



# Smithsonian

## *Archives of American Art*

### A Finding Aid to the Norman B. Colp Papers, circa 1973-2005, in the Archives of American Art

Christopher DeMairo

The processing of this collection received Federal support from the Smithsonian Collections Care and Preservation Fund, administered by the National Collections Program and the Smithsonian Collections Advisory Committee.

2020 September 17

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

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Norman B. Colp papers
<b>Date:</b>	circa 1973-2005
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.colpnorm
<b>Creator:</b>	Colp, Norman
<b>Extent:</b>	4 Linear feet 0.031 Gigabytes
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Summary:</b>	The papers of conceptual artist and curator Norman B. Colp measure 4 linear feet and 0.031 GB and date between circa 1973 and 2005. The papers shed light on Colp's career through biographical material, project files, personal business records, printed and digital material, and sound and video recordings.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

The collection was donated by Norman B. Colp in 1993 and 2005.

### Processing Information

The collection was processed and a finding aid prepared by Christopher DeMairo in 2020. Born-digital materials were processed by Kirsi Ritosalmi-Kisner in 2020 with funding provided by Smithsonian Collection Care and Preservation Fund.

### Preferred Citation

Norman Colp papers, circa 1973-2005. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

### Restrictions

The collection is open for research. Access to original papers requires an appointment and is limited to the Archives' Washington, D.C., Research Center.

Researchers interested in accessing born-digital records or audiovisual recordings in this collection must use access copies. Contact Reference Services for more information.

### Conditions Governing Use

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## Biographical / Historical

Norman B. Colp was a conceptual artist and curator from New York City.

Colp received his bachelor's degree in art from Queens College in 1967, and took classes at the Pratt Institute and Parsons School of Design. Colp's artistic projects include *63 Artists' Objects* (1974) and *24 Small Scale Art Thefts* (1975), in which he "borrowed" door stops from 24 galleries and museums around the United States; both projects were exhibited individually as solo exhibitions. Additionally, in 1991 Colp was commissioned by the New York Metropolitan Transit Authority to install *Commuter's Lament or a Close Shave*, a poem and one photograph on nine porcelain tiles found in the Times Square subway.

Colp's solo exhibitions include those held at Hundred Acres Gallery in New York, and Victoria and Albert Museum, in London, England. He was also represented in group exhibitions at the Alternative Center for International Arts, Franklin Furnace, Artworks, and Boca Raton Museum of Art, among others. Exhibitions curated by Colp include those held at the Center for Book Arts, Georgia State University Art Gallery, and White Plains Public Library. His work is found in the permanent collections of the Corcoran Gallery of Art, International Center of Photography, New York Public Library and many other museums and institutions.

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## Scope and Contents

The papers of conceptual artist and curator Norman B. Colp measure 4 linear feet and 0.031 GB and date between circa 1973 and 2005. The papers shed light on Colp's career through biographical material, project files, personal business records, printed and digital material, and sound and video recordings.

Biographical material includes correspondence with artists, museums, galleries, and municipalities, two sound recordings of interviews, biographical sketches, and a note from Colp's mother. Project files relate to works of art and exhibitions curated by Colp. Personal business records contain some inventories, expenses, sales and trade files as well as the records of Colp's various donations to archives, museums, and libraries between 1983 and 2004. Printed material includes postcards, catalogs, and invitations from group and solo exhibitions, reviews of Colp's artwork and his curated shows, and an artist-made Xerox calendar.

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## Arrangement

This series is arranged as 4 series.

- Series 1: Biographical Material, 1974-2005 (Box 1; 10 folders)
- Series 2: Project Files, circa 1973-2004 (Box 1-2; 1 linear feet)
- Series 3: Personal Business Records, 1975-2005 (Box 2; .8 linear feet)
- Series 4: Printed Material, 1974-2004 (Box 2-4; 2 linear feet, ER01; 0.031 GB)

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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:

Conceptual art

Types of Materials:

Interviews

Sound recordings

Video recordings

Occupations:

Conceptual artists -- New York (State) -- New York

Curators -- New York (State) -- New York

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Biographical Material, 1974-2005

#### 10 Folders (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Series includes resumes, biographical writings, sound recordings of interviews, and correspondence with artists, museums, galleries, and municipalities. Also included is a satirical note signed by Colp's mother in which she asks potential buyers not to request a discount from her son.

