



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Ernest Briggs
Papers, circa 1900-2013, bulk 1940-1984,
in the Archives of American Art

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Archives of American Art
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<https://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions>
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Table of Contents

Collection Overview	1
Administrative Information	1
Arrangement.....	2
Biographical / Historical.....	2
Scope and Contents.....	2
Names and Subjects	3
Container Listing	4
Series 1: Biographical Material, 1942-1984.....	4
Series 2: Correspondence, 1950s-2001.....	5
Series 3: Writings, 1960-1985.....	7
Series 4: Diaries, 1976-1984.....	8
Series 5: Personal Business Records, 1960s-2000s.....	9
Series 6: Printed Material, 1949-2013.....	10
Series 7: Photographic Material, circa 1900-1990 (bulk 1940-1984).....	11

Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Ernest Briggs papers
Identifier:	AAA.brigerne
Date:	circa 1900-2013 (bulk 1940-1984)
Extent:	2.4 linear feet
Creator:	Briggs, Ernest, 1923-
Language:	English Collection is in English
Summary:	The papers of painter Ernest Briggs measure 2.4 linear feet and date from circa 1900-2013, bulk 1940-1983. The collection documents the life and career of this second generation abstract expressionist through biographical material; correspondence with artists and critics; writings and five diaries that chronicle the changing art world from 1950s-1970s; personal business records; printed material; and a significant amount of photographic material documenting the artist and his work.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Ernest Briggs donated papers in 1980 with the bulk of the collection donated in 2015 by the Anne Arnold Estate, via Robert Brooks and Janice Kasper, executors.

Related Materials

Also found in the Archives of American Art is an oral history interview with Ernest Briggs conducted by Barbara Shikler in 1982 and the papers of sculptor, Anne Arnold, Briggs' wife.

Processing Information

The collection was processed to a minimal level and a finding aid prepared by Hilary Price in 2016.

Preferred Citation

Ernest Briggs papers, circa 1900-2013, bulk 1940-1984. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

Use of original papers requires an appointment and is limited to the Archives' Washington, D.C. Research Center. Contact Reference Services for more information.

Conditions Governing Use

The Ernest Briggs papers, circa 1900-2013, bulk 1940-1984 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

Ernest Briggs (1923-1984) was a second generation abstract expressionist painter working in New York City and Maine. He was born in San Diego, California and served in the U.S. Navy during World War II. After returning home, Briggs studied at the California College of Fine Art in San Francisco from 1947-1951 under Clyfford Still, Ad Reinhardt, David Park, and Mark Rothko. He moved to New York in 1953 and began exhibiting at the Stable Gallery. In 1956 Briggs was included in the Museum of Modern Art's exhibition, *12 Americans* curated by Dorothy Miller. Briggs taught at Pratt Institute from 1961-1984. He was married to the sculptor Anne Arnold.

Scope and Contents

The papers of painter Ernest Briggs measure 2.4 linear feet and date from circa 1900-2013, bulk 1940-1983. The collection documents the life and career of this second generation abstract expressionist through biographical material; correspondence with artists and critics; writings and five diaries that chronicle the changing art world from 1950s-1970s; personal business records; printed material; and a significant amount of photographic material documenting the artist and his work. Papers dating from after Briggs's death were created and kept by Anne Arnold.

Notable correspondents include Hubert Crehan, Mary McChesney, Dorothy Miller, Clyfford Still, and Howard Wise. One outgoing letter to Clement Greenberg offers Briggs's criticism of *Art and Culture*.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as seven series

- Series 1: Biographical Material, 1942-1984 (1 folder; Box 1)
- Series 2: Correspondence, 1950s-2001 (0.4 linear feet; Box 1)
- Series 3: Writings, 1960-1985 (5 folders; Box 1)
- Series 4: Diaries, 1976-1984 (0.3 linear feet; Box 1)
- Series 5: Personal Business Records, 19460s-2000s (0.2 linear feet; Box 1)
- Series 6: Printed Material, 1949-2013 (0.6 linear feet; Box 1-2, OV 4)
- Series 7: Photographic Material, circa 1900-1990, bulk 1940-1984 (0.8 linear feet; Box 2-3, OV 5)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Abstract expressionism
Painters -- New York (State) -- New York

Types of Materials:

Diaries
Photographs

Names:

Arnold, Anne, 1926-
Crehan, Hubert
Greenberg, Clement, 1909-1994
McChesney, Mary Fuller
Miller, Dorothy Canning, 1904-2003
Still, Clyfford, 1904-1980

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Material, 1942-1984

1 folder (Box 1)

Biographical material dates from 1942-1984 and is identification cards, life documents, high school and college transcripts, resumes, and business cards.

Box 1, Folder 1 Biographical Material, 1942-1984

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 2: Correspondence, 1950s-2001

0.4 linear feet (Box 1)

Correspondence dates from 1950s-2001 and is both personal and professional in nature. The series is comprised mostly of letters written to Briggs, with occasional drafts of his replies and outgoing letters. Notable correspondents include painter and art critic Hubert Crehan, sculptor and art historian Mary McChesney, curator Dorothy Miller, painter Clyfford Still, and gallerist Howard Wise. One outgoing letter to Clement Greenberg offers Briggs' criticism of *Art and Culture*. Other correspondents include museums, galleries, foundations, and colleges. Correspondence is in regards to exhibitions, teaching appointments, writings about Briggs, and reflections on art.

