



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Elmer Bischoff papers,
1914-1990, in the Archives of American Art

Alexandra Krensky

Funding for the processing of this collection was provided by
the Smithsonian Institution Collections Care Preservation Fund.

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Elmer Bischoff papers
Identifier:	AAA.biscelme
Date:	1914-1990
Extent:	4.4 Linear feet
Creator:	Bischoff, Elmer, 1916-1991
Language:	The collection is in English
Summary:	The papers of San Francisco painter and arts instructor Elmer Bischoff measure 4.4 linear feet and date from 1914 to 1990, with the bulk of the material dating from the late 1950s to the mid-1980s. Found within the papers are biographical materials, scattered correspondence, notes and notebooks, teaching and student files, printed materials, artwork and two sketchbooks, and photographs and negatives of Bischoff, his family, post World War II Europe, and artwork studies.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Two items on reel 2787 were donated in 1974 by Elmer Bischoff. His papers were donated in 1991 by his widow, Adelle Bischoff.

Related Materials

Among other resources relating to the Elmer Bischoff papers are two oral histories with Bischoff; one conducted in 1965 by Mary McChesney and the other conducted in 1977 by Paul J. Karlstrom.

Available Formats

A portion of the collection is available on 35 mm microfilm reel 2787 at the Archives of American Art offices and through interlibrary loan. Researchers should note that the arrangement of the material described in the container inventory does not reflect the arrangement of the collection on microfilm.

Processing Information

The collection was minimally processed, arranged, and described by Alexandra Krensky in 2013 with funding provided by the Smithsonian Institution's Collections Care and Preservation Fund.

The goal for minimal-level processing at the Archives of American Art is to provide access to collections as quickly as possible while maintaining our high standards for arrangement,

description and preservation. Generally, materials are minimally rearranged, existing folder titles are retained, and all materials are rehoused in acid-free folders and boxes. Staples and other fasteners are not removed, but materials are removed from binders or damaged binding when necessary.

Preferred Citation

Elmer Bischoff papers, 1914-1990. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

Use of original papers requires an appointment.

Conditions Governing Use

The Elmer Bischoff 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.

Biographical / Historical

Elmer Bischoff (1916-1991) was an influential painter and arts instructor in the San Francisco Bay Area figurative art movement that emerged in the early 1950s.

Bischoff grew up in Berkeley, California and attended the University of California (UC) at Berkeley, receiving his Master of Arts in 1939. During the Great Depression, he became involved with the Federal Art Project and taught ceramics at an arts center in Sacramento, California. During World War II, he served in the US Air Force and was stationed in England as an intelligence officer. When he returned to California in 1945, he taught at the California School of Fine Arts (now known as San Francisco Art Institute) with Richard Diebenkorn, David Park, Mark Rothko, Clyfford Still, and Ad Reinhardt. He resigned from the school in the early 1950s when he took up figurative painting, but returned in 1956 to head the graduate program. In 1963 he became an associate professor at UC Berkeley, and was promoted to full professor in 1965, where he stayed until he retired in 1985.

Scope and Contents

The papers of San Francisco painter and arts instructor Elmer Bischoff measure 4.4 linear feet and date from 1914 to 1990, with the bulk of the material dating from the late 1950s to the mid-1980s. Found within the papers are biographical materials, scattered correspondence, notes and notebooks, teaching and student files, printed materials, artwork and two sketchbooks, and photographs and negatives of Bischoff, his family, post World War II Europe, and artwork studies.

Biographical materials document jurying on art prize committees, interviews with others, lists of names and addresses, and biographical materials. Scattered correspondence is with Staempfli Gallery, organizations, and artists. Notes and notebooks document people Bischoff kept in touch with, as well as day-to-day occurrences in his life, including health and travel. University files document Bischoff's years as a professor at UC Berkeley, as well as papers written about him and notes from his days as a student at UC Berkeley. The bulk of the collection consists of printed material documenting exhibitions, magazines and newspapers where Bischoff's work was profiled, and materials that document his personal interests.

Artwork and two sketchbooks contain drawings, watercolors, and collages by Bischoff. Photographs are of Bischoff, his family, travel, and art resource photographs.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged as 7 series.

