



**Finding Aid to the Fran Frisch Collection of
Prints and Original Drawings
1984-2021**

**Collection number:
#2016-01**

**Bear Ephemera & Archival Repository
San Francisco, California**

Contact Information:

Bear Ephemera & Archival Repository
San Diego, CA 92119
Phone: (619) 209-1954
Email: BEARarchivesSF@gmail.com

Processed by: Jeremy Prince

Date Completed: July 2016; revised May 2017, September 2021

Descriptive Summary

Title: Fran Frisch Collection of Prints and Original Drawings

Dates: 1984-2017

Collection Number: 2016-01

Extent: 3 boxes (2.83 linear feet)

Repository: Bear Ephemera & Archival Repository

Abstract: This collection contains original cartoons and drawing created by Fran Frisch for various newspapers, bear organizations, bars, and promotional materials from various art shows, as well as prints of his drawings and newspaper clippings containing his published works.

Administrative Information

Language of Material: English

Access: The collection is open for research without limitations.

Publication Rights

Copyright to unpublished materials has been transferred to Bear Ephemera & Archival Repository.

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Fran Frisch Collection of Prints and Original Drawings, 2016-01. Bear Ephemera & Archival Repository (BEAR).

Acquisition Information

Gift of Fran Frisch, May 2016.

Collection note: This collection was donated in anticipation of the exhibition, "Beartoonist of San Francisco: Sketching an Emerging Subculture," at the GLBT History Museum from January-May 2017, curated by Jeremy Prince. Materials dated 2016 and 2017 were incorporated into the collection as donations from the donor in conjuncture with the exhibition.

Administrative/Biographical History

Fran Frisch's (August 18, 1948 - August 29, 2021) art career began in his hometown of St. Paul, Minnesota, where he started drawing cartoons for the *Twin Cities Gaze* and donated his time and artwork for worthy causes. By the late 1980s, he began drawing cartoons for the newly published *BEAR* magazine—Issue 8 contains his first cartoon—and in the same period, his first T-shirt featuring a bear, "Can U Bear it?", was, as he said, "the snowball that started it all for me and my art."

While visiting San Francisco in the late-1980s, Frisch also showed his portfolio to the *Bay Area Reporter*, and became their cartoonist for three years. He moved to San Francisco in 1990 and called the city his home for the next 17 years. Frisch helped produce Bear Expo '92-'94, created the graphics for International Bear Rendezvous from 1995-2007, and has created logos for numerous Bear clubs, including Bears Las Vegas (circa 1990), Bears of San Francisco (1994), and Bears San Diego (1998). His logos and designs have been printed on over 25,000 T-shirts.

Fran Frisch's first public showing of his cartoons was at Rumors in St. Paul, Minnesota. Like many starving artists, he could not afford frames for all his works so he laminated his prints and hung them on clotheslines with wooden clothes pins. Since he did not have enough prints to fill the whole bar, he supplemented his works with assorted laundry in between. In San Francisco, his first Bear art show was at My Place in South of Market about 1988. For many years after, the clothesline and campy clothes from thrift shops became his signature way to show his art. His last show presented on clotheslines was in Hawaii in 2005, when his art was suspended between two palm trees.

On top of his career as a cartoonist for newspapers, magazines, and art shows he installed at different bars in the Castro and South of Market districts, Frisch generously gave—and continues to give—back to the Bear and broader LGBT community. He routinely donated his time and artistic talent to providing raffle prizes and fundraising works for local bear organizations and events, and his art has helped raised money for multiple HIV/AIDS organizations, National Center for Lesbian Rights, PFLAG, the GLBT Historical Society, and countless more. And as a prostate cancer survivor, Frisch has donated to multiple fundraisers for prostate cancer awareness and testing. His drawings have raised over \$60,000 for a variety of charities around the world.

Frisch retired to Palm Springs, CA in 2007, where he resided until he passed away from bladder and rectum cancer on August 29, 2021.

