



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the John Caldwell Papers, circa
1909-1996 , in the Archives of American Art

Carla De Luise

January 2007

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
Biographical Note.....	2
Scope and Content Note.....	2
Arrangement.....	2
Names and Subjects	3
Container Listing	4
Series 1: Biographical Material, circa 1909-1996, undated.....	4
Series 2: Letters, 1970-1994, undated.....	5
Series 3: Writings, circa 1983-1992, undated.....	6
Series 4: Printed Material, 1977-1996, undated.....	7
Series 5: Photographs, circa 1941-1993, undated.....	8
Series 6: Video Recording, 1985.....	9

Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	John Caldwell papers
Identifier:	AAA.caldjohn
Date:	circa 1909-1996
Extent:	1.7 Linear feet
Creator:	Caldwell, John, 1941-
Language:	The records are in English, French, Greek, Italian, and Latin.
Summary:	The papers of curator and writer John Caldwell measure 1.7 linear feet and date circa 1909 to 1996. The collection documents Caldwell's life and career through a variety of materials, such as biographical material including legal papers relating to the Caldwell Estate, letters from friends and colleagues, writings by Caldwell such as a draft version of a speech and draft essays, printed material including articles written by Caldwell for the <i>New York Times</i> , photographs of Caldwell, family members, dealers, donors, and artists, as well as a video recording documenting the 1985 Carnegie International.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The papers were donated in 2002 by Joan Witek, executrix of the John Caldwell estate.

Processing Information

The collection was processed by Carla De Luise in 2007.

Preferred Citation

John Caldwell papers, circa 1909-1996. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions on Access

Use of original papers requires an appointment. Use of archival audiovisual recordings with no duplicate access copy requires advance notice.

Ownership and Literary Rights

The John Caldwell 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 Note

John Caldwell (1941-1993) was a curator and art critic in New York, NY, Pittsburg, PA, and San Francisco, CA. He was born on November 16, 1941 in Nashville, Tennessee. He received a bachelor's degree in modern French history from Harvard University in 1963 and his master's degree in art history from Hunter College, New York, NY, in 1973. While studying at Hunter, Caldwell also served as associate editor at the New-York Historical Society (1967-1973). From 1973 to 1976, Caldwell pursued a doctorate in eighteenth and nineteenth century American art history at Yale University and worked as an assistant to the curator of American art at the Yale University Art Gallery in New Haven, CT.

In 1975, Caldwell won an Andrew W. Mellon Fellowship with the Metropolitan Museum of Art; in 1977, he was appointed assistant curator of American art at the museum. From 1980 to 1984, Caldwell served as art critic for the suburban weekly sections of the *New York Times*. During this period, Caldwell's interest in contemporary art grew. In 1984, Caldwell accepted a position as adjunct curator of contemporary art at the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh, PA. A year later he was promoted to curator of contemporary art at the museum, a position that he held until 1989. Both Caldwell and John R. Lane, the director of the Carnegie Museum of Art, infused new energy into the 1985 Carnegie International, a triennial exhibition, that brought together many contemporary American and European works of art. Caldwell also spearheaded the 1988 Carnegie International and was the only curator in the history of the museum to have organized two consecutive Internationals. During his tenure at the Carnegie Museum of Art, Caldwell organized solo exhibitions on artists that included Susan Rothenberg (1984), Sean Scully (1985), and Richard Deacon (1988).

In 1989, two years after John R. Lane was appointed director of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Caldwell joined his former colleague and served as the first curator of painting and sculpture for the museum. At SFMoMA, Caldwell organized retrospective exhibitions on artists that included Sigmar Polke (1990-91), Luciano Fabro (1992), and Jeff Koons (1992-1993). He also curated one person shows of new works by artists that included Matthew Barney (1991), Sherrie Levine (1991), and Susana Solana (1991).

Caldwell died in 1993 at the age of 51 in Miami Beach, Florida.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of curator and writer John Caldwell measure 1.7 linear feet and date circa 1909 to 1996. The collection documents Caldwell's life and career through a variety of materials, such as biographical material including legal papers relating to the Caldwell Estate, letters from friends and colleagues, writings by Caldwell such as a draft version of a speech and draft essays, printed material including articles written by Caldwell for the *New York Times*, photographs of Caldwell, family members, dealers, donors, and artists, as well as a video recording documenting the 1985 Carnegie International.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into 6 series:

- Series 1: Biographical Material, circa 1909-1996, undated (Box 1, OV 4; 0.6 linear feet)
- Series 2: Letters, 1970-1994, undated (Box 1, OV 4; 0.3 linear feet)
- Series 3: Writings, circa 1983-1992, undated (Box 2; 0.2 linear feet)
- Series 4: Printed Material, 1977-1996, undated (Box 2, OV 4; 0.4 linear feet)
- Series 5: Photographs, circa 1941-1993, undated (Box 3; 2 folders)

- Series 6: Video Recording, 1985 (Box 3; 1 folder)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Authors -- California -- San Francisco
Authors -- Pennsylvania -- Pittsburg
Curators -- California -- San Francisco
Curators -- Pennsylvania -- Pittsburg

Types of Materials:

Drafts (documents)
Essays
Photographs
Video recordings

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Material, circa 1909-1996, undated

(Box 1, OV 4; 0.6 linear feet)

Biographical material includes identification cards, obituaries for John Caldwell and family members, a file on memorials held for Caldwell in San Francisco and New York, along with audio recordings of the services. This series also contains a published monograph which includes the biography, speeches, and writings of Joshua William Caldwell, a family member. Estate files consist of wills, appraisals, bequests, and correspondence. Also included is documentation regarding the John Caldwell Fund for the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

