



Smithsonian  
*Archives of American Art*

A Finding Aid to the Mildred Constantine papers,  
1945-2008 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>  
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/>

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Mildred Constantine Papers
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.consmild
<b>Date:</b>	1945-2008
<b>Extent:</b>	5.3 Linear feet
<b>Creator:</b>	Constantine, Mildred
<b>Language:</b>	English
<b>Summary:</b>	The papers of Mildred Constantine measure 5.3 linear feet and are dated 1945-2009. Subject files, writings, photographs, and a scrapbook provide an overview of her curatorial work in the Architecture and Design department of the Museum of Modern Art, and subsequent activities as an independent curator, and art consultant. Especially well documented is <i>Whole Cloth</i> , a book written with Laurel Reuter that presents an historical overview of how artists have used cloth in their work.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

The papers were donated to the Archives in 2009 by Mildred Constantine's daughters, Judith Bettelheim and Vicki McDaniel.

### Related Material

Oral history interviews with Mildred Constantine were conducted for the Archives of American Art by Harlan Phillips, 1965 October 15, and by Paul Cummings, 1976 May 3-1976 August 26.

### Processing Information

The papers were processed and a finding aid prepared by Justin Brancato in December of 2009.

### Preferred Citation

Mildred Constantine papers, 1945-2008. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

### Restrictions on Access

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

## Ownership and Literary Rights

The Mildred Constantine 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.

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## Biographical Note

Curator and writer Mildred Constantine (1913-2008) was associated with the Museum of Modern Art's Department of Architecture and Design from 1943 to 1971. She then became an art consultant and independent curator, and wrote on fiber and textiles, decorative arts, photography, caricature and cartoons.

Mildred Constantine (known as "Connie") began her career at College Art Association. Hired as a stenographer in 1930, she soon was promoted to editorial assistant for *Parnassus*, the forerunner of *Art Journal*.

Constantine left the College Art Association in 1937 to study at New York University and earned BA and MA degrees. She then continued her education at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. In 1940, Constantine worked in the Office of Inter-American Affairs at the Library of Congress; it was there that she met René d'Harnoncourt.

Influenced by her 1936 travels in Mexico, Constantine's first curatorial effort was an exhibition of Latin American posters. Drawn from the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, the exhibition was held at the Library of Congress.

At the urging of René d'Harnoncourt, The Museum of Modern Art's Architecture and Design Department hired Constantine in 1943. The majority of her 28 year tenure at the museum was spent working with the department's founder, architect Philip Johnson. As a curator during the 1950s and 1960s, Constantine's innovative exhibitions brought lesser known portions of the museum's collection to public attention. Among her exhibitions were: "Words and Images," that focused on graphic design and posters; "Polio Posters," the first Museum of Modern Art show dedicated to social issues; "Olivetti: Design in Industry;" "Signs in the Street;" and "Lettering by Hand." She also published books on Art Nouveau, contemporary package design, and other subjects.

In 1971, Constantine left the Museum of Modern Art to become an independent curator and art consultant. Exhibitions included "Frontiers in Fiber: The Americans," and "Small Works in Fiber" with Jack Lenor Larsen. *Tina Modotti: A Fragile Life*, Constantine's book on the photographer, actress, model, and political activist, appeared in 1974. That same year, she and Alan Fern produced *Revolutionary Soviet Film Posters* that focused on works from the 1920s. Her last published work, *Whole Cloth*, was written with Laurel Reuter and published in 1997. Constantine continued to research and write, and at the time of her death was working on a large, international survey of the study of thread.

Mildred Constantine and Ralph W. Bettelheim (1909-1993) were married for 50 years. They had two daughters, Judith and Vicki.

Mildred Constantine died from heart failure on December 10, 2008, at home in Nyack, New York.

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## Scope and Content Note

The papers of Mildred Constantine measure 5.3 linear feet and are dated 1945-2008. Subject files, writings, photographs, and a scrapbook provide an overview of her curatorial work in the Architecture and Design department of the Museum of Modern Art, and subsequent activities as an independent curator, and art consultant. Especially well documented is the book *Whole Cloth* that she wrote with Laurel Reuter.

