



Smithsonian  
*Archives of American Art*

A Finding Aid to the Willard Warren  
Cummings Papers, 1911-1997, bulk  
1930-1975, in the Archives of American Art

Sarah Mundy

Funding for the processing of this collection was provided  
by the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture.

2019/03/13

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Willard Warren Cummings papers
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.cummwill
<b>Date:</b>	1911-1997 (bulk 1930-1975)
<b>Extent:</b>	19.3 Linear feet
<b>Creator:</b>	Cummings, Willard Warren, 1915-1975
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Summary:</b>	The papers of painter and co-founder of the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture Willard Warren Cummings measure 19.3 linear feet and date from 1911 to 1997 with the bulk of the papers dating from 1930 to 1975. The collection documents Cummings's career as an artist through biographical material, correspondence, writings, printed materials, scrapbooks, artwork, and photographic material.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

The Willard Warren Cummings papers were acquired from Willard H. and Willard W. Cummings from 1974 to 1976.

### Related Materials

Also found at the Archives of American Art are the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture records, 1945-2013, and an oral history interview of Willard Cummings conducted by Paul Cummings on March 20, 1973 for the Archives of American Art.

### Processing Information

The collection was processed and a finding aid prepared by Sarah Mundy in 2019.

### Preferred Citation

Willard Warren Cummings papers, 1911-1997, bulk 1930-1975. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

### Restrictions

Use of original papers requires an appointment and is limited to the Archives' Washington, D.C., Research Center.

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## Biographical / Historical

Willard Warren Cummings (1915-1975) was a painter and co-founder of the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Skowhegan, Maine.

Cummings was born to Willard H. and Helen Cummings in Old Town, Maine. He studied at the Académie Julian in Paris, received a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Yale University, and was presented with an honorary doctorate degree from Colby College in 1960. Cummings was notable for his portraits of military generals, politicians including Margaret Chase Smith and Adlai Stevenson, actors such as Bette Davis, and other notable figures.

Cummings joined the U.S. Army in 1941. He organized a mural project for soldiers, painted portraits for the War Department, and served as an artist-correspondent with the War Art Unit in the Aleutian Islands. Cummings met artists Sidney Simon, Henry Varnum Poor, and Charles Cutler while assigned to the unit. After completing their military service, Cummings, Simon, Poor, and Cutler founded the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Skowhegan, Maine. Additionally, Cummings played an important part of organizing *Soldier Art*, an exhibition of the National Army Arts Contest winners.

Cummings was married to Mildred "Milly" Cummings with whom he had a daughter, Daphne, and son, William. Cummings died in 1975 in Skowhegan, Maine.

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## Scope and Contents

The papers of painter and co-founder of the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture Willard Warren Cummings measure 19.3 linear feet and date from 1911 to 1997 with the bulk of the papers dating from 1930 to 1975. The collection documents Cummings's career as an artist through biographical material, correspondence, writings, printed materials, scrapbooks, artwork, and photographic material.

Biographical material includes an interview transcript, material for a mural commissioned by Warner Brothers Company, and records documenting Cummings's memorial. Personal and professional correspondence with family, friends and colleagues, and clients. Writings are by Cummings, his wife Mildred, and others, and includes a 1928 diary from his time in Paris. Printed material and six scrapbooks document Cummings's career, activities at Colby College, and the work of other artists. Artwork includes student work, six sketchbooks, and a substantial number of drawings. Photographs, slides, and negatives depict Cummings, his family, the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, works of art, and images from military service in the War Art Unit.

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## Arrangement

The collection is arranged as seven series.

- Series 1: Biographical Materials, 1930-1997 (Boxes 1, 18, OV 20-22; 1.2 linear feet)
- Series 2: Correspondence, 1911-1975 (Boxes 2-13, OV 20, 23; 12.0 linear feet)
- Series 3: Writings, 1928-1974 (Box 14; 0.8 linear feet)
- Series 4: Printed Materials, 1928-1996 (Boxes 14-16, 18; 1.9 linear feet)
- Series 5: Scrapbooks, circa 1930-circa 1960 (Boxes 16, 19, OV 33, BV 35; 0.4 linear feet)
- Series 6: Artwork, 1929-circa 1965 (Boxes 16, 18, OV 24-32; 1.0 linear feet)
- Series 7: Photographic Materials, circa 1930-circa 1970 (Boxes 16-18, OV 34; 2.0 linear feet)

## Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

World War, 1939-1945 -- Art and the war

Types of Materials:

Diaries  
Drawings  
Interviews  
Scrapbooks  
Sketchbooks

Names:

Colby College  
Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture  
Warner Brother's Company

Occupations:

