Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Olive Thompson Cowell Papers, circa 1940-1982, in the Archives of American Art

Jayna M. Josefson

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

2022/09/13

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
Scope and Contents..... 2
Biographical / Historical..... 2
Arrangement..... 2
Names and Subjects 2
Container Listing 3
    Series 1: Olive Thompson Cowell Papers, circa 1940-1982..... 3

Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Olive Thompson Cowell papers
Date:	circa 1940-1982
Identifier:	AAA.coweoliv
Creator:	Cowell, Olive Thompson, 1887-1984
Extent:	0.5 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	The scattered papers of art and music patron and educator Olive Thompson Cowell measure 0.5 linear feet and date from circa 1940 to 1982. Found are biographical materials including sound recordings, a photo album and snapshots, and files on artists including Claire Falkenstein, Trude Guermonprez, and Frans and Marguerite Wildenhain.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Donated 1994 and 1998 by Alan W. Ford, who inherited and resided in Cowell's home and received the papers from Cowell. He destroyed all other Cowell papers at her request. Ford subsequently resided in a house designed by architect Lilian Bridgman, and donated a group of Bridgman's papers as well; these are cataloged separately.

Processing Information

The collection was processed, and a finding aid prepared by Jayna Josefson in 2022 with support from the Smithsonian American Women's History Initiative.

Preferred Citation

Olive Thompson Cowell papers, circa 1940-1982. 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.

Conditions Governing Use

The Archives of American Art makes its archival collections available for non-commercial, educational and personal use unless restricted by copyright and/or donor restrictions, including but not limited to access and publication restrictions. AAA makes no representations concerning such rights and restrictions and it is the user's responsibility to determine whether rights or restrictions exist and to obtain any necessary permission to access, use, reproduce and publish the collections. Please refer to the Smithsonian's Terms of Use for additional information.

Biographical / Historical

Olive Thompson Cowell (1887-1984) was an arts and music patron and educator in San Francisco, California. Cowell attended Barnard College and worked as an educator in California. Later she received an MA from the University of California, Berkeley. She founded the international relations department at San Francisco State University, where she taught until 1956. Married to Henry Clayton Blackwood Cowell, she was the stepmother to pianist Henry Cowell.

Scope and Contents

The scattered papers of art and music patron and academic Olive Thompson Cowell measure 0.5 linear feet and date from circa 1940 to 1982. Found are biographical materials including sound recordings, a photo album and snapshots, and files on artists including Claire Falkenstein, Trude Guermonprez, and Frans and Marguerite Wildenhain.

Arrangement

The collection was processed, and a finding aid prepared by Jayna Josefson in 2022.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Women art patrons
Women educators
Women educators

Types of Materials:

Sound recordings

Names:

Cowell, Henry, 1897-1965
Falkenstein, Claire, 1908-1997
Wildenhain, Frans, 1905-1980
Wildenhain, Marguerite

Occupations:

Art patrons -- California -- San Francisco
Educators -- California -- San Francisco

Container Listing

Series 1: Olive Thompson Cowell Papers, circa 1940-1982

0.5 Linear feet (Box 1, OV 2)

Scope and Contents: Biographical materials consist of a Cowell's handwritten memoir; three cassette tapes from Cowell's anniversary and birthday in 1973; and a drawing of a house plan. Photographs depict Cowell in the 1970s with friends and in her garden. A spiral-bound photograph album contains about forty photographs of Olive Cowell, her husband, Harry, and his son, pianist and composer Henry taken in their home in San Francisco, California. Artist files for Claire Falkenstein and Frans and Marguerite Wildenhain consist of scattered correspondence, clippings, and exhibition material. A file for Trude Guermonprez concerns the loan of Cowell's tapestry to the Oakland Museum.

Box 1, Folder 1	Biographical Material, Memoir, 1980
Box 1, Folder 2	Birthday Message, 1973 1 Sound cassette
Box 1, Folder 3	Cowell House 40th Anniversary, 1973 2 Sound cassettes
Oversize 2	Drawing, House Plan, circa 1950
Box 1, Folder 4	Falkenstein, Claire, 1956-1968
Box 1, Folder 5	Guermonprez, Trude, 1982
Box 1, Folder 6	Photographs and Photo Album, circa 1940-1975
Box 1, Folder 7	Wildenhain, Frans and Marguerite, 1949-1953

Return to Table of Contents