“Paul’s own writing, in particular, seemed daring and adventurous to me; it took big chances and made important arguments in relentlessly funny ways. I felt, down deep, that maybe I had some of that in me, too; that maybe I could be using my skills to better express my beliefs. The Realist was the inspiration that kept pushing me to the next level; there was no way I could continue reading it and remain the same.”

—George Carlin

“He’s spent his life at the blurry crossroads between facts that sound fake and satire that sounds true.”

—Art Spiegelman

“Father of the underground press.”

—People
PAUL KRASSNER (1932-2019)


Krassner invented the term Yippie, and was an organizer at that pivotal youth movement. He worked at MAD magazine and, seeing the potential for a more elevated, intellectual satire, he founded The Realist magazine. He was a stand-up comic, a practice encouraged by his close friend Lenny Bruce – whose ground-breaking book How to Talk Dirty and Influence People Krassner edited for publication. His studies of prison life and incarceration in America put him in touch with jailed people across the country for decades, none more notorious than Charles Manson and members of his Family – all of whom sent him letters.

This willing ear tuned to listen to different – and difficult – voices formed at an early age. The New York-native was a child violin prodigy and performed at the age of six at Carnegie Hall. He rejected his family’s institutional Judaism as “organized superstition” and cultivated a burgeoning interest in research and reportage as a journalism major at Baruch College. Never the prim and formal type – he wore his signature graphic t-shirts until the end – Krassner adopted the name Paul Maul and began performing as a comedian. In this role he met and formed his close bond with Lenny Bruce, another funny man whose work shined a spotlight on hypocrisy. The serious and the whimsical were never opposed in Krassner, and his college exposure to both comedy and the anti-censorship paper The Independent forged his future paths.
Krassner’s activities rapidly expanded in the ’60s. He founded *The Realist* to explore a side of politics not found in mainstream media. In Abbie Hoffman’s apartment in December 1967, Krassner was a founding member of the Youth International Party – and coined its nickname. The Yippies soon became a notorious political movement, most infamously for its involvement at the Chicago Democratic convention in 1968 and the subsequent government case against the so-called Chicago Seven. Krassner’s press credentials spared him from prosecution — he took the stand at the trial (high on LSD), but remained an unindicted co-conspirator.

Krassner was one of the most prolific writers of his era, and surrounded himself with like-minded people. *The Realist* published Kurt Vonnegut, Norman Mailer, and Ken Kesey, among others, all of whom are found in his papers. He published three collections of drug stories in which he detailed his experiences with marijuana, LSD, mushrooms, ecstasy – you name it. He also had regular columns for *Cavalier* and *Playboy*, and wrote for outlets as disparate as *The Nation* and *Adult Video News*. His wild ride across genres and subjects makes him the only person to have won awards from both *Playboy* (for satire) and the Feminist Party Workshop (for journalism), and he was the first living writer to be inducted into the Counterculture Hall of Fame. He received an American Civil Liberties Union Uppie (Upton Sinclair award) for dedication to freedom of expression, while his FBI files described him as “a raving, unconfined nut.” Krassner was happy to adopt this assessment in the title of his autobiography. “The FBI was right,” concluded George Carlin, “this man is dangerous – and funny; and necessary.”

The Paul Krassner Papers comprises manuscripts, drafts, correspondence, research files, artwork, books, personal items and other materials related to the work and life of Paul Krassner. This brochure presents some highlights from the Papers, and a detailed finding aid is available as a separate document.

THE REALIST

“Irreverence is our only sacred cow”

Paul Krassner’s groundbreaking satirical magazine sought to occupy the space between the more juvenile MAD and Lyle Stuart’s anti-censorship monthly The Independent. The Papers illuminate how The Realist encompassed Krassner’s worldview, as well as his peripatetic interests: from comedy to conspiracy, from activism to the absurd. Known for its extremes, scathing satire might appear beside more traditional interviews and political commentary from some of the era’s literary stars like Ken Kesey, Joseph Heller, and Norman Mailer. Starting in 1958, The Realist became a landmark post-war American underground publication and a countercultural milestone.

Krassner first published The Realist in New York in the offices of MAD and it appeared regularly in the 1960s. Issues were fairly sporadic in the 1970s, and it was revived in 1984 as a more modest newsletter. The final issue was #146 in the Spring of 2001. Highlights from its articles and cartoons were collected in The Best of the Realist (Running Press, 1984).

