



MICHAEL CHILDERS: AUTHOR! AUTHOR!

MICHAEL CHILDERS HAS BEEN MAKING striking images for most of his life. Born in North Carolina and now based in Southern California, Childers graduated from UCLA Film School and began his career in the motion picture business working on the film *Midnight Cowboy*, directed by the man who would become his long-time partner, John Schlesinger. The worlds they inhabited – from swinging London to downtown New York to old guard and new guard Hollywood – provided Childers the opportunity to capture many of the most intriguing faces of our time.

Michael Childers was a founding photographer for Andy Warhol’s *Interview Magazine* and provided numerous cover images for *Dance Magazine*. He is the author of *Icons and Legends: The Photography of Michael Childers* (2003),

which accompanied an exhibition at the Palm Springs Desert Museum. His work has been in numerous solo and group shows and has been added to the permanent collection of twenty museums and galleries.

Childers’s connection to Yale started with his gift of over 50 prints to Beinecke Library in 2016. He extended his donation the following year with 87 prints of British artists and writers given to the Yale Center for British Art.

The gift to Beinecke Library focuses on the world of literary figures Childers has known, specifically, a set of images titled “Author! Author!” He captured the faces of many of the most beloved – and best-selling – novelists, screenwriters, and playwrights of the past five decades. The images on view were selected from the library’s Childers collection by Phoenix Alexander, graduate student in Yale’s Department of African American Studies and curatorial assistant at Beinecke Library.

The array of faces along the sides of the central glass book stack and in the curved exhibition cases on the mezzanine floor shows writers at their most glamorous while still presenting them with a level of intimacy.

There are dramatists who have reshaped the landscape of American theater – Eve Ensler, Katori Hall, Beth Henley and David Henry Hwang. Humorists are well represented by Paul Rudnick, Jane Wagner, and Fran Lebowitz. We are reminded that many people we are used to seeing on screen had parallel lives as authors, including Mae West, Carrie Fisher, and Shirley MacLaine.



The portraits range in time from Ray Bradbury, photographed in 1966, to Terrence McNally in 2014, and include a range of singular talents. Henry Rollins fits right alongside Arianna Huffington; Rachel Rosenthal keeps company with fellow iconoclast Kenneth Anger.

Many of the authors on view are already present at Yale in the archival sense. Harvey Fierstein donated his papers to the Department of Manuscripts and Archives beginning in 2005. Larry Kramer’s papers reside in Beinecke, along with the papers of John Guare, as do caches of letters by Paul Monette and Gore Vidal. An important collection of first editions of Edward Albee’s plays was acquired by Beinecke Library in 2018. Michael Cunningham teaches a popular fiction writing course every year.

Michael Childers continues to print and show photographs. His focus in the most recent decade has reoriented from the likes of Cher and Andy Warhol to abstract images of dancers. His gift of photographs to Yale’s collections helps show the faces of influential writers and artists and documents a singular talent who brought out the best in his subjects.

Photographs copyright © Michael Childers: Armistead Maupin, 2010; Gloria Steinem, undated; Gore Vidal, 2011; David Henry Hwang, undated; Shirley MacLaine, 1989; Carrie Fisher, 1999; Mae West, 1969.