



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Avis Berman Research Material on Katharine Kuh, 1939-2006, in the Archives of American Art

Joy Weiner

June 05, 2009

Archives of American Art
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Avis Berman research material on Katharine Kuh
Date:	1939-2006
Identifier:	AAA.bermavis3
Creator:	Berman, Avis
Extent:	3.6 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	<p>The Avis Berman research material on art dealer and curator Katharine Kuh measures 3.6 linear feet and dates from 1939 to 2006. The materials were compiled by art historian Avis Berman in preparing Katharine Kuh's memoir, which was published posthumously as <i>My Love Affair with Modern Art: Behind the Scenes with a Legendary Curator</i>. The collection includes Katharine Kuh's files; Kuh's drafts, manuscripts and interviews for her memoir; and Avis Berman's files relating to the book's publication. Also included is memorabilia. There is a 0.6 linear foot unprocessed addition to this collection donated in 2021 that includes research material consisting of correspondence, drafts, photographs, administrative files and reviews regarding the reissue of <i>The Artist's Voice: Talks with Seventeen Modern Artists</i> by Katharine Kuh, De Capo press, 2002, and additional published writings by Kuh. Material dates from 1948-2002.</p>

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The Avis Berman Research Material, 1939-2006 was donated to the Archives of American Art by Avis Berman, an art historian and literary executor of Katharine Kuh's estate in 2007 and in 2021.

Location of Originals

The collection includes photocopies of Katharine Kuh's correspondence; some of the letters may be among the Katharine Kuh papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. The Daniel Catton Rich correspondence is located at the Art Institute of Chicago.

Related Material

The Archives of American Art holds the Katharine Kuh papers, 1908-1994. Also found in the Archives of American Art is an oral history interview with Katharine Kuh conducted by Avis Berman, March 18, 1982-March 23, 1983. Additional Katharine Kuh material is located at the Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Processing Information

The collection was processed to a minimal level by Joy Weiner in 2009. A small addition received in 2021 is unprocessed.

Preferred Citation

Avis Berman research material on Katharine Kuh, 1939-2006. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions on Access

This collection is temporarily closed to researchers due to archival processing. Contact Reference Services for more information.

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Terms of Use

The donor has retained all intellectual property rights, including copyright, that they may own in the following material: all writings by Avis Berman

Biographical Note

Writer and art historian, Avis Berman lives and works in New York City. Berman was a close friend of Katharine Kuh's and is Kuh's literary executor. Berman compiled Katharine Kuh's research materials for the memoir that she was working on at the time of her death; the book was subsequently published as *My Love Affair with Modern Art: Behind the Scenes with a Legendary Curator in 2006*.

Katharine Kuh (1904-1994) was a curator and art dealer born in St. Louis, Missouri. She received her Bachelor of Arts from Vassar College in 1925, where she studied art history under Alfred Barr. In 1928, she earned her Master's in Art History at the University of Chicago. As a graduate student, Kuh developed an interest in modern art, particularly the work of European artists.

Kuh married George Kuh, a businessman in 1930. She and Kuh divorced six years later.

In 1935, she established the Katharine Kuh Gallery in Chicago. The gallery was dedicated to featuring the works of contemporary European and American painters and sculptors, such as Alexander Archipenko, Alexei Jawlensky, Wassily Kandinsky, Gyorgy Kepes, Paul Klee, Gaston Lachaise, Fernand Léger, Carlos Mérida, Joan Miro, Lazlo Moholy-Nagy, Pablo Picasso, as well as Charles Biederman, Alexander Calder, Stuart Davis, and Isamu Noguchi, among others. The Katharine Kuh Gallery was one of the first galleries in Chicago to show photography as art. Kuh held exhibitions for Ansel Adams, Eliot Porter, Edward Weston, and she also showed the photographs of Gyorgy Kepes and Man Ray.

At the gallery, Kuh taught classes on an informal basis to individuals interested in modern art. During this period, she spent her summers as a Visiting Professor of Art History at the University School of Fine Arts of San Miguel in Guanajuato, Mexico (1938-1940). With the onset of America's involvement in World War II, Kuh realized that the war would curtail her contact with many of the European artists whose works she had promoted and in 1942, she decided to close the gallery.

In 1943, Katharine Kuh took a position in the public relations department at the Art Institute of Chicago. The following year, Kuh was asked to take over the Gallery of Art Interpretation at the Art Institute. Later

she was appointed the Curator of Painting and Sculpture; in this role, she developed a close collaborative relationship with the Director of the Art Institute, Daniel Catton Rich. From 1946-1953, she served as the Editor of the *Art Institute of Chicago Quarterly*.

