



# Smithsonian

*Archives of American Art*

## A Finding Aid to the Nell Blaine Papers, 1942-1985, in the Archives of American Art

Jayna M. Josefson

Processing of this collection received Federal support from the Collections  
Care Initiative Fund, administered by the Smithsonian American  
Women's History Initiative and the National Collections Program

2020/08/17

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/>

# Table of Contents

Collection Overview .....	1
Administrative Information .....	1
Scope and Contents.....	2
Biographical / Historical.....	2
Arrangement.....	2
Names and Subjects .....	2
Container Listing .....	4
Series 1: Biographical Material, 1959-1980.....	4
Series 2: Correspondence, 1944-1985.....	5
Series 3: Writings and Notes, 1960s-1980s.....	6
Series 4: Personal Business Records, 1949-1983.....	7
Series 5: Printed Material, 1940s-1980s.....	8
Series 6: Photographs, 1942-1980s.....	9

## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Nell Blaine papers
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.blainell
<b>Date:</b>	1942-1985
<b>Creator:</b>	Blaine, Nell, 1922-1996
<b>Extent:</b>	2.9 Linear feet
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Summary:</b>	The papers of painter Nell Blaine measure 2.9 linear feet and date from 1942 to 1985. Found are biographical material, scattered artwork, correspondence, writings, business records, printed material, and photographs. Also included are papers relating to the estate of Blaine's friend, Howard Griffin.

---

## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Nell Blaine lent a portion of her papers for microfilming on reel D311. She later donated her papers to the Archives of American Art in 1980 and 1985. The Howard Griffin papers included in the collection were received by Blaine as executrix of Griffin's estate.

### Separated Materials

The Archives of American Art also holds microfilm of scrapbooks lent for microfilming on reel D311. Loaned materials were returned to the donor and are not described in the collection container inventory.

### Related Materials

Also found in the Archives of American Art is an interview of Nell Blaine conducted 1967 June 15, by Dorothy Seckler, and the Nell Blaine letters to Robert A. Wilson, 1963-1995.

### Available Formats

Material lent for microfilming is available on 35mm microfilm reel D311 at Archives of American Art offices and through interlibrary loan.

### Processing Information

The collection was processed with a finding aid prepared by Jayna Josefson in 2020.

### Preferred Citation

Nell Blaine papers, 1942-1985. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

### 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

The Archives of American Art makes its archival collections available for non-commercial, educational and personal use unless restricted by copyright and/or donor restrictions, including but not limited to access and publication restrictions. AAA makes no representations concerning such rights and restrictions and it is the user's responsibility to determine whether rights or restrictions exist and to obtain any necessary permission to access, use, reproduce and publish the collections. Please refer to the Smithsonian's Terms of Use for additional information.

---

## Biographical / Historical

Nell Blaine (1922-1996) was a painter and illustrator from Richmond, Virginia, and was active in New York City.

Blaine was born in 1922 with severe visual impairments. She received corrective surgery as a child and quickly found a desire to draw and paint what she was finally able to see. Her art education began at the Richmond School of Art and later moved to New York City where she studied under Hans Hoffmann and joined the American Abstract Artists.

In the 1950s, Blaine moved to Paris where she lived with close friends including Larry Rivers. Blaine's early work was abstract, and later evolved to figurative and landscape painting--likely inspired by the 19th century painters of Europe. She was a close friend of poet and art writer Howard Griffin, and illustrated a limited edition of his *Four Poems*.

Nell Blaine died in 1996 in New York City. She was survived by her partner of thirty years, artist Carolyn Harris.

---

## Scope and Contents

The papers of painter Nell Blaine measure 2.9 linear feet and date from 1942 to 1985. Found are biographical material, scattered artwork, correspondence, writings, business records, printed material, and photographs. Also included are papers relating to the estate of Blaine's friend, Howard Griffin.

---

## Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 6 series.

- Series 1: Biographical Material, 1959-1980 (0.3 linear feet; Box 1, OV5)
  - Series 2: Correspondence, 1944-1985 (1.0 linear feet; Boxes 1-2)
  - Series 3: Writings and Notes, 1960s-1980s (4 folders; Box 2)
  - Series 4: Personal Business Records, 1949-1983 (0.5 linear feet; Box 2)
  - Series 5: Printed Material, 1940s-1980s (0.7 linear feet; Boxes 2-3, OV5)
  - Series 6: Photographs, 1942-1980s (0.4 linear feet; Boxes 3-4)
- 

## Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Women artists  
Women painters

Women printmakers

Names:

Griffin, Howard, 1915-1975

Harris, Carolyn, 1937-

Occupations:

Illustrators -- New York (State) -- New York

Painters -- New York (State) -- New York

Printmakers -- New York (State) -- New York

---

## Container Listing

### Series 1: Biographical Material, 1959-1980

#### *0.3 Linear feet (Box 1, OV 5)*

Scope and Contents: Found are awards, resumes, artwork by Blaine, and subject files kept by Blaine on her friends. Subject files include printed material, Blaine's notes, and photographs.