Painters -- Maine -- Skowhegan

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Biographical Materials, 1930-1997

#### 1.2 Linear feet (Box 1, 18, OVs 20-22)

Biographical materials include addresses, five appointment books, architectural plans, awards and certificates, biographical sketches and chronology, material documenting Cummings's relationship with the Colby College Art Gallery, family documents, a guest book from 1957, an interview transcript, a few legal papers, and membership cards. Also included are sketches, photographs, clippings of advertisements, templates, and source material for a mural commissioned by the Warner Brothers Company in Connecticut to document their history as a women's clothing company. Also found are Cummings's War Art Unit notebook containing administrative records; and memorial records containing a guest book, eulogy by John I.H. Baur, and obituaries.

Box 1, Folder 1-2	Address Books, circa 1960s
Box 1, Folder 3	Addresses, circa 1960s
Box 1, Folder 4-5	Appointment Books, 1967-1974
Oversize 20	Architectural Plans, undated
Box 1, Folder 6	Awards and Certificates, circa 1970 Includes an exhibition catalog for the <i>Fourth Annual Exhibition of Artists of Northern Westchester</i> where Cummings won the Junior League Prize for Oils.
Oversize 20	Awards and Certificates, 1969
Box 1, Folder 7	Biographical Sketches and Chronology, circa 1950-1972
Box 1, Folder 8	Colby College Art Gallery, 1959-1963 Includes a project proposal for the college's art collection, material for the Friends of Art at Colby College, printed materials, and lists of paintings in the art collection.
Box 1, Folder 9	Family Documents, circa 1950s Includes school work and drawings by Cummings's children.
Box 1, Folder 10	Guest Book for Unidentified Event, 1957
Box 1, Folder 11	Identification Documents, 1944-1964
Box 1, Folder 12	Interview Transcript, circa 1941 Transcript is of a WBZ-WBZA broadcast about Vose Galleries history.

Box 1, Folder 13	Legal, 1930-1970
Box 1, Folder 14	Membership Cards, 1944-1971
Box 1, Folder 15-16	Memorial Records, 1975 Includes one guest book, a transcript of a eulogy given by John I.H. Baur at the Whitney Museum of American Art, and obituaries.
Box 1, Folder 17-23	Mural Project for Warner Brothers Company, circa 1965
Box 18, Folder 1	Mural Project for Warner Brothers Company, circa 1965
Oversize 21	Mural Project for Warner Brothers Company, circa 1965
Oversize 22	Mural Project for Warner Brothers Company, circa 1965
Box 1, Folder 24-25	Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture Records, 1957-1997 Includes a photocopy of a letter from Janet Van Hise Davidson donating her childhood portrait by Cummings to Skowhegan School, financial records, and material regarding fundraising.
Box 1, Folder 26-27	War Art Unit Notebook, 1943 The notebook includes material on directives, orders, financial information, and supply and shipping records that Cummings collected as 2nd Lt. in the Corps of Engineers, War Art Unit.

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## Series 2: Correspondence, 1911-1975

*12 Linear feet (Boxes 2-13, OVs 20, 23)*

Correspondence is between Cummings and his wife Mildred or "Milly", daughter Daphne, son William, brother King, other family members, friends and colleagues, and clients such as politicians Margaret Chase Smith and Adlai Stevenson. While early general correspondence is more personal in nature, post World War II correspondence typically concerns Cummings's professional career and dealings at Skowhegan School. Also included are Christmas and greeting cards, Christmas cards created by artists, get-well cards, and sympathy letters to Cummings's family after his death in 1975. Correspondence dating circa 1970 relates to a studio at the Carnegie Center in New York City.

Box 2, Folder 1	Willard and Mildred "Milly" Cummings (Wife), 1962-1964
Box 2, Folder 2	Daphne and Will Cummings (Daughter and Son), 1962-1964
Box 2, Folder 3	Family, A-K, circa 1935-circa 1965
Box 2, Folder 4	Family, L-W, circa 1935-circa 1965
Box 2, Folder 5-6	First Names, A-F, circa 1935-circa 1965
Box 2, Folder 7-8	First Names, F, circa 1935-circa 1965
Box 2, Folder 9	Last Names, A-E, circa 1935-circa 1965
Box 2, Folder 10	Last Names, E-M, circa 1935-circa 1965
Box 2, Folder 11-12	Last Names, M-Z, circa 1935-circa 1965
Box 2, Folder 13-18	Christmas Cards by Artists, circa 1960s Includes cards from William and Marguerite Zorach, Al Blaustein, Chaim Gross, and other artists.
Oversize 23	Christmas Cards by Artists, circa 1960s
Oversize 23	Christmas Cards, General, circa 1960s
Box 3, Folder 1-16	Christmas Cards, General, 1960s-1970s
Box 4, Folder 1-17	Christmas Cards, General, 1960s-1970s
Box 5, Folder 1-4	Christmas Cards, General, 1960-1970s
Box 5, Folder 5-10	Envelopes Only, 1930s-1940s



The envelopes were received by the archivist without their original letters. The letters may be included in the chronological correspondence.

