))  
Includes *Braille Teeth*, a documentary Written by Nancy Brooks Brody and Michael Holman about Jean-Michel Basquiat.