Box 1, Folder 1	Biographical Sketch, Who's Who in America, 2003-2005
Box 1, Folder 2	Collections, circa 2001-2002
Box 1, Folder 3	Correspondence, Art Mail, 1974-1976
Box 1, Folder 4	Correspondence, Publicity, 2002-2004
Box 1, Folder 5	Correspondence, 1980-2005
Box 1, Folder 6	Interview, Artists in the City with S. Bladerman, K. Hines, Jenny Dixon, 1982 1 Sound cassette
Box 1, Folder 7	Interview, Artists in the City with Jenny Dixon, 1984 March 18 1 Sound cassette
Box 1, Folder 8	Note from Norman Colp's Mother, 1994
Box 1, Folder 9	1994 Note Regarding Meyer Schapiro, undated
Box 1, Folder 10	Presentations Given, 1990-2005, 2005
Box 1, Folder 11	Resumes, 1995-2005

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## Series 2: Project Files, circa 1973-2004

*1 Linear foot (Box 1-2)*

Scope and Contents: Files include correspondence, loan agreements, slides and photographs, postcards, contracts, concept plans, video recordings, and printed material documenting Colp's various art projects. Also included are several files related to the exhibition of Colp's work and correspondence pertaining to Colp's curated exhibitions.

Box 1, Folder 12	63 Artists' Objects, circa 1973-1974
Box 1, Folder 13	24 Small Scale Art Thefts, 1975, 1993
Box 1, Folder 14	1975 Mystery Museum Contest, 1975-1977, 1993
Box 1, Folder 15	A Documentative Investigation: Dirt, circa 1975-1976
Box 1, Folder 16	A Documentative Investigation: Lead, 1976, 1993
Box 1, Folder 17	Miserly Endowment for Art, 1976
Box 1, Folder 18	"The Conceptual Artist's Blues", 1978
Box 1, Folder 19	Zoetrope #1: The Consumer (1991), 1989-1991
Box 1, Folder 20	Zoetrope #2: 15 Figures Walking in a Line, 1991
Box 1, Folder 21	Zoetrope #3: Out of the Fire and Into the Frying Pan (1992), 1991-1992
Box 1, Folder 22	Commuters Lament or Close Shave (1991), Papers, 1990-2003
Box 1, Folder 23	Commuters Lament or Close Shave (1991), WNBC-TV Interview, 1992 June 3 1 Videocassettes (VHS)
Box 1, Folder 24	Commuters Lament or Close Shave (1991), Subway Q & A on Metro TV, 2003 1 Videocassettes (VHS)
Box 1, Folder 25-27	Commuters Lament or Close Shave (1991), Reprint; The Girl's Guide to Hunting and Fishing (1999) by Melissa Bank, 1999
Box 1, Folder 28	Tee Shirt Concepts, 1991-2004
Box 1, Folder 29	Role Model (1996), circa 1996
Box 1, Folder 30	World Trade Center Site Memorial Competition, 2002-2003
Box 1, Folder 31	Rejected Projects, 1997-2004
Box 1, Folder 32	Exhibitions, Ziggurat: Accordion Fold Books (1991-1992), 1990-1997

Box 1, Folder 33	Exhibitions, Mutoscopes, 1995-2004
Box 1, Folder 34	Exhibitions, Loan Agreements, 1978-1991
Box 2, Folder 1	Exhibitions, Loan Agreements, 1992-2002
Box 2, Folder 2	Curating, The Impractical Practical (1984), 1984 November 22 1 Videocassettes (VHS)
Box 2, Folder 3	Curating, Correspondence, 1983-1985

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## Series 3: Personal Business Records, 1975-2005

### 0.8 Linear feet (Box 2)

Scope and Contents: Included are records of photographs, artist made books, and other artwork Colp donated to various museums and archives between 1983 and 2004. These records contain correspondence, some slides and photographs, appraisals, and press releases. Also found in this series are invoices, inventories, sales records, and papers related to artwork traded by Colp.

Box 2, Folder 4	Donation, The Brooklyn Museum, 1983
Box 2, Folder 5	Donation, CUNY Graduate Center, 1983
Box 2, Folder 6	Donation, The Friends of Photography, 1983
Box 2, Folder 7	Donation, International Center of Photography, 1983
Box 2, Folder 8	Donation, Museum of Holography, 1983
Box 2, Folder 9	Donation, Nassau County Museum of Fine Art, 1983
Box 2, Folder 10	Donation, The Queens Museum, 1983
Box 2, Folder 11	Donation, Corning Museum of Glass, 1984
Box 2, Folder 12	Donation, Franklin Furnace, 1985
Box 2, Folder 13	Donation, Museum of Modern Art Library, 1985
Box 2, Folder 14	Donation, Museum of Contemporary Art, 1986
Box 2, Folder 15	Donation, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 1986
Box 2, Folder 16	Donation, University of California, University Library, 1986
Box 2, Folder 17	Donation, Islip Art Museum, 1987
Box 2, Folder 18	Donation, New York Public Library, 1988
Box 2, Folder 19	Donation, Boca Raton Museum of Art, 1989
Box 2, Folder 20	Donation, Fashion Institute of Technology, 1989
Box 2, Folder 21	Donation, University of California, University Library, 1989
Box 2, Folder 22	Donation, CUNY Graduate Center, 1990
Box 2, Folder 23	Donation, Museum of Fine Art, St. Petersburg, Florida, 1990