Correspondence, though mostly business related, often touches on personal matters since many of the artists and art world figures with whom she corresponded were also friends. Correspondents include Miguel Angel Corzo, Arthur C. Danto, Dorothy Dehner, Allen Hart (who sent more than 40 illustrated letters), Elizabeth Wilder and Donald L. Weisman. She also corresponded with many art institutions and organizations, among them the Cleveland Museum of Art, Independent International Design Conference, El Museo del Barrio, Museum of New Mexico, Ohio State University, Philadelphia Museum of Art, and the Estate of David Smith.

Subject files reflect Constantine's activities and interests. A large portion of this series concerns *Whole Cloth*, a book written with Laurel Reuter that presents an historical look at how artists have used cloth in their work. Correspondence between the two authors, with artists, institutions, and others concerns researching and writing the volume. Also documented are the successes and failures of Constantine's decade long pursuit to publish the book. Other substantive files relate to the Cleveland Museum of Art, Getty Conservation Institute, Sheila Hicks, Jack Lenor Larsen, Rhode Island School of Design, and *Soviet Film Posters*. Files concerning the University of the Arts' 2003 Commencement include a videocassette.

Writings by Constantine are lecture material and notes. Also found are transcripts of interviews with Constantine and writings by others. Printed material includes newspaper and magazine articles about Constantine and her career. A scrapbook of printed material and photographs documents an exhibition of Latin American posters at the Library of Congress organized by Constantine.

Photographs of people include Mildred Constantine with family, friends, artists and others at public and private events around the world. Notable photographs include: Magdalena Abakanowicz, Anni Albers, Alfred Barr, Luis Barragan, Lou Block, Louise Bourgeois, Jagoda Buic, Elaine Lustig Cohen, Charles Coiner, James Marston Fitch, Mathias Goeritz, Ingeborg Ten Haeff, Ann d'Hamoncourt, Sheila Hicks, Richard Koch, Nancy Koenigsberg, Jack Lenor Larsen, Leo Lionni, Roberto Burle Marx, Ruth Reeves, Laurel Reuter, Eleanor Roosevelt, Ben Shahn, Massimo Vignelli, Ulfert Wilke, and Claire Zeisler. Also, there are photographs of artwork by a wide range of artists.

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## Arrangement

The Mildred Constantine papers are organized into 8 series.

- Series 1: Biographical Material, 1947-1997 (Boxes 1, 6; 0.2 linear feet)
- Series 2: Correspondence, 1964-2008 (Boxes 1, 6; 1.0 linear feet)
- Series 3: Subject Files, 1964-2008 (Boxes 2-5; 3.3 linear feet)
- Series 4: Writings, 1991-2008 (Box 5; 0.2 linear feet)
- Series 5: Printed Material, 1961-2006 (Box 5; 0.2 linear feet)
- Series 6: Photographs, 1993 (Box 5; 0.3 linear feet)
- Series 7: Artwork, 1945 (Box 5; 1 folder)
- Series 8: Scrapbook, circa 1940s (Box 6; 0.1 linear feet)

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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:

Curators -- New York (State) -- New York  
Film posters, Russian  
Textile fabrics in art

Types of Materials:

Illustrated letters  
Interviews  
Photographs  
Scrapbooks  
Transcripts  
Video recordings

Names:

Abakanowicz, Magdalena  
Albers, Anni  
Barr, Alfred Hamilton, 1902-  
Barragán, Luis, 1902-  
Block, Lou, 1895-1969  
Bourgeois, Louise, 1911-2010  
Buic, Jagoda, 1930-  
Burle Marx, Roberto, 1909-1994  
Cleveland Museum of Art  
Cohen, Elaine Lustig, 1927-  
Coiner, Charles T., 1897-  
Corzo, Miguel Angel  
D'Hamoncourt, Anne, 1943-2008  
Danto, Arthur Coleman, 1924-  
Dehner, Dorothy, 1901-1994  
Fitch, James Marston  
Getty Conservation Institute  
Goeritz, Mathias, 1915-  
Hart, Allen M., 1925-  
Hicks, Sheila, 1934-  
Koch, Richard H., d. 2009  
Larsen, Jack Lenor  
Lionni, Leo, 1910-  
Museum of Modern Art (New York, N.Y.) -- Employees  
Museum of New Mexico  
Ohio State University  
Philadelphia Museum of Art  
Reeves, Ruth, 1892-1966  
Reuter, Laurel  
Rhode Island School of Design  
Roosevelt, Eleanor, 1884-1962  
Shahn, Ben, 1898-1969 -- Photographs  
Smith, David, 1906-1965  
Ten Haeff, Ingeborg, 1915-

