

December 2019

# Holiday Broadside

The Poetry Collection

*Featuring Robert Duncan & Jess*



Jess (American, 1923-2004)

Decorated piano (Wizard of Oz scene), undated (ca. 1950s)

Paint on wood and wax crayon on paper

Gift of Gina James

Copyright © the Jess Collins Trust

Photograph by Douglas Levere

Why in to love's true world comes  
ready fear as ever yearning fire eye  
strikes in eye waiting's alarm and figure  
predicate of you whose ruddy flame means  
warmth at danger's edge, whose smile I  
know not in lips or eyelids most  
overtakes my sight and memorized by heart  
takes over past and future lives anew  
Tonight your voice dearest of all [ . ]  
I call'd to hear I sought where "seek"  
means to see more than eyes floods  
hearing "I love you" who to whom  
says touches bloods total singing life is  
in "us" designs keys unlock from us

It is all of a music. If it were  
no more than music words would cry  
out—something dearest in words for me  
cries out in desertion always I  
need depths of color, horizons and perspective's shifts  
to find your ever awaiting me  
echoes and reflections in time "ours"  
The painter makes manifest means  
the song hours sing in eternity present  
in every thing is visible    O voice  
space and time suspend where you reach  
ear in what hearing, eye in what ikon  
touches this devotion all senses attend.

—Robert Duncan



Robert Duncan and Jess, ca. mid-1950s. Photograph by Helen Adam. From the Poetry Collection's Helen Adam Collection.

The Poetry Collection's 2019 Holiday Broadside marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of the American poet Robert Duncan (January 7, 1919–February 3, 1988). A key figure of the San Francisco Renaissance of the 1940s and 50s, Duncan played a significant role in the 1950s in the development of what became known as the Black Mountain School of Poetry. In 1949 Duncan first met the artist Jess Collins (known widely as simply "Jess"), his longtime partner and often creative collaborator with whom he lived for the rest of his life.

In honor of Duncan's centennial, the Poetry Collection is currently processing its Robert Duncan Collection. Steadily augmented over the years since the collection first came to Buffalo in the late 1980s, the Robert Duncan Collection is the largest collection of the

poet's papers, consisting of over 80 notebooks dating from the early 1940s through early 1984; hand-written and typed manuscripts for hundreds of poems; thousands of pages of manuscripts by other writers; thousands of items of correspondence with various individuals, publishers, and associations; and other personal and professional papers relating to Duncan's publications, reading tours, and literary relationships.

There are also numerous works of art by Jess, Duncan, and other artists, including the decorated piano reproduced on this card; audio recordings; and a large selection of photographs. Once the collection has been fully processed, a complete finding aid will be available online as part of the UB Special Collections' new finding aids database: [library.buffalo.edu/robertduncan](http://library.buffalo.edu/robertduncan). Additionally, the Poetry Collection holds virtually all of Duncan's publications (including small press publications, broadsides, and little magazine appearances), Duncan criticism, and the large and eclectic personal library he shared with Jess, all of which can be found in the UB Libraries catalog.

The Poetry Collection also celebrated the poet's centenary by co-sponsoring "*Passages*": *The Robert Duncan Centennial Conference in Paris* held June 12-14 at Sorbonne Université and Maison de la recherche.

The untitled poem featured in this year's Holiday Broadside is an unpublished draft from Duncan's notebook 66, where it has the note "c. 11 PM—11:55 PM Nov. 19 [1981]."