She left the Art Institute in 1959 and settled in New York City. She served as an art editor at the *Saturday Review* and *World Magazine*. She was also an art consultant for the First National Bank of Chicago from 1968-1979.

Katharine Kuh traveled extensively and often wrote about the art of the places she visited such as Sicily, Turkey, and the Yucatan. In the 1940s Kuh developed an interest in the wood carvings of the Indian tribes in the Pacific Northwest. The University of Alaska awarded her an honorary doctorate for her efforts to preserve the indigenous artwork of the region's Native Americans.

Her publications on twentieth-century art included: *Art Has Many Faces* (1951), *The Artist's Voice: Talks with Seventeen Artists* (1962), *Break-up: The Core of Modern Art* (1965), and *The Open Eye: In Pursuit of Art* (1971). Kuh also wrote the catalog that accompanied the "Fernand Léger Retrospective at the Art Institute of Chicago" (1953). At the time of her death, Katharine Kuh had completed a final draft of her memoir, which she had tentatively titled, *Sorting Out and Summing Up: Episodes in an Art Odyssey*.

In 1994, Katharine Kuh died in New York City.

Scope and Content Note

The Avis Berman research material on art dealer and curator Katharine Kuh measures 3.6 linear feet and dates from 1939 to 2006. The materials were compiled by art historian Avis Berman in preparing Katharine Kuh's memoir, which was published posthumously as *My Love Affair with Modern Art: Behind the Scenes with a Legendary Curator*. The collection includes Katharine Kuh's files; Kuh's drafts, manuscripts and interviews for her memoir; and Avis Berman's files relating to the book's publication. Also included is memorabilia.

The Katharine Kuh files contain correspondence; exhibition files; writings and notes; and Kuh's interview with Lily Harmon on J. B. Neumann. Correspondents include Walter Arensberg, Marcel Duchamp, and Edgar Kaufmann. Also included is the scattered correspondence of Daniel Catton Rich with Walter Arensberg, Chester Dale, Katharine Kuh, Samuel Marx, and others. Exhibition files pertain to exhibitions curated by Katharine Kuh for the Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection and one-man shows for Rico Lebrun and Mark Tobey, respectively.

Sorting Out and Summing Up: Episodes in An Art Odyssey contains Katharine Kuh's draft versions of book chapters; her manuscripts and interviews; and drafts of chapters that were not incorporated in the published memoir. Also included are manuscripts for the memoir and an annotated version of Avis Berman's interview with Kuh.

The Avis Berman files include correspondence, writings, printed material, clippings, press releases, and miscellaneous printed material. Files document Berman's activities concerning the publication of the memoir.

Memorabilia consists of a monograph and a memorial booklet.

There is a 0.6 linear foot unprocessed addition to this collection donated in 2021 that includes research material consisting of correspondence, drafts, photographs, administrative files and reviews regarding the reissue of *The Artist's Voice: Talks with Seventeen Modern Artists* by Katharine Kuh, De Capo press, 2002, and additional published writings by Kuh. Material dates from 1948-2002.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 5 series:

Missing Title:

- Series 1: Katharine Kuh Files, 1944-2003 (Box 1; 0.3 linear feet)

- Series 2: *Sorting Out and Summing Up: Episodes in an Art Odyssey* by Katharine Kuh, 1939-2006 (Boxes 1-3; 2.0 linear feet)
- Series 3: Avis Berman Files, 1950s-2006 (Box 3; 0.6 linear feet)
- Series 4: Memorabilia, 1976, 1977 (0.1 linear feet)
- Series 5: Unprocessed Addition, 1948-2002 (box 4-5, 0.6 linear feet)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Art, Modern
Women art historians
Women authors

Types of Materials:

Interviews

Names:

Arensberg, Walter, 1878-1954
Dale, Chester, b. 1883
Duchamp, Marcel, 1887-1968
Harmon, Lily, 1912-
Kaufmann, Edgar, 1910-1989
Kuh, Katharine
Lebrun, Rico, 1900-1964
Neumann, J. B. (Jsrael Ber)
Rich, Daniel Catton, 1904-1976
Tobey, Mark

Occupations:

Art critics -- New York (State) -- New York
Art historians -- New York (State) -- New York
Authors -- New York (State) -- New York

Container Listing

Series 1: Katharine Kuh Files, 1944-2003

0.3 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: This series contains correspondence; exhibition files; writings and notes; and an interview. Included is Katharine Kuh's correspondence with artists, collectors, museums, and others during her tenure at the Art Institute of Chicago and the correspondence of the Art Institute's Director, Daniel Catton Rich with Kuh and others. Letters between Rich and Walter and Louise Arensberg chronicle Rich's efforts to obtain the Arensbergs' art collection for the Art Institute. Exhibition files contain letters, a chronology, notes, list of artwork, printed material, press releases, and clippings; included is an extensive file on Kuh's efforts to organize the exhibition, *20th Century Art from the Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection*. Writings and notes include Kuh's article for *Vassar Alumnae Magazine*; her written reports of visits to galleries; notes on possible acquisitions for the Art Institute of Chicago; and a copy of a transcript of Katharine Kuh's 1984 interview with Lily Harmon on J. B. Neumann.

