Guide to the Casey Roberson Collection on Gross-Out Toys, 1964-2004 — 124.gross

This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on November 20, 2025.
Description is written in: English.
Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play at The Strong

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Summary Information

Repository:	Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play at The Strong
Creator:	Roberson, Casey
Creator - Artist:	Arshawsky, David
Creator - Artist:	McCarthy, Errol
Creator - Artist:	Easley, Jeff
Title:	Casey Roberson collection on gross-out toys
ID:	124.gross
ID [aspace_uri]:	/repositories/3/resources/360
Date [inclusive]:	1964-2004
Date [bulk]:	bulk 1985-1989
Physical Description:	2.1 Linear Feet (1 over-sized box)
Language of the Material:	English
Mixed Materials [box]:	1
Abstract:	This collection consists of sketches, photographs, fliers, mechanical drawings and more related to "gross-out toys" collected by Casey Roberson while conducting researching for a book project. The papers are dated from 1964 to 2004, with the bulk of the materials dated from 1985 to 1989. Some of the gross-out toys represented in the collection are the Gross Out Gang, MadBalls, Hot Wheels Scum and Chums, Toxic Crusaders, Beetlejuice, and more.

Preferred Citation for Publication

Casey Roberson collection on gross-out toys, Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play at The Strong, Rochester, New York, USA.

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Historical Note

Casey Roberson is a reference and instruction librarian at St. Lawerence University. As of 2025, he is conducting research on gross-out toys of the 1980s and 1990s. During the course of his research, he has conducted hundreds of oral history interviews with toy designers and companies, while also acquiring the archival materials that comprise this collection.

In response to the 1954 Comics Code Authority, which regulated vulgarity and explicit-ness in comics, a counter-culture movement was born as most artists were not willing to "water down" their art. One such artist, Art Speigelman, was invited to join the Topps Company as a freelance artist. In the early 1980s, Topps Company decided to parody the Cabbage Patch dolls with a series of collecting cards called the Garbage Pail Kids. Their release in 1985 kicked off a genre of gross-out toys that lasted into the 1990s.

MadBalls is a series of foam or rubber balls, created by Amtoy, released in 1986, with gross faces and designs and included names such as "Goal Eater" and "Foul Shot." Another line of gross-out toys was the Gross Out Gang, produced by SkilCraft and released in 1987. The Gang included Nose Ark, Fat-So, Blow Hard, Egg Brain, Wired Wilma, and Seezall; picked on at school they enter Egg Brain's "Exaga-Chamber" and exit with their features exaggerated as super powers.

Toxic Crusaders was another toy line based loosely on the movie *Toxic Avengers* (1984). Toxic Crusaders were a group of environmentally conscious super heroes that combatted pollution, released in 1991 by Playmates Toys and Troma. The 1980s and 1990s saw many other gross-out toy lines but the trend slowed down in the mid to late 1990s.

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Collection Scope and Content Note

The collection documents Casey Roberson's gross-out toy research. The materials are dated from 1964 to 2004, with the bulk of the materials dated from 1985 to 1989. The papers are comprised of color and pencil sketches, photographs, fliers, mechanical drawings, packaging, and packaging copy drafts.

The majority of the papers are color and pencil sketches of unreleased toy designs and ideas. Artists included in the collection are Jeff Easley, Errol McCarthy, Barb Stamper, and David Arshawsky.

Along with the sketches, the collection includes photo positives for Beetlejuice vehicles, assembly instructions and decals for MadBalls Mad Rollercycle, packaging for Loony Laffers by Galoob Toys, sketches not related to gross-out toys by Errol McCarthy, photographs of a

prototype sculpture of Slobulus, and draft copies of the packaging text and story of the Gross Out Gang.

Some of toys represented in the collection did not make it to the production line. Of note are the sketches of unreleased toy lines including the Gross-Out Gang characters Bones, Buck-O, Toothpick, Wimpy, Zits, Mukose, and Ears, signed by Jeff Easley, the Toxic Crusaders characters Sludge, Motormouth, Locoweed, and Splattersaurus, signed by David Arshawsky, and from the Beetlejuice toy line, Napoleon Blown-A-Part, The Black Knight, and vehicles.

The collection is arranged in alphabetical order by toy. The physical materials are housed in one oversized box.

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Publication Statement

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Conditions Governing Access

The collection is open for research use by staff of The Strong and users of its library and archives.

Conditions Governing Use

Though the donor has not transferred intellectual property rights (including, but not limited to any copyright, trademark, and associated rights therein) to The Strong, they have given permission for The Strong to make copies in all media for museum, educational, and research purposes.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

The papers were donated to The Strong as a gift of Casey Alexander Roberson. The papers were accessioned by The Strong under object ID 124.4861 in August 2024 and were

received from Casey Roberson in one box. The second lot of papers were dontated to The Strong also as a gift of Casey Alexander Roberson, accessioned under object ID 124.5690 in September 2024, and were received from Casey Roberson in one box.

Processed by

Stephanie Ball, November 2025.