Vignelli, Massimo  
Weisman, Donald M.  
Wilder, Elizabeth, 1908-  
Wilke, Ulfert, 1907-1987  
Zeisler, Claire, 1903-1991

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Biographical Material, 1947-1997

*0.2 Linear feet (Boxes 1, 6)*

Constantine's honorary certificates are accompanied by photographs. The two National Bicentennial medals are from the United States Embassy in Mexico.

Box 1, Folder 1	Passports, 1947-1995
Box 1, Folder 2	Honorary Certificates, 1991-1992 oversized material housed in box 6
Box 1, Folder 3	National Bicentennial-Medal, 1977
Box 6	Honorary Certificates, 1991 from box 1, folder 2

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## Series 2: Correspondence, 1964-2008

### *1 Linear foot (Boxes 1, 6)*

The majority of Constantine's correspondence is professional in nature. Many of the correspondents - artists, curators, dealers, and other art world professionals - were friends as well as colleagues, and their letters often touch on personal matters as well. Also found are a small number of purely personal letters.

Additional correspondence is included in many subject files (series 3).

Box 1	Business Correspondence
Box 1, Folder 4-22	General, 1978-2008 <i>19 Folders</i> Oversized material housed in box 6
Box 1, Folder 23	Miguel Angel Corzo, 2000-2003
Box 1, Folder 24	Arthur Danto, 1991-1998
Box 1, Folder 25	Dorothy Dehner, 1971-2004
Box 1, Folder 26	Allen Hart, 1964-2006, undated oversized material housed in box 6
Box 1, Folder 27	Elizabeth Wilder/Don Weisman, 1980-1993, 1968
Box 1, Folder 28	Personal Letters, 1972-2002, undated
Box 6	Oversized Business Correspondence
Box 6	General, 1999 from box 1, folders 4-22
Box 6	Allen Hart, 1964 from box 1, folder 26

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## Series 3: Subject Files, 1964-2008

### 3.3 Linear feet (Boxes 2-5)

Created and maintained by Constantine, the subject files reflect her activities and interests. They contain varying combinations of correspondence, biographical material, writings, interviews, printed material and a videocassette.

Subject files are arranged alphabetically by title, Individual subject files are organized by record type and arranged chronologically within each folder. An exception is *Whole Cloth*, with 12 folders of correspondence arranged alphabetically by correspondent.

Box 2	Cleveland Museum of Art
Box 2, Folder 1-2	Correspondence, 1992-2006, undated <i>2 Folders</i>
Box 2, Folder 3	Printed Material, 1992-1997, 2002 <i>2 Folders</i>
Box 2, Folder 4	Photographs, 1993
Box 2	Getty Conservation Institute
Box 2	Correspondence
Box 2, Folder 5-6	Tracy Bartley, 1995-1999, undated <i>2 Folders</i>
Box 2, Folder 7	Ben Shahn, 1995-1997, undated
Box 2, Folder 8-9	General, 1993-1999, undated <i>2 Folders</i>
Box 2, Folder 10	Althofer-Dusseldorf, 1987-1998
Box 2, Folder 11	Dusseldorf-Wollheim, 1994-1998
Box 2, Folder 12	Newsletter and Book, 1989-2000, undated
Box 2, Folder 13-14	Interview Transcripts, 1992-1997, undated <i>2 Folders</i>
Box 2, Folder 15	Printed Material, 1997-1998
Box 2, Folder 16	John Dumbacher, 1999-2000, undated
Box 2	Sheila Hicks
Box 2, Folder 17	Biographical Material, circa 1970s, 1997-1998 <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 2, Folder 18	Letters from Mildred Constantine to Sheila Hicks, 1970-1975