Box 1, Folder 1	Passports, Identity Card, and Drivers License, 1983, 1991, undated
Box 1, Folder 2	Health Documents and Notes, 1991-1992, undated
Box 1, Folder 3	Obituaries, 1985, 1993, 1995 <i>(Oversized items housed in OV 4)</i>
Box 1, Folder 4	Memorial Services for John Caldwell, 1987, 1993 <i>(Includes four sound cassette tapes)</i>
Box 1, Folder 5-10	Estate of John Caldwell, 1985, 1992-1996, undated
Box 1, Folder 11	Monograph, <i>A Memorial Volume</i> , Joshua William Caldwell, circa 1909
Box 1, Folder 12-13	Harvard Undergraduate Coursework, 1960-1961
Box OV 4	Oversize Obituaries, 1985-1986, 1993

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 2: Letters, 1970-1994, undated

This series houses letters to John Caldwell from friends, artists, and gallery and museum representatives including Amy Blakemore, Marian Goodman, Rebecca Horn, Jeff Koons, John R. Lane, Andrew Masullo, and Sean Scully. Also found are invoices, delivery receipts, and acknowledgement letters from institutions including the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Lühring Augustine Gallery, New York, NY, Jack Tilton Gallery, New York, NY, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA, and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN. Also included are honorarium records for Caldwell's participation in juries, symposia, and lectures.

Found within the series are condolence letters to Joan Witek and John R. Lane on Caldwell's passing.

This series is organized chronologically.

Box 1, Folder 14-16	General Letters, 1970-1993, undated <i>(oversized items housed in OV 4)</i>
Box 1, Folder 17	Condolence Letters to Joan Witek and John R. Lane, 1993-1994, undated
Box OV 4	Oversize General Letters, 1980-1982, 1986

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 3: Writings, circa 1983-1992, undated

(Box 2; 0.2 linear feet)

Writings by John Caldwell consist of a draft of a speech on Winslow Homer and draft versions of various essays including, "Andy Warhol: Portraits and Disasters," "Art of the '90s," and "Andrew Wyeth: Drawings and Watercolors."

Also found are essays written by Caldwell's mother, Camilla, relating to the social welfare of children.

Box 1, Folder 18	Address Book, undated
Box 1, Folder 19	Appointment Books, 1988-1990, 1992
Box 1, Folder 20	Draft Essays, circa 1983, 1989, undated
Box 1, Folder 21	Draft Speech on Winslow Homer, undated
Box 1, Folder 22	Essays by Camilla Caldwell, undated
Box 1, Folder 23	Notebooks and Miscellaneous Notes, undated

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 4: Printed Material, 1977-1996, undated

(Box 2, OV 4; 0.4 linear feet)

This series contains articles about John Caldwell and his curatorial career at the Carnegie Museum of Art and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Also included are articles written by Caldwell for the suburban weekly sections of the *New York Times* from 1980-1983. This series also contains newspaper and magazine clippings.

The series houses a catalog, *Facing the Finish: Some Recent California Art* for the exhibition Caldwell co-curated with Robert Riley in 1991 at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Also found is a monograph of the collected writings of John Caldwell, *This is About Who We Are*, which was published posthumously.

Box 2, Folder 1	Articles on John Caldwell, 1986-1987, 1990, undated
Box 2, Folder 2	Articles by John Caldwell for the <i>New York Times</i> , 1980-1983
Box 2, Folder 3	Exhibition Announcements, Invitations, and Checklists, 1988, 1991-1992, undated
Box 2, Folder 4	Exhibition Catalog, <i>Facing the Finish: Some Recent California Art</i> , 1991
Box 2, Folder 5	Magazine Articles, 1985, 1990-1992
Box 2, Folder 6	Magazine, <i>The New Yorker</i> , 1977
Box 2, Folder 7	Magazines, <i>Carnegie Magazine</i> , 1984-1993
Box 2, Folder 8-9	Monograph, <i>This is About Who We Are</i> , by John Caldwell, 1996 (2 items)
Box 2, Folder 10	Miscellaneous Printed Material, undated
Box OV 4	Newspaper Clippings, 1985-1986, 1990-1996
Box OV 4	Various Museum Exhibition Calendars, 1987, 1994

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 5: Photographs, circa 1941-1993, undated

(Box 3; 2 folders)

This series houses photographs of Caldwell as an infant, young boy, and adult, as well as photographs of his parents, Nathan and Camilla Caldwell. Also included are photographs of Caldwell at exhibitions and with dealers, donors, and artists including Matthew Barney and Sigmar Polke. Found within the series is an image of Caldwell taken by Richard T. Hurst.

Box 3, Folder 1 Photographs of John Caldwell, Friends and Family, circa 1941, 1986, 1988, undated

Box 3, Folder 2 Photographs and Negatives of John Caldwell with Artists, Dealers, and Donors, 1985-1993, undated

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 6: Video Recording, 1985

(Box 3; 1 folder)

This series contains a video recording (VHS) of John Caldwell explaining a selection of the artworks included the 1985 Carnegie International. Found on the same VHS tape is an interview of John Caldwell and John R. Lane conducted by Ruth Massey in 1985. Caldwell and Lane discuss artists selected for the 1985 Carnegie International.

Box 3, Folder 3 John Caldwell, 1985 Carnegie International; and Interview of John Caldwell and John R. Lane, 1985
(1 videocassette: VHS)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)