Among its most famous creations was the red, white, and blue automobile bumper sticker brazenly reading FUCK COMMUNISM. With this confrontational wordplay, Krassner created a bind for censors claiming their work was done in the name of American patriotism.

Kurt Vonnegut wrote that Krassner had created “a miracle of compressed intelligence nearly as admirable for potent simplicity, in my opinion, as Einstein’s e=mc2.” Vonnegut explained: “With the Vietnam War going on, and with its critics discounted and scorned by the government and the mass media, Krassner put on sale a red, white and blue poster that said FUCK COMMUNISM. At the beginning of the 1960s, FUCK was believed to be so full of bad magic as to be unprintable. ... By having FUCK and COMMUNISM fight it out in a single sentence, Krassner wasn’t merely being funny as heck. He was demonstrating how preposterous it was for so many people to be responding to both words with such cockamamie Pavlovian fear and alarm” (Vonnegut’s foreword to Krassner’s The Winner of the Slow Bicycle Race).

The May 1967 issue contained the controversial poster by Wally Wood, “Disneyland Memorial Orgy” in which Snow White is sexually assaulted by five of the Seven Dwarfs. It was so successful that Krassner printed it as a separate poster that was widely pirated. Examples are found in the papers, along with a later colored version that Krassner had digitally rendered.

This same issue printed Krassner’s most successful prank: a grotesque article following the censorship of William Manchester’s book on the Kennedy
Hunter S. Thompson. Typed letter signed, 1974

Paul,

I just got the new issue of the Realist & noticed on page 3 (top-right) a reference to “the assassination of President Nixon.”

This was an odd thing to see, coming as it did less than a week after interviewing a person who popped up more or less out of nowhere with a flat-out “incredible” story about how people were being screened for that job. It was a hard thing to believe, at first — especially with no hope of corroboration — but your note about Tackwood suddenly gave it some flesh.

Maybe we should get our heads together on this sometime soon. I’m leaving for Boston in a few hours, and just in case my plane crashes with Gordon Liddy’s goddamn on the passenger manifest, I’ve left the details of my volatile contact (above) with Wexner,... and I’ve also contacted Carl Bernstein at the Post to see if he knows anything about this weird connexion.

In any case — regardless of how this thing gets dealt with in the big-time press — I think I’m onto something worth pursuing; by you, me, the Post, or anyone else who can run it down for real. Because if what this bastard told me was true, it’s going to be a sellers’ market for bullet-proof vests very soon.

But in the meantime, let’s keep it out of print until we can put these things together.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Owl Farm, Woody Creek, Colorado 01508

Ed Koren. Original cartoon submission to The Realist

Assassination. Titled “The Parts That Were Left Out of the Kennedy Book,” Krassner’s story described LBJ on Air Force One sexually penetrating JFK’s bullet-hole wound. Elliot Feldman wrote that “Some members of the mainstream press and other Washington political wonks, including Daniel Ellsberg of Pentagon Papers fame, actually believed this incident to be true.” In a 1995 interview for the magazine Adbusters, Krassner commented: “People across the country believed – if only for a moment – that an act of presidential necrophilia had taken place. It worked because Jackie Kennedy had created so much curiosity by censoring the book she authorized – William Manchester’s The Death of a President – because what I wrote was a metaphorical truth about LBJ’s personality presented in a literary context, and because the imagery was so shocking, it broke through the notion that the war in Vietnam was being conducted by sane men.”

The Realist occupies a central place in the Krassner papers, but as he worked simultaneously on multiple projects, for multiple outlets – including The Nation, High Times, Playboy, Hustler, Adult Video News, and latter blogged for The Huffington Post and The Rag Blog – files dedicated to his favorite subjects may have served many purposes. Nor was Krassner a systematic record keeper and organizer of his own working papers – their method of storage reflects an author continually moving forward with new work who would interfile (interpile!) clippings, articles he would print from the web, emails, full magazines or newspapers, mail (some personal, some business, some mundane, some incredibly potent), scraps of handwritten notes, and various other miscellany. These chaotic piles appear to have grown annually, and were periodically moved to boxes – just as they were, unfiltered. We have identified these as “mixed working papers” but their lines are sometimes blurred with his more structured methods of filing by subject since a folder might contain this same blend of materials, from the mundane to the sublime. Individual items of note have been singled out and listed separately in the corresponding series (Writings, Correspondence, etc).