Frisch's bears are both cuddly and sexual, playful and laidback yet radical and subversive; his cartoons epitomize what it means to be a Bear. Frisch was a pioneering artist who helped define the Bear community through his designs, and his drawings added a humorous context and sarcastic wit to the early definition of Bear masculinity.

Collection Scope and Content Summary

The Fran Frisch Collection of Prints and Original Drawings includes original cartoons and drawing created by Fran Frisch for various newspapers in Minneapolis and San Francisco, bear organizations, bars, and promotional materials for various art shows, as well as prints of his drawings and newspaper clippings containing his published works. This collection contains works that span Frisch's career, from Minneapolis in the mid- to late-1980s to the height of his career in San Francisco, followed by works created after he retired to Palm Springs in 2007.

The materials are mainly arranged chronologically, and the original order that Frisch sorted and sent the collection was maintained.

Collection Contents

Content Note: Most works, whether original drawings or prints, contain annotations on the sleeves from the artist, along with the year each work was created.

Box 1

Materials in Folders:

- 1/1 Fran Frisch autobiographical sketch, circa 2016
- 1/2 Fran Frisch obituary and memorial, 2021
- 1/3-6 Newspaper clippings from *Twin Cities Gaze* (1986, 1988); *Bay Area Reporter* (1989-1990); *San Francisco Gay Guide* (1994, 1996, 1997); and *San Francisco Spectrum* (May 2004).

1/7 "Frisch Coloring Book of Bears" (1986-2016); "Angel Bear" original drawing for book

Prints and Original Drawings (artist's notations and date in parentheses):

Born Gay: Mom Should Have Known When..., Completed by Michael Zambotti, (Alamo Square Press: San Francisco, 1998)

"The Call of the Wild...'Hey Guys Does This Give You Any Ideas?'" (Original *BAR* cartoon, 1989)

Easter Island (1986)

"I'm sorry sir, but we're out of frog legs. I got the last pair!" (Early Frisch, 1984)

"Stop in the Name of Love" (Published *GAZE*, original, 1986-1987?)

"The dinosaurs last orgy!" (Original *GAZE* magazine, Minneapolis/St. Paul, 1986)

"The Main Club" (Club logo, Superior, Wisconsin, 1986)

"Trio Bar/ Superior, Wisconsin" (Logo for Trip Bar softball team, 1986)

"I am What I am!" (Cartoon for *GAZE* magazine (published), Minneapolis/St. Paul. My first cartoon shirt too, 1986)

"Bear-ass Beach" (Copy, first cartoon with a bear, published, 1986)

"Dopey won't wear a condom!" (Copy/print, *GAZE*, 1987)

"Listen Lucky, You Have to Stay with Mom & Dad. Randy is Allergic to Dogs!" (B&W print, hand water colored, published in B&W in 1987, *GAZE*, Minneapolis/St. Paul)

"Can U Bear It?" (Original, first tee shirt printed, limited run of 36, "puff ink", 1988)

"To All You Gay Dads.. Happy Fathers Day!" (*BAR* published, original, 1988)

"Watch Your Step, Someone had an Accident!" (Print B&W, water colored, published in B&W, 1988)

"So the Dude Says 'Do Bears Shit in the Woods? HAHA' I said Yes and Showed Him What We Wipe our Ass with, HAHA!" (Original, *Bear Magazine*, 1989)

"I Remember When I Wore a Condom so I Wouldn't get my Wife Pregnant." (Original, published, 1988)

"Betty I Don't Think This is That 'Cute Little Card Shop on Castro' That Daisy Told Us About!" (Print, *BAR*, 1989)

"I Just Remembered, Bears Hate the Smell of Cologne" (Original, *BAR*, 1989)

"Homo Sapien Fault, Crack." (Original, *BAR*, 1989)

"The San Francisco Rhino Players Staging Their Own 'West Side Story.'" (*BAR* Original, 1989)

"Now remember This is San Francisco, So It's Boy Girl, Boy Girl, Boy Boy, and Girl Girl" (Print B&W hand water colored, *BAR* San Francisco, 1989 Valentines Weekend)

