



Smithsonian  
*Archives of American Art*

A Finding Aid to the Florence Allen Papers,  
1920-1997, in the Archives of American Art

Jean Fitzgerald

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Archives of American Art  
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<https://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions>  
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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Florence Allen papers
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.alleflor
<b>Date:</b>	1920-1997
<b>Extent:</b>	0.5 linear feet
<b>Creator:</b>	Allen, Florence W. (Florence Wysinger), 1913-1997
<b>Language:</b>	English
<b>Summary:</b>	The collection measures 0.5 linear feet, dates from 1920 to 1997, and documents the career of artist's model Florence Allen. Found within the papers are biographical material, letters, notes and writings, art work, and printed material. Of particular interest are a wide variety of photographs, including 19th century photographs of Allen family members, photographs of Florence Allen posing for artists, socializing with famous friends such as Paul Robeson, Harry Belafonte, Paul Newman, Allen Ginsberg, and participating in protest marches. There is also an autographed photo of Bob Hope.

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## Administrative Information

### Provenance

The Florence Allen papers were donated in 1995 and 1999 by Florence Allen via Austin Conkey, an informal executor, who maintained Allen's papers.

### Processing Information

The papers were processed in July 2005 by Jean Fitzgerald.

### Preferred Citation

Florence Allen papers, 1920-1997. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

### Restrictions on Access

The collection is open for research. Use requires an appointment.

### Ownership and Literary Rights

The Florence Allen papers are owned by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Literary rights as possessed by the donor have been dedicated to public use for research, study, and scholarship. The collection is subject to all copyright laws.

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## Biographical Note

Florence Wysinger Allen was born in Oakland, California, in 1913, the granddaughter of early African-American settlers. Her mother, née Moore, was a concert pianist, and her father, Arthur, as a boy in 1892, was named in the case of *Wysinger vs. Crookshank* which led to the desegregation of schools in California.

Florence Allen was educated at Fremont High School and later became involved in the San Francisco literary and artistic community as a civil rights activist and newspaper columnist. She began modeling in 1933 and worked as an artist's model for most of the prominent figurative painters working in the Bay Area of San Francisco, including Diego Rivera, Mark Rothko, and Wayne Thiebaud. She also worked as a model in university art classes, including those at the San Francisco Art Institute, Mills College, University of California at Berkeley, Stanford University, and the California College of Arts and Crafts.

In 1945, Ms. Allen founded the San Francisco Models' Guild. After injuries from a traffic accident limited her mobility in 1987, she became the Model Coordinator at the College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland where she also taught a Model Certification Workshop.

Florence Allen died June 1, 1997 in El Sobrante, California.

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## Scope and Content Note

The papers of artist's model Florence Allen measure 0.5 linear feet and date from 1920-1997. Found within the papers are biographical material, scattered letters that generally discuss some of Allen's activities, miscellaneous notes and writings, a drawing and a silhouette, and clippings. The primary value of this collection rests in its wide variety of photographs. As well as 19th century photographs of Allen family members the collection contains photographs of Florence Allen posing for artists, socializing with famous friends such as Paul Robeson, Harry Belafonte, Paul Newman and Allen Ginsberg, and participating in protest marches. There is also an autographed photo of Bob Hope.

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## Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Artists' models -- California -- San Francisco

Types of Materials:

Photographs

Names:

Belafonte, Harry, 1927- -- Photographs

Newman, Paul, 1925- -- Photographs

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Florence Allen Papers, 1942-1947

#### *0.4 linear feet (Box 1)*

The series contains biographical material, scattered letters that generally discuss some of Allen's activities, miscellaneous notes and writings, a drawing and a silhouette, clippings, and a wide variety of photographs. In addition to 19th century photographs of Allen family members, the series includes photographs of Florence Allen posing for artists, socializing with famous friends such as Paul Robeson, Harry Belafonte, Paul Newman and Allen Ginsberg, and participating in protest marches. There is also an autographed photo of Bob Hope.

Box 1, Folder 1	Diploma, 1942
Box 1, Folder 2	Constitution and By-Laws of the San Francisco Models' Guild and Dues Book, 1947
Box 1, Folder 3-6	Letters, 1962-1985, undated
Box 1, Folder 7	Typescript "A Short History of the Visalia Colored School" By Mervyn G. Shippey, 1970
Box 1, Folder 8	Miscellaneous Notes and Writings, undated
Box 1, Folder 9	Cut-out Silhouette Portrait and a Drawing, undated
Box 1, Folder 10-13	Clippings, 1945-1997, undated
Box 1, Folder 14	Autographed Brochure for Actor, Scott Beach, undated
Box 1, Folder 15-21	Photographs of Family Members, undated
Box 1, Folder 22-35	Photographs of Florence Allen, 1920-1987 See also OV 2.
Box 1, Folder 36-37	Photographs of Allen's Friends, undated
Box 1, Folder 38	Photographs of Portrait Busts and View of a Garden, undated
Box OV 2	Oversized Photographs of Family Members and Florence Allen, undated

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