



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Thomas Craven Papers, 1919-1949, 1975, in the Archives of American Art

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Thomas Craven papers
Date:	1919-1949 1975
Identifier:	AAA.cravthom
Creator:	Craven, Thomas, b. 1889
Extent:	0.7 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	The papers of art critic Thomas Craven measure approximately .7 linear feet and date from 1919 through 1949 and 1975. The collection consists primarily of a dismantled scrapbook (1925 1949; 1975) containing newspaper clippings of Craven's articles and writings which span his career. Also found within the scrapbook are reviews by Oscar Bluemner and Byron Browne of Craven's two anti-modernist books, <i>Men of Art</i> and <i>Modern Art</i> . The collection also contains four letters concerning publications, a typescript essay about Thomas Craven's early career, two files of scattered writings in manuscript form, two bound handwritten manuscript versions of <i>A Treasury of Art Masterpieces</i> (1939), and <i>Greek Art</i> (1950), and miscellaneous loose newsclippings.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The collection was donated in 1999 by Richard Craven, Thomas Craven's son.

Alternative Forms Available

A portion of this collection is available on 35 mm microfilm reel 5670 at the Archives of American Art offices and through interlibrary loan. Researchers should note that the arrangement of the material described in the container inventory does not reflect the arrangement of the collection on microfilm.

Processing Information

The collection was processed by Rosa Fernandez in June, 2000. The scrapbook was microfilmed in 2000.

Preferred Citation

Thomas Craven papers, 1919-1949, 1975. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions on Access

The collection is open for research. Use requires an appointment and is limited to the Washington, D.C. research facility. Patrons must use microfilm copy for portions on microfilm.

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Accruals

Additional donations of Thomas Craven papers are expected.

Biographical Note

Author, art critic, and lecturer Thomas Craven (b.1888) was dubbed the "the principal ideologue of the American Scene" movement by the art historian Matthew Baigell. Craven wrote numerous articles, essays, criticisms, and reviews for Scribners, Harpers, The Dial, The Nation, The New Republic and The Forum. He was art critic for the New York American, the Hearst Paper. After graduating from Kansas Wesleyan University in 1908, Craven lived in Paris for a time. Upon his return to the United States, he settled in Greenwich Village where he began his reaffirmation of American art and culture. He roomed with American painter Thomas Hart Benton and was friends with John Steuart Curry, George Grosz, Reginald Marsh and Grant Wood. Craven's first book, *Men of Art*, was published in 1931. The book was an art historical survey of painting in the Western world and described as a combination of social history, biography and description and criticism. Craven also wrote *Modern Art, A Treasury of Art Masterpieces*, and *Greek Art*. Craven was noted for his often caustic reviews and criticisms of the modernistic movement. He died in 1969 at the age of 81.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of art critic Thomas Craven measure approximately .7 linear feet and date from 1919 through 1949 and 1975. The collection consists primarily of a dismantled scrapbook (1925-1949; 1975) containing newspaper clippings of Craven's articles and writings which span his career. Also found within the scrapbook are reviews by Oscar Bluemner and Byron Browne of Craven's two anti-modernist books, *Men of Art* and *Modern Art*. The collection also contains four letters concerning publications, a typescript essay about Thomas Craven's early career, two files of scattered writings in manuscript form, two bound handwritten manuscript versions of *A Treasury of Art Masterpieces* (1939), and *Greek Art* (1950), and miscellaneous loose newsclippings.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into six series:

- Series 1: Biographical Material, undated (Box 1; 1 folder)
- Series 2: Letters, 1919-1956, undated (Box 1; 1 folder)
- Series 3: Writings, 1920-1949 (Box 1; 2 folders)
- Series 4: Manuscripts, 1939, 1950 (Box 1; 2 folders)
- Series 5: Loose Newsclippings, 1941 (Box 1; 1 folder)
- Series 6: Scrapbook, 1925-1941, 1975 (Box 2; 5 folders)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Art criticism
Art, Modern

Types of Materials:

Manuscripts
Scrapbooks

Occupations:

Art critics -- New York (State) -- New York

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Materials, undated

(Box 1; 1 folder)

Scope and Contents: One file containing an essay about Craven by an unidentified author.

Box 1, Folder 1 Essay, undated

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Series 2: Letters, 1919-1956, undated

(Box 1; 1 folder)

Scope and Contents: Four letters concerning publishing from the World Publishing Company, Marian McNamara, and E. Pollock.

Box 1, Folder 2 Letters, 1919-1956, undated

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Series 3: Writings, 1920-1949

(Box 1; 2 folders)

Scope and Contents: Original manuscripts of essays, articles, and commentaries written by Thomas Craven. Found here are "A League for Democratic Art", an essay about the Art Student's League; "Nude Ascends A Staircase" about a watercolor Craven owned by George Grosz; "The Books as Illustrated Books" about artists who have successfully illustrated books; and "The New Century", an excoriation of the French.

Box 1, Folder 3-4 Writings, 1920-1949

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Series 4: Manuscripts, 1939, 1950

(Box 1; 2 folders)

Scope and Contents: Two bound original handwritten manuscripts versions of Craven's books *A Treasury of Art Masterpieces* (1939) and *Greek Art* (1950).

Box 1, Folder 5-6 Handwritten Manuscripts, 1939, 1950

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Series 5: Loose Newsclippings, 1941

(Box 1; 1 folder)

Scope and Contents: Found here are miscellaneous loose news clippings collected by Craven.

Box 1, Folder 7 Loose Newsclippings, 1941

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Series 6: Scrapbook, 1925-1941, 1975, undated

(Box 2; 5 OV folders)

Scope and Contents: A dismantled scrapbook of clippings of Craven's numerous articles written for such periodicals as The New York Times, The New York Herald Tribune, Art Digest, The New York American and others. Reviews in the form of letters of his anti modernist books, Men of Art and Modern Art are also found including those, most notably, by Oscar Bluemner and Byron Browne.

Box 2, Folder 1-5 Dismantled Scrapbook, 1925-1975, undated

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