Box 1	By Name
Box 1, Folder 2	A, Miscellaneous, 1958-1980
Box 1, Folder 3	B, Miscellaneous, 1961-1977
Box 1, Folder 4-7	Crehan, Hubert, 1975-1984
Box 1, Folder 8	C, Miscellaneous, 1969-1984
Box 1, Folder 9	Dillenberger, Jane (San Francisco Museum of Art), 1964
Box 1, Folder 10	D, Miscellaneous, 1970s
Box 1, Folder 11	F, Miscellaneous, 1961-1974
Box 1, Folder 12	H-J, Miscellaneous, 1961-1976
Box 1, Folder 13	L, Miscellaneous, 1958-1961
Box 1, Folder 14	Marin, Norma and Cape Split Place, Inc., 1978-1980
Box 1, Folder 15	McChesney, Mary, 1971-1976
Box 1, Folder 16	Miller, Dorothy, 1956-1978
Box 1, Folder 17	M, Miscellaneous, 1969-1980
Box 1, Folder 18	P-R, Miscellaneous, 1958-1983
Box 1, Folder 19	Rosa, Gladys Illustrated Letter to Edward Dugmore, 1982
Box 1, Folder 20	Still, Clyfford, 1956-1962
Box 1, Folder 21	S, Miscellaneous, 1962-1983
Box 1, Folder 22	T, Miscellaneous, 1975-1976
Box 1, Folder 23	V, Miscellaneous, 1976
Box 1, Folder 24	Wise, Howard, 1959-1982

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| Box 1, Folder 25 | W, Miscellaneous, 1956-1961 |
| Box 1, Folder 26 | Teaching Related, 1969-1984 |
| Box 1, Folder 27 | Outgoing Letters, 1950s-1980s
Includes one letter to Clement Greenberg concerning <i>Art and Culture</i> |
| Box 1, Folder 28 | Anne Arnold Correspondence, 1961-2001 |

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 3: Writings, 1960-1985

5 folders (Box 1)

Writings date from 1960-1985 and are statements, notes, and drafts concerning Briggs' work and art in general. One folder contains course descriptions. Many of the scattered notes and drafts were found inside a metal clipboard, on which a few notes are written. The last folder holds writings by others, including an essay about John Grillo, an address about the church and contemporary culture, resumes, and other writing fragments.

Box 1, Folder 29	Statements and Notes, 1960-1978
Box 1, Folder 30	Course Descriptions, 1970s
Box 1, Folder 31	Drafts and Scattered Notes, 1960s-1970s
Box 1, Folder 32	Clipboard with Notes, 1960s
Box 1, Folder 33	Writings by Others, 1955-1985

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 4: Diaries, 1976-1984

0.3 linear feet (Box 1)

Five diaries date from 1976-1984 and offer Briggs' anguished reflections on his place in the changing New York art world from the mid-1950s through the 1970s. He kept the diaries up until the time of this death.

Box 1, Folder 34	Diary, 1976-1977
Box 1, Folder 35	Diary, 1977-1978
Box 1, Folder 36	Diary, 1979-1981
Box 1, Folder 37	Diary, 1981-1983
Box 1, Folder 38	Diary, 1983-1984

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 5: Personal Business Records, 1960s-2000s

0.2 linear feet (Box 1)

Personal business records date from 1960s-2000s and are price lists, shipping and supply receipts, loan and consignment agreements, account books, checks, a lease, sketches of exhibition installations, and occasional correspondence with galleries. The notebook found here contains similar business records kept by Anne Arnold regarding Briggs' work and exhibitions.

Box 1, Folder 39-40 Personal Business Records, 1960s-2000s

Box 1, Folder 41 Notebook, 1990s-2000s

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 6: Printed Material, 1949-2013

0.6 linear feet (Box 1-2, OV 4)

Printed material dates from 1949-2013 and documents Briggs' career and the careers of his friends and colleagues. Items include brochures, clippings, exhibition announcements and catalogs, periodicals, and press releases. Also found here are two poetry booklets. One folder of assorted printed material contains catalogs, newsletters, booklets, listings, pamphlets, and postcards.

Box 1, Folder 42	Poetry Books, 1974, 1960
Box 1, Folder 43	Brochures, 1991-2013
Box 2, Folder 1	Clippings, 1956-2001
Box 2, Folder 2	Exhibition Announcements, 1960s-2000s Oversized material housed in OV 4
Box 2, Folder 3-6	Exhibition Catalogs, 1950s-1990s
Box 2, Folder 7-8	Periodicals, 1950s-1980s
Box 2, Folder 9	Press Releases, 1949-2001
Box 2, Folder 10	Assorted Printed Material, 1949-1996
Box OV 4	Oversized Exhibition Announcements from Box 2, Folder 2

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 7: Photographic Material, circa 1900-1990 (bulk 1940-1984)

0.8 linear feet (Box 2-3, OV 5)

Photographic material dates from circa 1900-1990, bulk 1940-1984. Subjects include Briggs, family, friends, artwork, and a few exhibition views. Formats are black and white and color prints, transparencies, and slides. This series offers significant documentation of Briggs through all stages of life. Images of his work from 1950s-1984 are found here on over 800 slides.

Box 2, Folder 11	Ernest Briggs, 1940s-1984 Oversized material housed in OV 5
Box 2, Folder 12	Ernest Briggs, India During World War II, 1940s
Box 2, Folder 13	Family and Friends, circa 1900-1983
Box 2, Folder 14	Family Album (disbound), 1940s-1950s
Box 2, Folder 15	Exhibition Opening at Alonzo, 1969
Box 2, Folder 16	Exhibitions Installations, 1947-1975
Box 2, Folder 17-18	Artwork, 1950s-1984 <i>Photographic prints</i>
Box 2, Folder 19	Artwork, 1950s-1984 <i>Transparencies and slides</i>
Box 3, Folder 1-4	Artwork, 1950s-1984 <i>Slides</i>
Box 3, Folder 5	Artwork by Others, 1960-1990
Box OV 5	Oversized Ernest Briggs from Box 2, Folder 11

[Return to Table of Contents](#)