



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Forrest Bess photographs and slides, circa 1981

Stephanie Ashley

Archives of American Art
750 9th Street, NW
Victor Building, Suite 2200
Washington, D.C. 20001
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions>
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/>

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Forrest Bess photographs and slides
Date:	circa 1981
Identifier:	AAA.bessforp
Creator:	Bess, Forrest, 1911-1977
Extent:	58 Items
Language:	English .
Summary:	This collection of Forrest Bess photographs and slides consists of 20 photographs, 38 slides, and 38 negatives, and dates from circa 1981. 20 color prints and 31 slides are of works of art by Forrest Bess; some, if not all, are from the collection of Harry Burkhart of Bay City, Texas. Negatives are labeled "Fridge Curtis" and are also of artwork by Bess. Also found are 5 slides of works by Bess from the Hawkins Ranch collection, and 2 slides of works from the Margaret and Austen Furse collection.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Collection was collected as part of the Archives of American Art's Texas project. Items on reel 3781 were donated in 1985 by Sandra Levy, collector for the project and photographer of some of the slides. Additional slides were donated by Margaret Lewis Furse in 1982.

Related Materials

The Archives of American Art also holds the Forrest Bess letter to L. E. and Patricia Cooke, the Forrest Bess letters, the Dana Friis-Hansen papers on Forrest Bess, the Louis Waldman research material on Forrest Bess, and the Rosalie Berkowitz papers relating to Forrest Bess.

Available Formats

The collection was digitized in 2021 and is available on the Archives of American Art's website.

Processing Information

The collection was partially microfilmed on Reel 3781 after receipt. It was processed and described in a finding aid by Stephanie Ashley, and digitized, in 2021.

Restrictions

This collection is open for research. Access to original papers requires an appointment and is limited to the Archives' Washington, D.C. Research Center.

Conditions Governing Use

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Biographical / Historical

Forrest Bess (1911-1977) was a painter and fisherman in Bay City, Texas, known for his generally small, abstract, biomorphic paintings, and his ideas on the merging of masculine and feminine energy.

Although Bess lived much of his life in relative isolation, he was represented by Betty Parsons in New York, and his work received renewed interest after a 1981 solo show at the Whitney Museum of American Art. Although most of his paintings are in private collections, his work can be found in museums including the Menil Collection, the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum, the San Francisco Museum of Art, and others.

Scope and Contents

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Names and Subject Terms

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

Occupations:

Painters -- Texas -- Bay City

Container Listing

Series 1: Forrest Bess Photographs and Slides, circa 1981

Folder 1 [Photographs and Slides, circa 1981](#)

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