Arrangement: Katharine Kuh Files have been arranged into four subseries:

- Subseries 1.1: Katharine Kuh Correspondence, 1944-1982
- Subseries 1.2: Daniel Catton Rich Correspondence, 1946-1958
- Subseries 1.3: Exhibitions Curated by Katharine Kuh, 1949-1955
- Subseries 1.4: Writings and Notes; Interview, 1947-1984

1.1: Katharine Kuh Correspondence, 1944-1982

Box 1, Folder 1	Abell, Walter - Cook, Gene, 1944-1957
Box 1, Folder 2	Duchamp, Marcel - Hess, Thomas, 1944-1954, 1974
Box 1, Folder 3	Kaufmann, Edgar - Kunstadler, Sigmund, 1953-1957
Box 1, Folder 4	Langsner, Jules - Maxon, John, 1949-1959, 1982

1.2: Daniel Catton Rich Correspondence, 1946-1958

Box 1, Folder 5	Correspondence, 1946-1947
Box 1, Folder 6	Correspondence, 1948
Box 1, Folder 7-8	Correspondence, 1949 2 Folders
Box 1, Folder 9	Correspondence, 1950-1951 2 Folders
Box 1, Folder 10	Correspondence, 1952-1953

Box 1, Folder 11	Correspondence, 1954
Box 1, Folder 12	Correspondence, 1955
Box 1, Folder 13	Correspondence, 1956
Box 1, Folder 14	Correspondence, 1957
Box 1, Folder 15-16	Correspondence, 1958 2 Folders
Box 1, Folder 17	Correspondence, undated

1.3: Exhibitions Curated by Katharine Kuh, 1949-1955

Box 1, Folder 18-22	20th Century Art from the Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection, 1949-1956 5 Folders
Box 1, Folder 23	Rico Lebrun: Latest Paintings from Mexico, , 1954-1956
Box 1, Folder 24	Mark Tobey, One-Man Exhibition, , 1954-1955

1.4: Writings and Notes; Interview, 1947-1959; 1984

Box 1, Folder 25	"Explaining Art Visually," Vassar Alumnae Magazine (March 1957), 1957
Box 1, Folder 26	Reports on Gallery Visits, 1947-1959
Box 1, Folder 27	Notes on Acquisition of Artwork for the Art Institute of Chicago, 1953-1957, undated
Box 1, Folder 28	Miscellaneous Notes, 1954-1955, undated
Box 1, Folder 29	Katharine Kuh's Interview with Lily Harmon on J. B. Neumann, 1984

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Series 2: *Sorting Out and Summing Up: Episodes in An Art Odyssey* by Katharine Kuh, 1939-2006

2 Linear feet (Boxes 1-2)

Scope and Contents: This series includes Katharine Kuh's drafts of book chapters, manuscripts, and interviews compiled for her memoir, which she had tentatively titled *Sorting Out and Summing Up: Episodes in An Art Odyssey*. Also found are annotated excerpts of Avis Berman's oral history interview with Kuh. Files include correspondence, notes, printed material, clippings, reviews, and photographs.

Arrangement: *Sorting Out and Summing Up: Episodes in An Art Odyssey* by Katharine Kuh has been arranged into three subseries:

- Subseries 2.1: Draft Versions of Chapters, 1939-2006
- Subseries 2.2: Manuscripts and Interviews, 1987-1993
- Subseries 2.3: Draft Versions of Chapters Not Used in *My Love Affair with Modern Art: Behind the Scenes with a Legendary Curator*, 1945-1997

2.1: Draft Versions of Chapters, 1939-2006

Box 1, Folder 30-42	"Preface and Introduction," 1959-2006 12 Folders
Box 1, Folder 43-45	"Josef Albers," 1984-1994 3 Folders
Box 1, Folder 46	"Bernard Berenson," 1990s
Box 1, Folder 47	"Stuart Davis," 1990s
Box 1, Folder 48-50	"Hans Hofmann," 1990s-2002 3 Folders
Box 1, Folder 51-53	"Edward Hopper," 1990s-circa 2002 3 Folders
Box 1, Folder 54-57	"Alfred Jensen," 1990s 4 Folders
Box 2, Folder 1-8	"Alfred Jensen," 1990s 8 Folders
Box 2, Folder 9-12	"Franz Kline," 1990s-2003 4 Folders
Box 2, Folder 13-23	"Fernand Léger," 1953-1998, undated 11 Folders
Box 2, Folder 24-26	"Isamu Noguchi," 1990s-1995, undated