*4 Folders*

	<a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 2, Folder 19	Letters from Mildred Constantine to Sheila Hicks, 1976-1994 <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 2, Folder 20	Letters from Mildred Constantine to Sheila Hicks, 1995-2008 <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 2, Folder 21	Letters from Sheila Hicks to Mildred Constantine, circa 1970s-1973 <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 3, Folder 1	Letters from Sheila Hicks to Mildred Constantine, 1974-2007 <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 3, Folder 2	Correspondents A-L, circa 1970-2006 <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 3, Folder 3	Correspondents M-Z, 1969-2008 <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 3, Folder 4	Unidentified, circa 1970s-1977 <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 3, Folder 5	Writings, 1968-2000, undated <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 3, Folder 6	Exhibition Proposals and Notes, undated <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 3, Folder 7	Announcements and Press Material, 1974-2006, undated <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 3, Folder 8	Announcements and Press Material, undated <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 3, Folder 9	Newspaper and Magazine Clippings, 1971-2006, undated <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 3, Folder 10	Catalogs, 1974-1995 <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 3, Folder 11	Books, 1973, undated <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 3, Folder 12	Photographs, 1996, undated <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 3, Folder 13	Miscellaneous, undated <a href="#">Image(s)</a>
Box 3	Jack Lenor Larsen

Box 3, Folder 14-21	Correspondence, 1989-2007 <i>8 Folders</i>
Box 3, Folder 22	Exhibition Proposals, 1996-2000, undated
Box 3, Folder 23	Catalogs, 1998-2001
Box 3, Folder 24	Digital Prints of Artwork, undated
Box 3, Folder 25	Magazine and Newspaper Clippings, 1960-2004, undated
Box 3, Folder 26	Mexico, General, 1977-1997, undated
Box 3, Folder 27	Rhode Island School of Design, 1992-1999, undated
Box 4, Folder 1	Rhode Island School of Design, undated
Box 4, Folder 2	Swann Foundation, 1970-2001, undated
Box 4, Folder 3	<i>Soviet Film Posters</i> , 1991-1996, undated
Box 4	Laurel Reuter
Box 4, Folder 4	Artist Files, undated
Box 4, Folder 5-9	Correspondence, 1990-2008, undated
Box 4, Folder 10	Printed Material, Clippings, 1987-1998, undated
Box 4, Folder 11	Catalogs and Exhibition Announcements, 1988-2003
Box 4, Folder 12	Photographs, 1990
Box 4	<i>Whole Cloth</i>
Box 4, Folder 13	General Correspondence, 1997-2002, undated
Box 4, Folder 14-15	Introduction and Chapter I, Correspondence, 1982-1998, undated <i>2 Folders</i>
Box 4, Folder 16	Chapter II, Metaphor and Symbol, Correspondence, 1985-1997
Box 4, Folder 17	Chapter III, Correspondence, 1983-1996
Box 4, Folder 18	Chapter V, Correspondence, 1981-1996
Box 4, Folder 19-20	Chapter VI, Correspondence, 1982-1997 <i>2 Folders</i>
Box 4, Folder 21	Chapter VII, Correspondence, 1984-1997

Box 4	Chapter VIII
Box 4, Folder 22	Correspondence, 1984-1997, undated
Box 4, Folder 23	Printed Material, 1980-1994, undated
Box 4, Folder 24	Writings and Notes, undated
Box 4, Folder 25	Chapter IX, Correspondence, 1986-1996, undated
Box 5, Folder 1	Monacelli Correspondence, 1994-2002, undated
Box 5	Research Material
Box 5, Folder 2	Printed Material, 1980-1993, undated
Box 5, Folder 3	Notes, 1982, undated
Box 5, Folder 4	Photographs, undated
Box 5, Folder 5	Transparencies, undated
Box 5, Folder 6	Slides, undated
Box 5, Folder 7	Tadanori Yokoo, 1977-1994, undated
Box 5, Folder 8-9	University of the Arts Commencement, 2003 <i>2 Folders</i> includes 1 Videocassettes (VHS)

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## Series 4: Writings, 1991-2008

### *0.2 Linear feet (Box 5)*

Writings include transcripts of interviews with Constantine conducted by Frances Pohl and Beverly M. Wolff. Writings by Constantine consist of lecture materials and notes.