"Now remember This is San Francisco, So It's Boy Girl, Boy Girl, Boy Boy, and Girl Girl" (Copy, published *BAR*, 1989 Valentines Week)

"On Top of Ol' Smokey" 1989

"Bear San Francisco" (Print for the[...]published *BAR*? Published in *GAZE* Minneapolis/St. Paul, 1986)

"Vanity Bear, Lone Star Saloon S.F." (Show poster and Tee shirt for "Vanity Bear" art showing at Lone Star, copy, 1991)

"I should have Heeded to Mr. Marcus When He Wrote 'Don't Go Near Them Bushes.'" (Original, *BAR*, 1990)

"Bear Expo '92" (Copy by Frisch, 1992)

"Dress a Teddy Bear Contest..." [Original, 1991?]

"My Two Dads Live in San Francisco!" (Original published *BAR*, 1991)

"Bear Alert!" (Logo, art show at Lone Star, Printed on yellow signs to hang in Lone Star and Tee, 1993)

BOSF logo x 2 sleeves (BOSF "seal" logo, films, part original, Sutro Tower, 1994)

"Bear Expo 1994" ("Bears at Play", 1994)

"Bad Beard Day" (Original for Tee shirt, 1994)

"Don't Fry Bacon Without a Shirt On!" (*Bulk Male*, print, 1994)

Las Vegas Bears logo, 1990?

"Balls" (Print, Tee shirt, date 1994?)

"Then He Created Bears!" (Centerpiece for Lone Star Show, date mid-90s?)

"Hell Bent on Bears" window static clings (x 2) (1995)

"Hell Bent on Bears" pitchforks (Logo, 12, hung in the Lone Star from the ceiling, 1995)

"Hell Bent of Bears" promotional posters (yellow, white), signed, 1995

"Hells Brew / Beer with Balls" (Print, "Hell Bent on Bears" show at the Lone Star, original owned by artist, size 16x20, B&W, 1995)

[Untitled] (Print from the "Hell Bent on Bears!" Lone Star show, original owned by artist, 16x20, 1995)

"Hell Bent on Bears!" (Print, "Hell Bent on Bears" Lone Star show, original owned by artist, size 16x20, B&W, 1995)

"Motorwerks" (Concept rough draft for the Motor Works bar, San Francisco Market Street, 1995)

Box 2

Materials in Folders:

- 2/1 6 photographs of Fran Frisch by Lynn Ludwig, Rick Gerharter, Jim Wigler, and unknown photographers
- 2/2 "Maxx's Big Balls Circus and Side Show" Frisch art show at the Lone Star Saloon, September 13 to October 3, 2000
- 2/3 "Beartoonist of San Francisco: Sketching an Emerging Subculture" exhibition information, 2017

Pins in Small Box:

"Bear Expo '92" pin (1992)

"Because I Care" prostate cancer cloisonné enamel pins (x 2) (2002)

Prints and Original Drawings (artist's notations and date in parentheses):

"An Almost 'All Occasion' 12 Pack of Greeting Cards designed by FRISCH" (2016)

"Bear on Bridge" (Film, IBR logo, 1994)

"IBR 1995" (Film, logo, 1995)

"IBR 1995" (Original idea for IBR logo, the world in the background taken out, 1995)

"Straw Beary" (First finished drawing for the show and calendar "Bear Flavors," bears coming in many shapes, sizes and flavors all in an ice cream cone, 1997)

"Got Balls?" (Original, logo for Lone Star show "Got Balls?", 1996)

"Bears in the Castro!: Cartoons with Fur, A Ten Year Retrospect of Frisch Bear Drawings" (art show at Moby Dick and Daddy's, Feb 14-29, 1996)

"Frisch B Files: 1986-1996 in Color!" (art show at the Lone Star Saloon, July 25-August 18, 1996)

"IBR 1996" (Film, IBR logo, 1996)

"IBR 1996 Poster" (Original, IBR poster bear, 1996)

"Leo: July 23 to August 22" (Original, Zodiac Bears, artist is a Leo, 1993)