Box 1, Folder 1	Awards, 1973
Box 1, Folder 2	Biographical Sketches and Resumes, 1971-1980
Box 1, Folder 3	Family Histories and Genealogy , circa 1970s
Oversize 5	Lithograph, Metal Plate, and Cartoons for a Book by Ruth Anderson, 1961-1979
Box 1, Folder 4	Sketches and Designs for Catalogs, circa 1960s-1970s
Box 1, Folder 5	Subject File--on Midi Garth, 1959-1961
Box 1, Folder 6	Subject File--on Beatrice Gazzolo, circa 1960s
Box 1, Folder 7	Subject File--on Carolyn Harris, 1960s-1970s
Box 1, Folder 8	Subject File--on Yaddo Estate, 1970s

*[Return to Table of Contents](#)*

## Series 2: Correspondence, 1944-1985

### 1 Linear foot (Boxes 1-2)

**Scope and Contents:** Correspondence is with artists, collectors, critics, family, friends, dealers, journalists, institutions, writers, and others. Notable correspondents include Kit Barker, Arthur Cohen, Irene Fisdell, Peggy Guggenheim, Midi Garth, Beatrice Gazzolo, Carolyn Harris, Galway Kinnell, Larry Rivers, John Von Wicht, Olga von Flotow, and others. Also found are illustrated letters by Lilian Kiesler, Richard leBland, and Nina Talbot.

**Arrangement:** This series maintains Nell Blaine's original arrangement.

**Available Formats:** Researchers should note that many of the letters are photocopies.

Box 1, Folder 9-13	Artists and Writers, 1944-1985
Box 1, Folder 14	Art Institutions, 1963-1985
Box 1, Folder 15-16	Collectors, 1959-1985
Box 1, Folder 17	Critics and Journalists, 1961-1984
Box 1, Folder 18	Family, 1967-1985
Box 1, Folder 19-22	Friends, circa 1940s-1985
Box 1, Folder 23	Galleries and Dealers, 1955-1984
Box 1, Folder 24-27	General, 1945-1985
Box 2, Folder 1-2	General, 1945-1985
Box 2, Folder 3	Greeting and Holiday Cards, 1980s
Box 2, Folder 4	Illustrated Letters, 1981-1983
Box 2, Folder 5	Outgoing Letters, from Nell Blaine, 1967-1984

*[Return to Table of Contents](#)*

## Series 3: Writings and Notes, 1960s-1980s

### *4 Folders (Box 2)*

Scope and Contents: Scattered notes and writings on art by Nell Blaine are found here. Writings by others include short biographical articles about Blaine.

Box 2, Folder 6	Writings by Nell Blaine, 1977
Box 2, Folder 7-8	Lists and Notes, 1972-1980s
Box 2, Folder 9	Writings by Others, on Nell Blaine, 1960s-1970s

*[Return to Table of Contents](#)*



## Series 4: Personal Business Records, 1949-1983

### 0.5 Linear feet (Box 2)

**Scope and Contents:** Found are scattered business records including a gallery file and a sales receipt. Proposals for books to include illustrations by Blaine are by Daisy Alden and Robert Wilson.

Files originating from the estate of Howard Griffin include research material on Joseph Cornell by Griffin; letters to Griffin from W. H. Auden, Kit Barker, Jean Garrigue, Clarence John Laughlin, Marianne Moore, Frank O'Hara, Mark Tobey, Clifford Wright (over 100), and others; and etchings by Alvin Ross.

**Available Formats:** Many of the letters in the Howard Griffin Estate files are photocopies.

Box 2, Folder 10	Gallery File--Jane Street Gallery, 1983
Box 2, Folder 11-16	Howard Griffin Estate, 1949-1975
Box 2, Folder 17-18	Proposals--Book Illustrations, 1960s-1980
Box 2, Folder 19	Sales Receipt, 1950s-1970s

*[Return to Table of Contents](#)*

## Series 5: Printed Material, 1940s-1980s

*0.7 Linear feet (Boxes 2-3, OV 5)*

Scope and Contents: Printed material includes a book by Jean Garrigue with a Blaine illustration, clippings, exhibition announcements and catalogs, and reproductions of works of art.

Box 2, Folder 20	Book--Love's Aspects by Jean Garrigue, 1975
Box 2, Folder 21-22	Clippings, 1950s-1980s
Box 2, Folder 23-27	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1940s-1980s
Box 3, Folder 1-2	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1940s-1980s
Box 3, Folder 3-4	Reproductions of Works of Art, 1950s-1980s
Oversize 5	Reproductions of Works of Art, 1970s

*[Return to Table of Contents](#)*

## Series 6: Photographs, 1942-1980s

### 0.4 Linear feet (Boxes 3-4)

Scope and Contents: Found here are portraits and snapshots of Nell Blaine, Blaine with her art, and Blaine's homes, studios, and gardens. Photos of Blaine with friends include individuals such as E. Astor, Patricia H. Cooper, Dilys Evans, Olga von Flotow, Jane Freilicher, Margaret Harmsworth, Carolyn Harris, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Jason, Denise Levertov, Larry Rivers, Constance Smith, Jane Watrous, and Gayle Young. Photographs of works of art may include annotations by Blaine such as titles, sales, dimensions, and buyers.

Box 3, Folder 5	Photographs of Nell Blaine, 1942-1980s
Box 3, Folder 6-7	Photographs of Nell Blaine and Friends at Events, 1950s-1970s
Box 3, Folder 8	Photographs of Howard Griffin, 1950s
Box 3, Folder 9	Photographs of Homes and Gardens, 1960s-1980s
Box 3, Folder 10	Photographs of Studio, 1950s-1980s
Box 3, Folder 11-12	Photographs of Works of Art, 1940s-1980s
Box 4, Folder 1-3	Photographs of Works of Art, 1940s-1980s

*[Return to Table of Contents](#)*