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Related Materials

Related Materials

The Strong acquired over 300 gross-out toys, prototypes, library materials, and other ephemera collected by Roberson.

Separated Materials

Trade sheets, periodicals, books, and trade catalogs have been transferred to the library holdings at The Strong and can be located by searching the online library catalog.

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Controlled Access Headings

- Toy industry
- Toy industry -- United States
- Freaky Foamers (Toy)
- Toxic Crusaders (Toy)
- Bath Vroomers (Toy)
- MadBalls (Toy)
- Garbage Pail Kids (Toy)
- Gross Out Gang (Toys)
- Gross out toys
- Toy making
- Action figures (Toys)
- Hot Wheels toys
- Airhead (Fictitious character)
- Nose Ark (Fictitious character)

- Blow Hard (Fictitious character)
- Fat-So (Fictitious character)
- Egg Brain (Fictitious character)
- Beetlejuice (Fictitious character)

Collection Inventory

Title/Description	Instances	
Beetlejuice figure prototype photo positives [unreleased 3rd series The Black Knight], undated Creator - scl: Elig, Larry ID [aspace_uri]: /repositories/3/archival_objects/59415	box 1	folder 19
Beetlejuice figure sketches and photographs [unreleased 3rd series Napoleon Blown-A-Part; signed by Kim D.M. Simmons], undated ID [aspace_uri]: /repositories/3/archival_objects/59416	box 1	folder 20
Beetlejuice vehicles photo positives [unreleased Shark Attack and Rotten Roadster], undated [circa 1990] ID [aspace_uri]: /repositories/3/archival_objects/59381	box 1	folder 2
Errol McCarthy sketches [signed], undated ID [aspace_uri]: /repositories/3/archival_objects/59382	box 1	folder 3
Freaky Foamers mechanical drawings [Gingivitis Joe, Show -n- Tell Sheldon, Sick Dysco], 1992 ID [aspace_uri]: /repositories/3/archival_objects/59417	box 1	folder 21
Garbage Pail Kids stickers, 1985 ID [aspace_uri]: /repositories/3/archival_objects/59383	box 1	folder 4
Germs flier and color sketch [unidentified germ], 1988 ID [aspace_uri]: /repositories/3/archival_objects/59384	box 1	folder 5
Gross Out Gang packaging copy text [annotated], undated ID [aspace_uri]: /repositories/3/archival_objects/59385	box 1	folder 6
Gross Out Gang sketches [Airhead, Blow Hard, Egg Head, Fat-So, Nose Ark, Seezall, Wired Wilma], undated [circa 1986] ID [aspace_uri]: /repositories/3/archival_objects/59386	box 1	folder 7
Gross Out Gang unreleased characters sketches [Bones, Buck-O, Mukose, Wimpy, Zits, 1 unidentified], undated [circa 1986] ID [aspace_uri]: /repositories/3/archival_objects/59387	box 1	folder 8
Gross Out Gang oversized sketches [Blow Hard, Bones, Buck-O, Ears, Nose Ark, Toothpick, Wimpy], undated [circa 1986]	box 1	folder 9

ID [aspace_uri]: /repositories/3/archival_objects/59388		
HMS Associates preliminary drawings [Aurora Mad Doctor, Mad Dentist], 1964 ID [aspace_uri]: /repositories/3/archival_objects/59389	box 1	folder 10
Hot Wheels Scum Chums sketches [signed by Errol McCarthy], undated ID [aspace_uri]: /repositories/3/archival_objects/59380	box 1	folder 1
Loony Laffer packaging and fliers, 1988-1989 ID [aspace_uri]: /repositories/3/archival_objects/59390	box 1	folder 11
MadBalls orthographic drawing [Socket Sucker] and photographs [Slobulus], undated [circa 1986] Creator - scl: Anderson, Doug, 1952 ID [aspace_uri]: /repositories/3/archival_objects/59414	box 1	folder 18
MadBalls poster, sketch [Sports ball goalie, Sports ball goalie with mask off, Mad-Donna, and Slurp Slurp. Signed by Jim Elliott] and assembly instructions [Mad Rollercycle], 1986, 2004 ID [aspace_uri]: /repositories/3/archival_objects/59391	box 1	folder 12
TCFC (Those Characters From Cleveland) sketches [unreleased My Pet Monster line], 1986 ID [aspace_uri]: /repositories/3/archival_objects/59393	box 1	folder 14
Rat Fink promotional photograph [Wrecker Rally and Rad Rod Toys, signed by Jim O'Brien], undated [circa 1990] ID [aspace_uri]: /repositories/3/archival_objects/59392	box 1	folder 13
Toxic Crusaders sketches [unreleased Motormouth, Van Del, LocoWeed, Sludge, Splattersaurus], undated [circa 1990] ID [aspace_uri]: /repositories/3/archival_objects/59394	box 1	folder 15
Ugly Ball candy order form [copy], 1987 ID [aspace_uri]: /repositories/3/archival_objects/59412	box 1	folder 16
Zugly ball sketches, 1985-1986 ID [aspace_uri]: /repositories/3/archival_objects/59413	box 1	folder 17