

Guide to the Rock Stream Studios Collection

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See also:

Wizard at Work – The Life and Art of George Rhoads - BIO RHOADS J66 c.1

COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

Rock Stream Studios was founded in the late 1970s in Glenora, New York by Bob McGuire. Named for a nearby town, it was originally a part-time business where McGuire created stained glass pieces while working as a reading teacher in nearby Odessa. Around this time artist George Rhoads asked McGuire to create a stained glass clock face for a “ball machine” or “audiokinetic sculpture” he was then fabricating, (which was to become a “Magic Clock.”) In 1980 McGuire moved to Ithaca and began constructing components for, and then entire ball machines under the artistic direction of Rhoads. In March 1985 he and Rhoads signed a partnership agreement whereby Rhoads would be responsible for the design of, and McGuire for the fabrication and installation of, these “audiokinetic” sculptures. (This new word was coined to describe sculptures that produce both sound and movement.) Over time those pieces included ball machines, kinetic fountains, and wind pieces. This long and fruitful partnership continued until 2008, when Rock Stream Studios was sold.

These elaborate creations were inspired by the clock mechanisms that fascinated Rhoads as a boy. Born in Evanston, Illinois in 1926, his early years as an artist were spent mostly painting, and it wasn't until the 1960s that Rhoads began creating the moving sculptures that would make his work famous. They were intricate and whimsical, and, as his sister Emily Rhoads Johnson wrote in *Wizard at Work, The Life and Art of George Rhoads*, he “wanted to show in an amusing way how mathematics, physics, engineering, and the laws of motion could work together to form interesting art.”

One of the first of these moving sculptures was bought by the Westinghouse Corporation in the late 1960s as an exhibit for an international trade fair in Zurich, Switzerland. Over the next four decades these unique pieces would be bought for museums, hospitals (especially children's hospitals), shopping malls, airports, corporate headquarters, the Port Authority of New York, and universities. They are in Ithaca, Boston, Denver, Norwalk, Phoenix, Miami, Philadelphia, Santiago (Chile), Taipei (Taiwan),

Mexico City, Singapore, Yokohama (Japan), Guam, Puerto Rico, and many other places. Part art, part engineering marvels, and wholly unconventional, these amusing and fascinating works have engaged millions all over the world.

This collection contains business records of Rock Stream Studios from 1981-2006. Details of orders filled and essential materials used to produce the pieces offer a staid backdrop to the creativity and innovation that grew out of the business. The collection also includes a useful brief history of the business.

One of the more famous of Rock Stream Studios' works was built for the Port Authority of New York in 1983.



Photograph courtesy Bob McGuire and Emily Rhoads Johnson

CONTAINER LIST

Box 1

Contents

Folder #

A Short History of Rock Stream Studios, (2022)
By Bob McGuire

1

<i>Contents</i>	<i>Folder #</i>
Business Journals (1981-1989)	Loose in box
Box 2	
Business Journals (1990-1999)	Loose in box
Box 3	
Business Journals (2000-2006)	Loose in box
Box 4	
Financial Ledgers (1987-1997)	Loose in box
Box 5	
Financial Ledgers (1998-2006)	Loose in box
Box 6	
Receivables (1991)	1
Receivables (1992)	2
Receivables (1993)	3
Receivables (1994)	4
Receivables (1995)	5
Receivables (1996)	6
Receivables (1997)	7
Receivables (1998)	8
Receivables (1999)	9
Receivables (2000)	10
Receivables (2001)	11

<i>Contents</i>	<i>Folder #</i>
Receivables (2002)	12
Receivables (2003)	13
Receivables (2004)	14
Receivables (2005)	15
Receivables (2006)	16
Receivables (2007)	17