	3 Folders
Box 2, Folder 27-37	"Mark Rothko,", 1950s-1990s 11 Folders
Box 2, Folder 38-39	"Clyfford Still,", 1990s-2002 2 Folders
Box 2, Folder 40-43	"Mark Tobey,", 1962-1994 4 Folders
Box 2, Folder 44-45	"Mies van der Rohe,", 1990s, undated 2 Folders
Box 3, Folder 1-4	"Mies van der Rohe,", 1939-2003, undated 4 Folders
Box 3, Folder 5-7	"Vincent van Gogh,", 1974-1995 3 Folders

2.2: Manuscripts and Interviews, 1987-1993

Box 3, Folder 8	Manuscript of <i>Sorting Out and Summing Up: Episodes in An Art Odyssey</i> by Katharine Kuh, 1993
Box 3, Folder 9	Final Version of <i>Sorting Out and Summing Up: Episodes in An Art Odyssey</i> by Katharine Kuh, 1993
Box 3, Folder 10	Excerpts of Interviews with Katharine Kuh conducted by Avis Berman, 1987

2.3: Draft Versions of Chapters Not Used in *My Love Affair with Modern Art: Behind the Scenes with a Legenday Curator*, 1945-1997

Box 3, Folder 11-15	"Alaska,", 1946-1997, undated 5 Folders
Box 3, Folder 16-17	"Central America,", 1945-1992 2 Folders
Box 3, Folder 18-21	"Corporate Art,", 1978-1995 4 Folders
Box 3, Folder 22	"Charles and Ray Eames,", 1990s-1995
Box 3, Folder 23-28	"Germany After the War,", 1990s-1996 6 Folders
Box 3, Folder 29-31	"India,", 1990s-1992

3 Folders

Box 3, Folder 32-33 "La Grand Jatte," 1960, 1990s
2 Folders

Box 3, Folder 34 "Mexico," 1990s-1993

Box 3, Folder 35-36 "Self Portraits," 1975-1990s, undated

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Series 3: Avis Berman Files, 1950s-2006

0.6 Linear feet (Box 3)

Scope and Contents: This series contains Avis Berman's research materials related to the editing and publication of *My Love Affair with Modern Art: Scenes with a Legendary Curator*. Included is correspondence, a letter agreement, writings, printed material, clippings, press releases, and miscellaneous printed material. Also found is Katharine Kuh's correspondence detailing her efforts to find a publisher for the memoir. Writings contain draft versions of chapters formatted on floppy disks.

Arrangement: The Avis Berman Files have been arranged into three subseries:

- Subseries 3.1: Correspondence, 1981-2003, undated
- Subseries 3.2: Writings, 1990s-1994
- Subseries 3.3: Printed Material, 1950s-2006

3.1: Correspondence, 1981-2003

Box 3, Folder 37	Correspondence, 1981-1982
Box 3, Folder 38	Correspondence, 1991-1992, undated
Box 3, Folder 39	Correspondence, 1993
Box 3, Folder 40	Letter Agreement, 1994
Box 3, Folder 41	Correspondence, 1994-2003

3.2: Writings, 1990s-1994

Box 3, Folder 42	Katharine Kuh Manuscript Chapters: "Sorting and Summing," "Hofmann," "Kline," "Rothko," "Jensen," "The 20th Century Briefly," "Tobey" and "Jensen Revisions," 1990s (2 1/2" disks)
Box 3, Folder 43	Various Manuscript Chapters: "Rothko Quote," "B. Berenson and Germany," "Preface and Donors," and "India and World Corp.," 1994 (4 1/2" disks)

3.3: Printed Material, 1950s-2006

Box 3, Folder 44	Clippings, 1950s, 2005-2006
Box 3, Folder 45	Press Releases, 1954-2006
Box 3, Folder 46	Miscellaneous Printed Material, 1950s

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Series 4: Memorabilia, 1997, 1976

0.1 Linear feet (Box 3)

Scope and Contents: Memorabilia houses a book of poems by Richard T. Cox and a memorial booklet.

Box 3, Folder 47	Many Seasons by Richard T. Cox, 1976
Box 3, Folder 48	Memorial Booklet for Denise Browne Hare , 1997

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Series 5: Unprocessed Addition, 1948-2002

0.6 Linear feet

Box 4 Unprocessed Papers

Box 5 Unprocessed Papers

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