Abbie Hoffman. Autograph letter signed

Paul Krassner. Birth of the Yippies, typescript
**ABORTION AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS**

A 1962 article detailed Krassner’s involvement with Dr. Robert Spencer. He later recounted:

“I seemed to be following a pattern of participatory journalism. In 1962, when abortion was still illegal, I published an anonymous interview with Dr. Robert Spencer, a humane abortionist who was known as ‘The Saint.’ Patients came to his office in Ashland, PA, from around the country. He had been performing abortions for 40 years, started out charging $5, and never charged more than $100. Ashland was a small town, and Dr. Spencer’s work was not merely tolerated, the community depended on it. The hotel, the restaurant, the dress shop all thrived on the extra business that came from his out-of-town patients. He built facilities at his clinic for Negro patients who weren’t allowed to obtain overnight lodgings elsewhere in Ashland” (“How the Realist popped America’s cherry”).

Krassner received calls from scared women seeking Dr. Spencer’s contact details, and he was later subpoenaed to appear before grand juries investigating abortion crime. The papers show that the issue of upholding women’s reproductive rights – both as an emotional and legal concern – remained core to Krassner’s work throughout his life.

**CARTOONS**

_The Realist_ was a major influence on the development of the underground comic scene, publishing some of the most incendiary cartoons to appear in an American magazine, including works by R. Crumb, Art Spiegelman, S. Clay Wilson, Jay Lynch, Trina Robbins, Mort Gerberg, Jay Kinney, Richard Guindon, Nicole Hollander, Skip Williamson, and many others. _Time_ called _The Realist_ “the Charlie Hebdo of the ‘60s” for Krassner’s commitment to publishing controversial material. The Papers includes correspondence with contributing artists as well as examples of original artwork by Ed Doren, Bill Murphy, Trina Robbins, Kalynn Campbell, Mort Gerberg and Bill Griffith. In 2016 Fantographics published the anthology _The Realist Cartoons_.

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Flyer for a Yippie event protesting the Catholic Church’s opposition to birth control
The Youth International Party (YIP) was founded on December 31, 1967, at a meeting at the apartment of Abbie and Anita Hoffman in New York City. The Hoffmans, along with Jerry Rubin, Nancy Kurshan, and Paul Krassner, were the group’s founder’s, with Krassner having the credit for naming this New Left movement.

“As the war escalated and as the civil rights struggle heated up, there was a kind of organic coalition of stoned hippies and political activists. They became the core of the Yippies—a name that I came up with.

“I met Abbie Hoffman in ’66 or ’67. We would see each other at a lot of meetings. He was a reader of The Realist, so we knew of each other. His big legacy was that he proved that not only could you fight city hall but that you could fight it creatively. As Fidel Castro said, ‘We shall not die of fear, we shall die laughing.’ That was his style. He played the media. He knew what the media wanted, which was we were the bad boys, but if we gave good quotes, they would give us good publicity.

“Abbie’s idea was that the hippies could be a force that could be harnessed and could be educated into being more political. We went on a vacation together and we discussed that there had to be some demonstrations at the Chicago Democratic convention in 1968, but the idea was they had to be different. On the afternoon of December 31, 1967, a bunch of us were at Abbie and Anita’s apartment. We were smoking marijuana and discussing some ideas for the Chicago convention. Our fantasy was to counter the convention of death with a festival of life. While the Democrats would present politicians giving speeches in the convention center, we would present rock bands playing in the park. There would be booths where young people could get information about drugs or alternatives to the draft.

“Then we decided we needed a name, so that reporters could have a ‘who’ for their journalistic who-what-when-where-why lead paragraphs. I felt a brainstorm coming on. I went into the bedroom and climbed up a ladder to concentrate.

“What would be an appropriate word to signify the politicization of hippies? For which words could they form an acronym? Youth—this was essentially a movement of young people involved in a generational struggle.
International—it was happening all over the world, from Mexico to France, from Germany to Japan. And Party—in both senses of the word. We would be a party and we would have a party.” (Quoted in “Paul Krassner The Realist,” in Generation on Fire: Voices of Protest from the 1960s, An Oral History, UPress of Kentucky, 2007.)