- Series 1: Biographical Materials, 1930-1990 (Box 1, 0.5 linear feet)
 - Series 2: Correspondence, 1956-1990 (Box 1, 0.2 linear feet)
 - Series 3: Notes and Notebooks, 1976-1989 (Box 1, 0.3 linear feet)
 - Series 4: University Files, 1954-1990 (Box 2, 0.4 linear feet)
 - Series 5: Printed Material, 1941-1990 (Box 3-6, 1.6 linear feet)
 - Series 6: Artwork and Sketchbooks, 1958, undated (Box 7-8, 0.6 linear feet)
 - Series 7: Photographic Materials, 1914-1990 (Box 9, 0.2 linear feet)
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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 -- Study and teaching

Types of Materials:

Collages
Drawings
Interviews
Watercolors

Names:

Staempfli Gallery (New York, N.Y.)
University of California, Berkeley -- Faculty
University of California, Berkeley -- Students

Occupations:

Painters -- California -- San Francisco

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Materials, 1930-1990

0.5 Linear feet (Box 1, 9)

Biographical materials date from 1930-1990 and document Bischoff's professional life. Included are drafts of his resume and curriculum vitae, a transcript from a speech, mailing lists and address books, material from jurying for art prize committees, and Bischoff's junior high school yearbook. The bulk of the biographical materials are made up by bio-bibliography supplemental material, which was material collected on an annual basis, possibly for tenure purposes, in order to update faculty biographies at UC Berkeley. The bio-bibliography supplemental material includes curriculum vitae drafts, expense reports, letters from galleries, news releases, notices of awards, sales contracts, purchase orders, proposals, a request for appointment to the Institute of Creative Arts (1966-67), personal services agreements, and a contract for services from the Contractor for the City of Walnut Creek, CA.

Box 1, Folder 1	Bibliography, 1986
Box 1, Folder 2-4	Bio-Bibliography Supplemental Material, 1964-1965
Box 1, Folder 5	Biographical Data, 1973-1974
Box 1, Folder 6	Certificate, National Academy of Design, 1984 Oversized material housed in Box 9, Folder 1
Box 1, Folder 7	Clippings and Photographs of Artwork, Gallery Materials, 1957-1978
Box 1, Folder 8	Interview with PJK, undated
Box 1, Folder 9	Interview with Susan Klein, 1985
Box 1, Folder 10	Jurying for Art Prizes, 1964-1965
Box 1, Folder 11	Mailing List, circa 1983-1985
Box 1, Folder 12	Metropolitan Museum Questionnaire, 1988
Box 1, Folder 13-14	Names and Addresses, undated
Box 1, Folder 15	Retirement Party Guest Book, 1985
Box 1, Folder 16	Reviews, 1969-1972
Box 1, Folder 17	Reviews, Fan Letters, 1985 Retrospectives, 1985-1991

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| Box 1, Folder 18 | San Francisco State Commencement, 1985 |
| Box 1, Folder 19 | The Target: Willard Junior High School Yearbook, 1930 |
| Box 1, Folder 20 | Transcript, Speech at Oakland Museum, 1973 |
| Box 9, Folder 1 | Oversized Certificate, National Academy of Design from Box 1, Folder 6, 1984 |

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Series 2: Correspondence, 1956 -1990

0.2 Linear feet (Box 1)

English.

Scattered correspondence dates from 1956 -1990 and consists of letters between Bischoff and other artists and Staempfli Gallery.

Box 1, Folder 21	Alphabetical, 1961-1990
Box 1, Folder 22	Archives of American Art, 1966-1981
Box 1, Folder 23	Landauer, Susan, 1989-1990
Box 1, Folder 24	McCormack, Kathleen, 1989
Box 1, Folder 25	Staempfli Gallery, 1956-1989

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Series 3: Notes and Notebooks, 1976-1989

0.3 Linear feet (Box 1)

English.

Notes and notebooks date from 1976-1989 and consist of 12 notebooks and other notes kept by Bischoff. The notes and notebooks contain numerous names and addresses. They also include diary entries about daily life, as well as some of Bischoff's various personal interests including chess, classical music, and travel.

Box 1, Folder 26-27 Notes, 1976-1989

Box 1, Folder 28 Notebooks, 1976-1989

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Series 4: University Files, 1954-1990

0.4 Linear feet (Box 2)

English.