Box 5, Folder 11	Envelopes Only, 1970s
Box 5, Folder 12	Get-Well Cards, 1975
Box 5, Folder 13-16	Greeting Cards, 1960s
Oversize 23	Greeting Cards, 1960s Contains a poster from William Pahlmann.
Box 5, Folder 17-19	Sympathy Letters, 1975
Box 6, Folder 1	General, 1911-1930
Box 6, Folder 2-15	General, 1931-1935
Oversize 20	General, 1931-1935
Box 7, Folder 1-3	General, 1936-1939
Box 7, Folder 4-19	General, 1940-1943
Box 8, Folder 1-16	General, 1943-1944
Box 9, Folder 1-9	General, 1944-1949
Box 9, Folder 10-19	General, 1950-1958
Box 10, Folder 1-5	General, 1958-1959 Folder 3 contains Sidney Simon's resignation letter from Skowhegan School dated October 15, 1959.
Oversize 23	General, 1959
Oversize 23	General, 1960
Box 10, Folder 6-16	General, 1960-1962
Oversize 23	General, 1961-1962
Box 11, Folder 1-17	General, 1962-1966

Box 12, Folder 1-11	General, 1966-1969
Box 12, Folder 12-16	General, 1970-1971
Box 13, Folder 1-10	General, 1972-1974
Box 13, Folder 11-15	General, 1975 Includes childhood photographs of Cummings and of the artist painting a portrait.
Box 13, Folder 16-17	General, undated

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## Series 3: Writings, 1928-1974

### *0.8 Linear feet (Box 14)*

Writings consist of several essays by unidentified authors, Cummings's journal from his time in Paris, lists and notes, poems by Mildred Cummings and others, a statement by Cummings regarding his portrait of Margaret Chase Smith, and student work that includes Cummings's "Pictorial Art Notebook," a notebook containing handwritten text and clippings of artwork produced while studying at Yale University.

Box 14, Folder 1	Essays by Unidentified Authors, circa 1950s
Box 14, Folder 2	Journal, 1928
Box 14, Folder 3-4	Lists, circa 1950-circa 1970 Includes price lists for artwork.
Box 14, Folder 5	Notes, circa 1950-circa 1970 Includes three notebooks with notes on purchases of produce and names along with budget notes, edits to an administrative report, and other annotations.
Box 14, Folder 6	Play Transcript, "Bringing Up Father" by Unidentified Author, undated
Box 14, Folder 7-8	Poems, circa 1935-circa 1970 Includes one notebook and poems by Mildred Cummings.
Box 14, Folder 9	Statement Regarding Margaret Chase Smith's Portrait by Cummings, 1974
Box 14, Folder 10-12	Student Work, circa 1930 Includes four notebooks and one music writing book from Cummings's studies in Paris.
Box 14, Folder 13	Student Work, Yale, 1934 Includes essays on 15th century engraving and Albrecht Dürer.
Box 14, Folder 14-21	Student Work, Yale - "Pictorial Art Notebook", 1933 The notebook includes a mixture of writings, clippings, and documents on art history.

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## Series 4: Printed Materials, 1928-1996

### 1.9 Linear feet (Boxes 14-16, 18)

The series includes art reproductions, booklets and pamphlets, calendars, event programs, exhibition announcements and catalogs, flyers, and periodicals featuring Cummings, his artwork, Colby College, and other artists. Also included are two copies of the book *Soldier Art*, invitations, and postcards.

Box 14, Folder 22	Art Reproductions, circa 1950-circa 1970
Box 14, Folder 23	Books, <i>Soldier Art</i> , 1945 Includes two copies.
Box 14, Folder 24-25	Booklets and Pamphlets, 1936-1972
Box 15, Folder 1	Booklets and Pamphlets, 1934-1973
Box 15, Folder 2	Calendars, 1961-1969
Box 15, Folder 3-14	Clippings, circa 1935-circa 1970
Box 15, Folder 15	Event Programs, 1928-1996
Box 15, Folder 16-20	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, circa 1937-1973
Box 16, Folder 1-3	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, circa 1937-1973
Box 16, Folder 4	Flyers, 1933-1936
Box 16, Folder 5	Invitations, circa 1940-circa 1960
Box 16, Folder 6-8	Periodicals, 1932-1965
Box 18, Folder 2	Periodicals, 1946
Box 16, Folder 9	Postcards, circa 1930s, 1960s Includes two books of postcards from the Vatican in Rome.