The Krassner Papers contain material made during the historic 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, during which the newly-formed Yippie party planned a six-day “Festival of Life.” This celebration of counterculture was also a protest against the state of the nation, and employed radical statements such as threatening to add LSD to the water supply, and their infamous nomination of a pig for president. Chicago police repeatedly clashed with protesters who would not relent to their intervention, and the brutality was broadcast on television. Following the convention, eight protesters were charged with conspiracy to incite riots. The trial of the “Chicago Seven” (down from eight once the case against Bobby Seale was declared a mistrial) was one of the most closely-watched proceedings of the late 60s. The Krassner Papers include not only original documents – notes written in preparation of events, lists of the proceedings, printed flyers (some annotated), and other printed matter – from the convention itself, but later correspondence between Paul Krassner, Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin revealing new insights into their relationships and their sometimes conflicting visions of what the Yippie movement meant.
“Hawkeye” was the codename of the Chicago police officer tasked with tailing Krassner during the protest.
STATEMENT BY DELEGATES GREST AND QUIMBERLY OF THE DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION
WHO ARE PEACEFULLY MARCHING AT 12 NOON, AUGUST 29, ON MICHIGAN AVENUE
IN FRONT OF THE CHICAGO HILTON HOTEL IN PROTEST OF THE POLICE VIOLENCE
LAST NIGHT AND IN RECENT DAYS IN CHICAGO.

Last night television carried to the American people and to
those around the world the sight of other Americans being beaten,
clubbed, and dragged along the streets. We saw helpless people
beaten after they were arrested and even as they were put in police
wagons.

In response we intend to assemble in a 24-hour vigil in front
of the Conrad Hilton Hotel where the violence occurred.

We do this to put the force of conscience against the tear gas,
haystacks, machine guns, billy clubs and barbed wire. Our protest
will be entirely peaceful. We will not return violence with violence.

We call upon Mayor Daley and the citizens of Chicago to put an
end to this use of armed force.

Yippie press release response to police violence during the Chicago ’68 protests.

Some of the extensive correspondence of Jerome Washington, the only Black Yippie.
He was instrumental in securing safe passage for Chicago ’68 protesters from the
Blackstone Rangers, a Chicago gang.
Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin autograph letter signed, 1972

Hoffman and Rubin disagree with Paul Krassner on strategy to protest the 1972 election
Examples of '60s political flyers found in the Paul Krassner Papers

“Get Your Piles Out of Vietnam!!
A Fuck You Position Paper:
operation Fuck-in.

The Johnson

“more dead gooks, ma”

It makes us pulse great remedy this to contemplate Johnson’s war in Vietnam. Lyndon Baines is crucifying the lost blood of innocents into a creep sound. How are you crucifying? in hope without hope, in fear, without reason, without love. Can we reason to the most possibleogue into to grope up sufficient sociologies with which we describe this overly whale blubber FOOT-WHIP, surrounded by crocru, killers? a unknow tell-whose game history will play upon, Johnson cows onward. The citizens of the world are having the Great Poor raped at them by a bunch of rippies.

This is addressed to the sneeze-bash space racist fur burger grope multitude who any feck upon this position paper. This is by no means a WORKSHOP. Clearly a demonstration of peace by tender formulating love-bottles will be a group screw sejek around the world, especially the west. Interesting demonstration in the history of Western civilization. You will be able to test the demonstration for yourself in many a bit, breaking free, smoke thrust out of zippers, naked writhing bodies, a routine in solar places, before they go on. On the next page you will find a description of WORKSHOP WAVING FOR A FUCK-IN AGAINST WAR. Please sign, as in every page of the world is

GROPE FOR PEACE!!

“Come & Help Us Launch A Yellow Submarine

Wear bright clothes; bring flowers (like yellow or purple chrysanthemums)

Bring musical instruments

(of any kind—ukuleles, pennywhistles, etc.)

Bring messages to launch in it.

Saturday: October 22; 2:30; Gansevoort Pier, at Gansevoort St., on the Hudson River.

Route

New York Workshop in Non-Violence 5 Beekman St.