Box 2, Folder 24	Donation, Godwin-Ternbach Museum, 1991
Box 2, Folder 25	Donation, Photographic Resource Center, 1991
Box 2, Folder 26	Donation, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992
Box 2, Folder 27	Donation, National Art Museum of Sport, 1992
Box 2, Folder 28	Donation, New York Public Library, 1992
Box 2, Folder 29	Donation, Archives of American Art, 1993
Box 2, Folder 30	Donation, Boca Raton Museum of Art, 1993
Box 2, Folder 31	Donation, University of California, Berkley, 1993
Box 2, Folder 32	Donation, High Museum of Art, 1993-1994
Box 2, Folder 33	Donation, Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1994-1995
Box 2, Folder 34	Donation, Islip Museum of Art, 1994
Box 2, Folder 35	Donation, University of California, Berkley, 1994
Box 2, Folder 36	Donation, Islip Art Museum, 1995-1996
Box 2, Folder 37	Donation, Library of Congress, 1995
Box 2, Folder 38	Donation, Museum of the City of New York, 1995
Box 2, Folder 39	Donation, University of California, Berkley, 1995
Box 2, Folder 40	Donation, Museum of Modern Art, Library, 1996-1997
Box 2, Folder 41	Donation, Wadsworth Museum, 1996
Box 2, Folder 42	Donation, Queens Museum of Art, 1997-1998
Box 2, Folder 43	Donation, Robert Scott Small Library, College of Charleston, South Carolina, 1997
Box 2, Folder 44	Donation, Islip Art Museum, 1998
Box 2, Folder 45	Donation, Museum of Sex, 1998-1999
Box 2, Folder 46	Donation, University Art Museum, University of California, Santa Barbra, 1998-1999

Box 2, Folder 47	Donation, New York Public Library, 1999
Box 2, Folder 48	Donation, Whitney Museum of American Art, 1999
Box 2, Folder 49	Donation, International Center of Photography, 2000
Box 2, Folder 50	Donation, New York Public Library, 2000
Box 2, Folder 51	Donation, CUNY Graduate Center, 2002
Box 2, Folder 52	Donation, Islip Art Museum, 2003-2004
Box 2, Folder 53	Donation, Fotofest Auction, 2003-2004
Box 2, Folder 54	Donation, Museum of Modern Art, 2004
Box 2, Folder 55	Expenses, 1988-1989
Box 2, Folder 56	Frames, 1989
Box 2, Folder 57	Inventory, 1990-1991
Box 2, Folder 58	Prices, 1979-1981, undated
Box 2, Folder 59	Sales and Donations, Hand and Mind Books, 1983-1987
Box 2, Folder 60	Sales, 1975-2005
Box 2, Folder 61	Trades, 1981-1997

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## Series 4: Printed Material, 1974-2004

*2 Linear feet (Box 2-4)**0.031 Gigabytes (ER01)*

Scope and Contents: Series includes news clippings, postcards and invitations, catalogs, and some ancillary material such as price lists, correspondence, photographs, a digital sound recording, and other museum ephemera from group and solo exhibitions of Colp's work. Also included are catalogs and price lists from photography auctions, reviews of Colp's artwork and curated shows, and a Xerox calendar published by Barbara Cushman.

Box 2, Folder 62	Auctions, 1994, 2004
Box 2, Folder 63	Clippings, Art Reviews, 1976-2005
Box 2, Folder 64	Clippings, "Ten Small Paintings" by Norman Colp, 1981
Box 2, Folder 65	Clippings, General, 1978-1983
Box 2, Folder 66-67	Curating, Reviews and Catalogs, 1980-1997
Box 3, Folder 1-19	Group Exhibitions, 1979-1994
Box 4, Folder 1-8	Group Exhibitions, 1995-2005 Includes born-digital records, see ER01
Folder ER01	Woodlawn; Or, the Ambiquities, Digital Audio Recording, circa 2003 0.031 Gigabytes (One computer file)
Box 4, Folder 9	Solo Exhibitions, 1974-2001
Box 4, Folder 10	Exhibitions, Other Artists, 1999
Box 4, Folder 11	Exhibition Mailer, Difficult Decisions/ Ethical Dilemmas, 1999
Box 4, Folder 12	Published Books, Locus: Galleries, Dealers & Artists in NYC, 1977
Box 4, Folder 13	Published Books, Eighth Assembling: A Collection of Otherwise Unpublishable Manuscripts, 1978
Box 4, Folder 14	Published Books, Target III: In Sequence (1982), 1982
Box 4, Folder 15	Published Books, Photo Diary: The World's Photo Directory (1987), 1987
Box 4, Folder 16	Published Books, The Book Arts Directory (1996), 1996
Box 4, Folder 17	Purchase Catalogs, Printed Matter Catalog (1983), 1983

Box 4, Folder 18

Xerox Calendar made by Barbara Cushman, 1984

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