



Smithsonian  
*Archives of American Art*

Biesel family papers

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

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Biesel family papers
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.biesfami
<b>Date:</b>	1859-1983 (bulk 1915-1983)
<b>Extent:</b>	3.1 Linear feet ((partially microfilmed on 3 reels))
<b>Creator:</b>	Biesel family
<b>Language:</b>	English

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Microfilmed material donated 1985 by Garnett Biesel, son of Fred Biesel; he donated unmicrofilmed material in 1990, after it had been used in preparation for the book *The Federal Art Project in Illinois, 1935-1943* (1990), by George Mavigliano and Richard Lawson.

### Available Formats

35mm microfilm reels 4207-4209 available at Archives of American Art offices, through interlibrary loan and at the Art Institute of Chicago Ryerson Library.

### Restrictions

Use of original papers requires an appointment and is limited to the Archives' Washington, D.C., Research Center. Microfilmed materials must be consulted on microfilm. Contact Reference Services for more information.

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## Biographical / Historical

Family of artists. Charles Biesel: marine painter, student of William Trost Richards; his son, Fred Biesel, a painter and art administrator; and Fred's wife, Frances Strain Biesel, a painter and director of the Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago for many years.

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## Scope and Contents

Correspondence, essays, subject files, art work, clippings and other materials documenting the activities of a Chicago family of artists, the 57th Street Art Colony and the Chicago art world in the early twentieth century.

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## Scope and Contents

REELS 4207-4209: Biographical materials, including seven biographical accounts, a 1960 program and a 1961 certificate of honor for Frances Strain Biesel and four biographical accounts of Fred Biesel; correspondence, 1927-1963, primarily concerning activities of Fred and Frances; price lists for works of art; a 1955 estate list of the works of Charles Biesel; mailing lists; miscellaneous receipts, 1928-1961; a notebook, 1931-1934, containing addresses and financial notations concerning the sale of works of art.

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## Scope and Contents

writings, including two essays, "Is It Futuristic or Cubistic?" and "The 57th Street Colony," 2 untitled essays concerning the perception of modern art, a short story about an appointment with Charles Biesel, lecture notes by Fred Biesel, "War and Arts Exhibition" (Renaissance Society), an untitled lecture at the University of Chicago Art Gallery, "The Story of Modern Art" (Beverly Hills, 1957), lecture notes concerning printmaking, and a 1945 typescript annotated as the "Bohrod talk." Also included are

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## Scope and Contents

subject files, 1939-1962, containing correspondence and printed material on the Federal Art Project (Index of American Design), Renaissance Society, Artists Equity Association, Artists Union of Chicago, Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago Society of Artists, and the 1020 Club; art works, including six sketchbooks and miscellaneous drawings, 1907-1919, by the Biesels, a sketchbook, 1859-1878, by William T. Richards, 3 prints, 1928-1932, by Emil Armin, and a 1930 print by Frances Foy;

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## Scope and Contents

photographs, 1919-1960, of Biesel family members, friends, a costume party with John Sloan (2), art classes, 1920 and 1950, at the Art Institute of Chicago and the Layton School of Milwaukee, "The Ten" opening reception at the Marshall Field Galleries, 1929 (2), Artists Equity members and activities, 1947-1948 (3), and of works of art;

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## Scope and Contents

and printed materials, including a scrapbook of clippings, 1915-1916, compiled by Charles Biesel, a scrapbook, 1926-1931, concerning "Ten Artists", clippings, 1897-1962, exhibition announcements and catalogs, 1921-1983, for Biesel and others, including 11 catalogs from the Chicago No-Jury Society of Artists, a 1923 souvenir program for the No-Jury Artists "Cubist Ball", and miscellany.

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## Scope and Contents

UNMICROFILMED: Papers, 1934-1944, relating to Fred Biesel's work for the Works Progress Administration Federal Art Project in Illinois, including correspondence with John Walley, Increase Robinson, George Thorp, Franklin D. Roosevelt and others; printed material, 1934-1941, including the newsletter "Chicago Artist," 1937, published by the Artists Union of Chicago, and several exhibition catalogs of the National Exhibition of the Index of American Design; a 25 p. typescript of a speech by Holger Cahill; a teachers handbook with silk-screen illustrations of "Let the Artist Speak"; business records including project proposals for the W.P.A.; and Biesel's letter of resignation, 1943.

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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:

Art, Modern -- 20th century -- Illinois -- Chicago  
Modernism (Art) -- Illinois -- Chicago  
Women painters -- Illinois -- Chicago

Types of Materials:

Drawings  
Sketchbooks

Names:

Armin, Emil, 1883-  
Artists Equity Association  
Biesel, Charles, 1865-1945  
Biesel, Frances Strain, 1898-1962  
Biesel, Fred, 1893-1954  
Bohrod, Aaron  
Chicago No-Jury Society of Artists  
Federal Art Project (Ill.)  
Foy, Frances M., 1890-1963  
Index of American Design  
Richards, William Trost, 1833-1905  
United States. Works Progress Administration  
University of Chicago. Renaissance Society

Occupations:

Marine painters -- Illinois -- Chicago  
Painters -- Illinois -- Chicago