“The Workshop in Non-Violence built their yellow submarine for $51,73, as opposed to the cost of a Polaris submarine, $108,284,620” (Krassner, Confessions, p. 154)
STAND UP

With the encouragement of his friend and mentor Lenny Bruce, Paul Krassner started to perform standup comedy in 1961 at the Village Gate in New York, and he edited Bruce's autobiography *How to Talk Dirty and Influence People*. Five years after Bruce died, Groucho Marx said “I predict that in time Paul Krassner will wind up as the only live Lenny Bruce.” Comedy, both dark and light, remained throughout Krassner’s life, not just in his satirical writings but in live performances. His papers include original material relating to his act: lists and index cards of prompts and fully realized jokes, both handwritten and typed.
Correspondence with incarcerated individuals is found throughout Paul Krassner's papers and working files. A lifelong researcher of conspiracy theories, investigator of abuse of power, and chronic contrarian, Krassner's letters to and from prisoners form a fascinating record of varying conditions – both physical and psychological – of prison life. The majority of his letters are from inmates responding to his expression of humanity, offered as a journalist seeking to make public that which is often shrouded in mystery. A most trenchant group of letters comes from Charles Manson and members of the “Manson Family”: Bobby Beausoleil, Patricia Krenwinkel, and Tex Watson. Their voices from prison – which Krassner sought while researching a proposed but never-published book – are the most disturbing of this facet of the Krassner's interests.
Paul Krassner typed notes the Manson family, 1972

Steve Allen, television and radio personality, musician, composer, actor, comedian, writer
Kenneth Anger, underground experimental filmmaker, actor, and author
Bobby Beausoliel, murderer and associate of Charles Manson and member of his communal Manson Family
John Belushi, comedian
Lewis Black, comedian
Lenny Bruce, stand-up comedian, social critic, and satirist, major influence on Paul Krassner’s life and career. Krassner edited Bruce’s autobiography, How to Talk Dirty and Influence People
Frank Cieriorka, graphic artist and activist
Robert Crumb, cartoonist
Harlan Ellison, New Wave speculative fiction writer
Lawrence Ferlinghetti, poet, translator, writer, founder of City Lights Books
Larry Flynt, publisher, founder of Hustler, free speech advocate
Mort Gerberg, cartoonist
Emmett Grogan, founder of the Diggers, a radical community-action group of Improvisational actors in the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco
Joseph Heller, author, best-known for Catch-22
Abbie Hoffman, political and social activist who co-founded the Youth International Party, member of the Chicago Seven
Ken Kesey, author, best known for One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest and his antics as a Merry Prankster
Edward Koren, cartoonist, celebrated for his work in The New Yorker
Patricia Krenwinkel, murderer and associate of Charles Manson and members of his communal Manson Family
Sam Leff, cartoonist
Timothy Leary, psychologist and author, an oracle for the use of psychedelic drugs
Norman Mailer, novelist, journalist, playwright, filmmaker

KEY FIGURES REPRESENTED IN THE KRASSNER PAPERS
Charles Manson, notorious criminal and leader of the Manson Family
Bill Murphy, cartoonist
Gerald Nicosia, author, poet, journalist
William Novak, author (co-written or ghostwritten) of numerous celebrity memoirs – Lee Iacocca, Nancy Reagan, and Magic Johnson
Yoko Ono, multimedia artist, singer, songwriter, and peace activist
Tony Randall, actor
Trina Robbins, cartoonist
Jerry Rubin, social activist, counterculture icon, anti-war hero
Ed Sanders, American poet, singer, activist, author, publisher and longtime member of the rock band the Fugs
Terry Southern, novelist, essayist, satirist
Lyle Stuart, author and independent publisher of controversial books
Hunter S. Thompson, American journalist and author, founded of the gonzo journalism movement
Jann Wenner, co-founder and publisher of Rolling Stone
Neil Wigus, author of speculative fiction
Paul Williams, music journalist, writer, and publisher who created Crawdaddy!, the first national US magazine of rock music criticism
Robert Anton Wilson, author, futurist, psychologist, and self-described agnostic mystic
Tom Wolfe, author and journalist widely known for his association with New Journalism

Abbie Hoffman. Autograph letter signed, 1980. A lengthy letter about post-‘60s political and philosophical divergences
Jerry Rubin. Typed letter signed, 1977. Re-establishing contact with Paul Krassner

Rear cover: poster advertising Paul Krassner’s Carnegie Hall violin recital
RUTH 
DEMBINSKY

GEORGE \nKRASSNER

PAUL \nKRASSNER

Nine Year Old Talent

6 Year Old Prodigy