



Guide to the Heather Murray Elkins Papers, 1974-1990

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Summary

Collection Title:

Heather Murray Elkins papers, 1974-1990

Creator:

Elkins, Heather Murray

Abstract:

Heather Murray Elkins received degrees in playwriting and divinity from the University of Arizona, Duke University, and Drew University. She was the first Religion and Arts intern at Duke Chapel and went on to become a professor of worship, preaching, and the arts at Drew University's Theological School. This collection consists of Elkins' scripts, essays, booklets, sermons, and materials for performances at Duke. Also included in the collection is a copy of her book, *Forked Tongues: Methods of Creating Bicultural Drama*.

Extent:

1.25 Linear Feet

Language:

Material in English, Korean, and Navajo

Collection ID:

UA.30.01.0100

Permalink:

<https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/m1mn0d>

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Heather Murray Elkins papers, Duke University Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

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Background

Scope and Content

The collection consists largely of Heather Murray Elkins' writings. This includes scripts, essays, booklets, sermons, and materials related to events at Duke University. Also contains a scrapbook of photographs, clippings, and programs

from; a photo album for *The Dance of Mary and Martha*; and a copy of Elkins' book, *Forked Tongues: Methods of Creating Bicultural Drama*, which is mostly written in English with some plays including Navajo translations. Elkins provided an inventory with background information about the collection which is also included.

Biographical/Historical

After receiving an undergraduate degree from Prescott University in 1970, Heather Murray Elkins received a master's degree in playwriting from the University of Arizona in 1972, master's in divinity from Duke University in 1977, and a doctoral degree from Drew University in 1991. Elkins taught at an independent bilingual Navajo school after graduating from the University of Arizona. In 1974, she published *Forked Tongues: Methods of Creating Bicultural Drama*, which uses Navajo origin stories and plays written by Elkins and students to share methods of storytelling that also incorporate dance and chant. While at Duke, she created dramatic performances using a similar form of storytelling for biblical texts. Elkins authored essays and creative works on this concept of "bodying the word." This includes scripts for *The Dance of Mary and Martha* (1975); *By Faith...The Word Became Flesh* (1977); and *Oh, Mary, Don't You Weep* (1978). Elkins became the first Religion and Arts intern at Duke Chapel in the spring of 1975. In 1989, she accepted a position as professor at Drew University's Theological School. She went on to publish books about religion and the arts and was later named the Frederick Hannan Emerita Professor of Worship, Preaching, and the Arts at Drew University.

Sources: Collection background and inventory, Heather Murray Elkins papers, Duke University Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University

<https://depts.drew.edu/tsfac/helkins/>, accessed 2023 October 9

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Access Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

Acquisition Information

The Heather Murray Elkins papers were received by the University Archives as a gift from Heather Murray Elkins in 2023.

Processing Information

Processed by April Blevins, October 2023

Accessions described in this collection guide: UA2023-0049

Use Restrictions

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Names and Subjects

- Playwriting -- Drama
- Drama in religious education
- Art and religion
- Student activities -- North Carolina
- Storytelling
- Navajo language -- Readers
- Elkins, Heather Murray
- Duke University -- Students
- Duke University. Chapel
- Duke University. Divinity School -- Alumni

Collection Inventory

Collection background and inventory, undated

Box 1

Forked Tongues: Methods of Creating Bicultural Drama, 1974 Box 1

The Ark sculpture image and Heather Murray Elkins photograph, 1974, 1977 Box 1

The Unveiling, Spring 1975 Box 1

Scope and Contents

Consists of a typescript draft of a presentation based on Gnostic creation text. The presentation was performed at the Baptist Student Union for an informal women's gathering.

The Dance of Mary and Martha photo album, Fall 1975 Box 2

The Dance of Mary and Martha, script and "Bodying Forth the Word," essay, 1976-1977 Box 1

Sanctuary material, 1976 Box 1

Scope and Contents

Includes script and promotional material.

The Ninth Hour, script, 1977 Box 1

By Faith...The Word Became Flesh material, 1977 Box 1

Scope and Contents

Consists of a program, scripts, and John H. Westerhoff's introductory statement "Historical Background on Liturgical Drama" for By Faith...the Word Became Flesh.

Scrapbook, 1977 Box 1

Scope and Contents

Consists of programs, photographs, newspaper clippings, and letters to Elkins in response to the performance for By Faith...The Word Became Flesh. Also includes some materials related to Sanctuary, The What Not, and bodying the word. Materials have been removed from the original binder.

Oh, Mary, Don't You Weep, script, 1978 Box 1

Perchance to Dream, sermon, 1978 Box 1

Blessed be the Tie, article, and Guidelines for
Bodying the Word, 1989 and undated

Box 1

Booklets, 1989-1990

Box 1

Scope and Contents

Contains the booklets *Woman and the Word*, *Testimony*, and *the Weaver* (in English and Korean).