

**Joan Myers: Salt Dreams**  
**Collection CAE2222**

**Introduction/Abstract**

The Salton Sea was re-created in 1905 when high spring flooding on the Colorado River destroyed the canal gates leading into the developing Imperial Valley. This archive contains research materials for the book *Salt Dreams* by Joan Myers and historian William deBuys.

**Biographical Note: Joan Myers**

Joan Myers was born in Des Moines, Iowa in 1944. She attended Stanford University, where her concentration on Renaissance and baroque music performance led to a B.A in 1966 and an M.A. in musicology in 1967. In the early 1970's Myers turned to photography. She began as a large-format platinum-palladium printer, examining and photographing the relationships between people and the land. Her work has been the focus of three Smithsonian exhibitions, more than fifty solo and eighty group shows, and eleven books. Her work is included in the permanent collections of the Amon Carter Museum, Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris, Center for Creative Photography, Denver Art Museum, George Eastman House, High Museum of Art, Minneapolis Museum of Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Museum of Modern Art, Nevada Museum of Art, and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, among others.

In 1999 she published *Salt Dreams: Land and Water in Low-Down California*, a book about the creation and subsequent life of the Salton Sea with writer William deBuys, which won the Western States Book Award in Creative Nonfiction. In 2002, the National Science Foundation awarded Myers an Antarctic Artists and Writer's Grant to photograph at McMurdo Station, surrounding field stations, historic huts, and the South Pole during the 2002-2003 austral summer. Her four-year traveling SITES show entitled "Wondrous Cold: an Antarctic Journey" opened at the National Museum of Natural History in Washington, DC in May 2006, accompanied by a book published by Smithsonian Books.

In the process of completing the Antarctica work, Myers gradually phased out platinum printing and began working entirely digitally, printing all her own work in her studio. In 2012, Myers' book "The Jungle at the Door: A Glimpse of Wild India" was published by George F. Thompson Books. A book entitled "Fire and Ice: Timescapes", published by Damiani Editore in 2015, centers on volcanic and geothermal sites around the world. "I've always been fascinated," she says, "by what I cannot see and by what goes on beneath my feet." A collaboration with poet Nathaniel Tarn, entitled "The Persephones", was published in 2016. Her most recent work concentrates on the myth of the American West and is entitled "Where the Buffalo Roamed: Images of the New West" (published by Damiani Editore in 2019). She and her husband, Bernie Lopez, moved to Tucson, AZ in 2022.

**Scope and Content**

The Salton Sea is one of the world's largest inland seas and one of the lowest spots on earth at -227 below sea level. It first existed as a prehistoric lake and was re-created in 1905 when high spring flooding on the Colorado River destroyed the canal gates leading into the developing Imperial Valley. For the next 18 months the entire volume of the Colorado River rushed downward into the Salton Trough. By the time engineers were finally able to stop the breaching water in 1907, the Salton Sea had been born at 45 miles long and 20 miles wide – equaling about 130 miles of shoreline. The Salton Sea State Recreation Area covers 14 miles of the northeastern shore and has long been a popular site for campers, boaters, and anglers. Increasing salinity in the Salton Sea basin has limited the number of types of fish that can be found there, and most fish currently

caught are Tilapia. Kayakers, campers, birdwatchers, photographers, and hikers enjoy the site's many recreation opportunities, even as they witness an environmental disaster caused by irrigation runoff and drought. *Salt Dreams* by Joan Myers and historian William deBuys covers many aspects of the natural and cultural histories of the inland sea.

Materials include articles and documents about the Salton Sea and Imperial Valley of California, maps, government reports, printed tourist ephemera, and press material.

**This archive is currently in process.**