University files date from around 1954-1990 and document Bischoff's career as a professor at UC Berkeley, as well as his time as a student in the UC Extension program. Included are class rolls, material on committees for budgets and research, and university forms. Also included are masters' theses and student papers written about Elmer Bischoff, some of which were written by students from other universities.

Box 2, Folder 1	California School of Fine Arts, 1958-1959
Box 2, Folder 2	Class Rolls, 1973-1985
Box 2, Folder 3	Committee on Research, 1981-1990
Box 2, Folder 4	Loose Leaf Organizer, UC Extension, circa 1954
Box 2, Folder 5	Student Essays, 1986
Box 2, Folder 6	University Forms, 1964-1969

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Series 5: Printed Material, 1941-1990

1.6 Linear feet (Box 3-6, 9)

English.

Printed material dates from 1941-1990 and documents Bischoff's art career, as well as some of his personal interests. Materials include books, newspaper clippings, magazines, exhibition announcements and catalogs, and a deck of tarot cards.

Box 3, Folder 1	Artwork Prints and Postcards , circa 1953 Oversized material housed in box 9, folder 1
Box 3, Folder 2	Book, <i>Modern Art in America</i> , 1941
Box 3, Folder 3	Book, <i>Basic Tap Dancing</i> , 1979
Box 3, Folder 4	Book, <i>Tarot Classic</i> , 1972
Box 3, Folder 5	Book, <i>Art in America: New Talent USA</i> , 1964
Box 3, Folder 6	Clippings, 1958-1988
Box 4, Folder 1	Clippings, 1958-1988
Box 4, Folder 2	Clippings Regarding Chess, 1986-1990
Box 4, Folder 3	Exhibition Annoucements, 1956-1988, 1956-1988
Box 4, Folder 4-7	Exhibition Catalogs, 1941-1963
Box 5, Folder 1-3	Exhibition Catalogs, 1963-1980
Box 5, Folder 4	History Book Club, 1990
Box 5, Folder 5	Houston Show--Brochures, Clippings, 1980
Box 5, Folder 6	Lectures, 1971-1989
Box 5, Folder 7	Magazines, 1955-1971
Box 6, Folder 1-2	Magazines, 1970-1986
Box 6, Folder 3	Newspapers, 1958-1988
Box 6, Folder 4	Philips Collection, The, 1986

- Box 6, Folder 5 Printed Material regarding Religion, 1966-1990
- Box 6, Folder 6 San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1985
- Box 6, Folder 7 Tarot Cards, 1976
- Box 9, Folder 1 Artwork Prints and Postcards (from box 3, folder 1), circa 1953

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Series 6: Artwork and Sketchbooks, 1958, undated

0.6 Linear feet (Box 7-8, OV 10)

Artwork and sketchbooks contains drawings, collages, and watercolors created by Bischoff. Of note are drawings of Bischoff's contemporaries, David Park and Richard Diebenkorn.

Box 7, Folder 1-4	Drawings, undated
Box 7, Folder 5	Gallery Forms, Paintings and Drawings, circa 1970s
Box 7, Folder 6-8	Sketchbook, undated
Box 9, Folder 1	Oversize Sketchbook, undated
Box 9, Folder 2-4	Oversize Artwork, undated
Box OV 10, Folder 1	Matted Sketches, 1958

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Series 7: Photographic Materials, 1914-1990

0.2 Linear feet (Box 8)

English.

Photographic materials consist of developed prints and negatives of Elmer Bischoff himself, as well as family photos. Most notable are photographs of post-World War II Europe, taken by Bischoff after he served in the Air Force, and a signed photograph of Captain A.W. Nelson, author of "Yankee Swanson."

Box 8, Folder 1	Bischoff, Elmer, circa 1974-1988
Box 8, Folder 2	Bischoff, Elmer, circa 1980s
Box 8, Folder 3	Family Campout, 1982-1989
Box 8, Folder 4	Family Photographs, 1914-1990
Box 8, Folder 5-6	Post-World War II Europe, 1944-1945
Box 8, Folder 7	Test Photos of Paintings, Lights, Film, and Notes, 1979-1988

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