



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Cleo (Cleo Dorman) Papers, 1924-1999, in the Archives of American Art

Jayna M. Josefson

Processing of this collection received support from
the Smithsonian American Women's History Initiative.

2023/8/18

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Cleo (Cleo Dorman) papers
Date:	1924-1999
Identifier:	AAA.cleo
Creator:	Cleo, 1908-1990
Extent:	1.2 Linear feet (Boxes 1-3, OV 4)
Language:	English .
Summary:	The papers of artist's model Cleo Dorman measure 1.2 linear feet and date from 1924 to 1999. Found are biographical materials, correspondence, personal business records, photographs, printed material, a mixed-media scrapbook, and writings by Cleo and others.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Donated 1995 and 2020 by Jennifer Coile, trustee of Cleo's estate.

Processing Information

The collection was processed, and a finding aid prepared by Jayna Josefson in 2023 with support from the Smithsonian American Women's History Initiative.

Preferred Citation

Cleo (Cleo Dorman) papers, 1924-1999. 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.

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Biographical / Historical

Cleo (Cleo Dorman) (1908-1990) was an artist's model in Los Angeles, California.

Born Essie Cleo Dorman, May 16, 1908, Cleo's first modeling job was at a Chicago art school. She subsequently modeled at the Cranbrook Academy, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Art Student's League in New York, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art, the Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles and various other university art schools.

Cleo moved permanently to Los Angeles in 1949. She worked and became friends with painters such as Hans Burkhardt, Raphael Soyer, Joe Magnani and Charles White.

Scope and Contents

The papers of artist's model Cleo Dorman measure 1.2 linear feet and date from 1924 to 1999. Found are biographical materials, correspondence, personal business records, photographs, printed material, a mixed-media scrapbook, and writings by Cleo and others.

Arrangement

Due to the small size of this collection the papers are arranged as one series.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Occupations:

Artists' models -- California -- Los Angeles

Container Listing

Series 1: Cleo Papers, 1924-1999

1.2 Linear feet (Boxes 1-3, OV 4)

Scope and Contents: Biographical materials include scattered doodles and notes. Correspondence is with artists, friends, and institutions including Cranbrook Academy of Art, Carlos Lopez, Quentin Neal, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, and Dr. Millard Zisser. Also found are greeting and holiday cards, many of which are handmade. Contracts, posing schedules, and scattered correspondence regarding payment are found between the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, Carnegie Institute of Technology, Dan Lutz, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, and John Lyon Reid. Additional personal business records relate to the scholarship fund Cleo established to assist minority art students and the sale of her collection of works of art.

Photographs are of Cleo as a young woman and later in life; of events and exhibitions including *Cleo: Fifty Years as an Artist's Model* at the Otis/Parsons Art Institute, Los Angeles.; of others including Novella Joel and Jac Kennedy; and of works of art featuring Cleo. Of note is a portrait of Cleo by Deborah J. Youngman. Printed materials relate to artists for whom Cleo posed. Also found are two books, *Memories of the Future* by Gorgon Wagner and *The Newd Cookbook* compiled by the Torana Art League of Santa Ana, California.

A mixed media scrapbook, likely compiled by Cleo, documents her early career and includes clippings, exhibition announcements, press releases, notes, and unsigned sketches. Writings by Cleo include notes on artists for who she posed and her reflections on their techniques and styles, and an unpublished autobiography with notes entitled "Cleo: a Naked Woman's Handbook." Writings by others include a short story by Jack Bender and poems by Norma Green.

Box 1, Folder 1	Biographical Material, circa 1940s-circa 1980s
Box 1, Folder 2	Correspondence, 1937-1982
Box 1, Folder 3	Correspondence - Greetings and Holiday Cards, circa 1930-1989
Box 1, Folder 4	Personal Business Records, 1937-1949
Box 1, Folder 5	Personal Business Records, 1989-1994
Box 1, Folder 6	Photographs, of Cleo Dorman, circa 1940-1980
Box 1, Folder 7	Photographs, of Others, 1966-1989
Box 1, Folder 8	Photographs, of Events and Exhibitions, 1989
Box 1, Folder 9	Photographs, of Works of Art, circa 1950s-1970s
Box 1, Folder 10-11	Printed Material, Books, 1971-1979

Box 2, Folder 1-2	Printed Material, Clippings, 1965-1982
Box 2, Folder 3-4	Printed Material, Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1938-1984
Oversize 4	Printed Material, Posters, circa 1950s-1970s
Box 3	Scrapbook, 1924-circa 1940s
Box 2, Folder 5-7	Writings, by Cleo Dorman, circa 1970-1987
Box 2, Folder 8-9	Writings, by Others, circa 1970-1978

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