Among the subject files (series 3) are additional writings by Constantine - specifically *Whole Cloth* and *Soviet Film Posters* - and other authors.

Box 5	Interview Transcripts
Box 5, Folder 10	Mildred Constantine with Frances Pohl, 2008
Box 5, Folder 11	Mildred Constantine with Beverly M. Wolff, 1991
Box 5, Folder 12	<i>Way Beyond Craft</i> by Jenni Sorkin, Galley Sheets with Corrections, 2003
Box 5, Folder 13	Writings by Others, unidentified, undated
Box 5, Folder 14-15	Lectures, 2001, undated <i>2 Folders</i>

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## Series 5: Printed Material, 1961-2006

### *0.2 Linear feet (Box 5)*

Clippings are mostly about Constantine, her career, projects, and activities. Books are *Le Message* by Jean-Michel Folon (with an inscription and drawing) and *American Art Today*.

Printed material is also found in subject files (series 3) and in the scrapbook (series 8).

Box 5, Folder 16	Newspaper and Magazine Clippings, 1961-2006, undated
Box 5, Folder 17	Announcements, 1976-1987, undated
Box 5, Folder 18	Catalogues, 1991
Box 5	Books
Box 5, Folder 19	<i>Le Message</i> by Folon, 1967 with original drawing
Box 5, Folder 20	<i>American Art Today</i> , undated

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## Series 6: Photographs, 1993

### 0.3 Linear feet (Box 5)

Photographs are of Mildred Constantine with artists, art world professionals, friends, and family. There are views of exhibition openings and other events, public and private. Also found are photographs of a wide variety of artwork, and a small number of slides and transparencies.

Photographs of people and events are arranged alphabetically by subject matter - person, event, or place; those of artwork are arranged by artist.

Biographical material (series 1) includes photographs that accompany honorary certificates. A small number of photographs are among the subject files (series 3), and are also found in the scrapbook (series 8).

Box 5, Folder 21-23	People and Events, undated 3 Folders
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Magdalena Abakanowicz</li> <li>• Anni Albers</li> <li>• Alfred Barr</li> <li>• Luis Barragan</li> <li>• Lou Block</li> <li>• Louise Bourgeois</li> <li>• Jagoda Buic</li> <li>• Elaine Lustig Cohen</li> <li>• Charles Coiner</li> <li>• Anne d'Harnoncourt</li> <li>• James Marston Fitch</li> <li>• Mathias Goeritz</li> <li>• Ingeborg Ten Haeff</li> <li>• Sheila Hicks</li> <li>• Richard Koch</li> <li>• Nancy Koenigsberg</li> <li>• Jack Lenor Larsen</li> <li>• Leo Lionni</li> <li>• Roberto Burle Marx</li> <li>• Ruth Reeves</li> <li>• Laurel Reuter</li> <li>• Eleanor Roosevelt</li> <li>• Ben Shahn</li> <li>• Massimo Vignelli</li> <li>• Ulfert Wilke</li> <li>• Claire Zeisler</li> </ul>

Box 5	Artwork
Box 5, Folder 24	Magdalena Abakanowicz, undated
Box 5, Folder 25	Mildred Constantine Collections, Cleveland Museum, 1993
Box 5, Folder 26	Amat-London, undated
Box 5, Folder 27	Lorenzo-Unidentified, undated



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## Series 7: Artwork, 1945

*1 Folder (Box 5)*

This series consists of a drawing by F. D. Berg.

Box 5, Folder 28

F. D. Berg, 1945 July 23

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## Series 8: Scrapbook, circa 1940s

*0.1 Linear feet (Box 6)*

The scrapbook contains printed material and photographs that document an exhibition of Latin American posters at the Library of Congress organized by Constantine.

Box 6, Folder 1          Scrapbook, circa 1936-1940s  
*1 Volume*

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