"Herbivore, Carnivore, or the Omnivore Menu Tonight, or...all Three?" (*Bear Magazine*, 1997)

9 Illustrations for "Born Gay: Mom Should Have Known When...", Completed by Michael Zambotti, Published by Alamo Square Press (Originals, 1998)

"Chicken on Speed. Chicken with his Head Cut Off" (Copy, published *BAR*, 1998)

"Sun Bear Weekend Logo" x 2 (Logo for San Diego Bears, now their club logo, rough (large) drawing, finished copy (small), 1998)

"The 8th Annual Mr. San Francisco Bear Contest & Extravaganza" (poster and original drawing, 2000) [poster was a duplicate from John Caldera]

"Faultline LA" x 2 (B&W ink hand draw copy of Faultline Bear logo, original rough draft, 2000)

Postcards for IBR 1998 and www.frischdraws.com (Bear Artwork by Fran Frisch, digital imaging by David Gan)

Postcards for IBR 2002 and IBR 2004 (Bear Artwork by Fran Frisch, Postcard Designed by Jeffrey M. Glover); #LoveHangover promo card at the Lone Star Saloon, 2017

"IBR 2001 Bear" (Original rough draft for poster, 2001)

"IBR 2004 Bear" (Concept for IBR poster bear, 2003)

"Boots 'n' Balls" (Side Winders show, Palm Springs, 2007)

[No title] (Hand drawn hand colored copy of original for Palm Springs show at "Side Winders", 2007, now a Palm Springs shirt!)

Fran Frisch Collection of Prints and Original Drawings (#2016-01)

"Santa's (Shit) List" 2009

"Hop Hop Santa" 2009

"12 Roses Gnome" (Original ink and water color, 2010)

"Farewell IBR 2011" (Rough draft for Farewell IBR 2011, 1/5/2011)

"Wave Adieu" (Hand drawn hand colored copy, 2011)

IBR promotional posters: 1996, 1997, 1999, 2004

"Adieu! IBR 2011" poster

"Mr. Bear" ice cream flavor Bear with leather sash Xerox print (1997) [poster was a duplicate from John Caldera]

"Flavor of the Month, Bear!" reception poster, Sunday Feb 15, Daddy's; "More Bear Flavors!" 1999 Calendar Originals, Sept 22-Oct 12 at the Lone Star Saloon [promotional posters]

"Frisch Presents Maxx's Big Balls Circus and Side Show" Sept 13 to Oct 3, Lone Star Saloon, 2000 [promotional posters]

"I'll Show You Mine!" JJ's Bar & Clubhouse, St. Louis, MO, Nov 13-17, 2002; SF's Leather Block Party, Sun July 28, 1996 [promotional posters]

"Things You've Seen Before or Not!" Feb 13-27, 2002, Lone Star Saloon; "Red, White & Bear Naked" Lone Star Saloon, June 24-July 8, 2003 [promotional posters]

"Beer Up & Bear Up" Lone Star Saloon beer bust, Nov 13, 2016; "Meet & Greet Beartoonist Fran Frisch," Jan 25, 2017 [promotional posters for "Beartoonist of San Francisco" exhibition, 2017]

"Do Not Feed the Bears Ice Cream" (original drawing, 2000). Donated by the Estate of Edward Sienkiewicz by Jeffrey Lan, November 20, 2014

IBR logo, 1995

Bear Magazine #34 first draft, 1995 [Purchased by Jeremy Prince for \$400 on Aug 30, 2021, the day after Fran passed away]

Box 3 [Donated to the GLBT Historical Society, 2019]

8 various T-shirts designed by Fran Frisch (some signed and dated by artist)

2 teddy bears used for "Maxx's Big Balls Circus and Side Show" Frisch art show (see folder 2/2)

CD of opening night of "Beartoonist of San Francisco" exhibition, January 27, 2017

Other items include:

Framed original drawing, "It was his favorite position!", 1989

Framed print of stood-up bar patron covered in cobwebs, published in the *Bay Area Reporter*, 1989