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## Series 5: Scrapbooks, circa 1930-circa 1960

*0.4 Linear feet (Boxes 16, 19, OV 33, BV 35)*

The series consists of six scrapbooks containing printed material, a small amount of correspondence, and photographs relating to art history, Cummings's exhibitions, and his military service during World War II.

Box 16, Folder 10	Scrapbook 1, circa 1940-circa 1960
Box 19, Folder 1-2	Scrapbook 2, circa 1930s
Box 16, Folder 11	Scrapbook 3, <i>An Exhibition of Paintings and Drawings by Willard W. Cummings</i> , 1935
Box 19, Folder 3	Scrapbook 4, Clippings Regarding Exhibitions, 1937-1941 The scrapbook contains clippings of reviews and articles about exhibitions of Cummings's artwork.
Box 19, Folder 4	Scrapbook 5, 1938-1958 The scrapbook contains clippings, exhibition catalogs, Army certificates, and forms to become 1st lieutenant.
Box 16, Folder 12	Scrapbook 6, World War II, circa 1943
Oversize 33	Scrapbook 6, World War II, circa 1943
Box BV 35	Scrapbook 6, World War II, circa 1943

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**Series 6: Artwork, 1929-circa 1965***1 Linear foot (Boxes 16, 18, OVs 24-32)*

Artwork includes drawings, a few paintings, six sketchbooks, watercolors, and student artwork of landscapes, figure drawings, and still lifes, as well as preparatory drawings for portraits and mural mockups for student projects at Yale University.

Box 16, Folder 13	Drawings, General, 1929, undated
Box 18, Folder 3-6	Drawings, General, circa 1940-circa 1965
Oversize 24	Drawings, General, circa 1945-circa 1965
Oversize 25	Drawings, General, circa 1945-circa 1965
Oversize 26	Drawings, General, circa 1945-circa 1965
Oversize 27	Drawings, General, circa 1945-circa 1965 Includes a few painted sketches.
Box 16, Folder 14	Drawings, Children's, circa 1920-1960 Includes drawings by Cummings's children. Some drawings may be childhood drawings by Cummings.
Box 16, Folder 15	Drawing, Portraits, circa 1940-circa 1965
Box 18, Folder 3	Drawings, Portraits, circa 1940-circa 1965
Oversize 28	Drawings, Studies for Skowhegan School Solon House Fresco, circa 1950s
Box 16, Folder 16	Drawing of Cummings by Allan Kleinwaks, 1931
Box 16, Folder 17	Drawing of Outdoor Scene by Guy Chapman, circa 1933
Oversize 32	Paintings, circa 1945-circa 1965 Includes artwork in mixed media.
Box 16, Folder 18-20	Sketchbooks, circa 1963, undated Four sketchbooks include figure drawings, still lifes, and some notes.
Box 18, Folder 7	Sketchbook, undated
Oversize 31	Sketchbook, undated
Oversize 29	Student Work, circa 1934

Includes portrait and figure drawings in various media, as well as painted mural mockups.

Oversize 30

Student Work, circa 1934

Box 16, Folder 21-22

Watercolors, circa 1933, undated

Includes landscapes, still lifes, and student work at Yale University.

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## Series 7: Photographic Materials, circa 1930-circa 1970

*2 Linear feet (Boxes 16-18, OV 34)*

The series contains photographs, negatives, and slides, including two glass slides, of Cummings, his family, friends and colleagues, landscapes, images of the grounds and people at the Skowhegan School, works of art by Cummings and others, and his surroundings while serving in the military during World War II.

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| Box 16, Folder 23-25 | Cummings, circa 1930-circa 1970<br>Includes photographs of Cummings in the military, portraits, at events, in the studio, and with his artwork.  |
| Oversize 34          | Cummings, circa 1930<br>Contains two photographs by Paul Cordas.   |
| Box 16, Folder 26    | Family, circa 1930-circa 1970<br>Includes photographs of Cummings's wife Mildred, children Daphne and William, brother H. King, and parents Willard H. and Helen Cummings.   |
| Box 17, Folder 1-5   | Others, circa 1950-circa 1970<br>Includes photographs and negatives of friends, colleagues, and subjects of Cummings's portraits.  |
| Box 17, Folder 6     | Landscapes, circa 1960s  |
| Box 17, Folder 7-8   | Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Grounds and People, 1952-circa 1970<br>Includes digital prints of photographs of the Solon House originally taken in the 1950s and two postcards picturing the school. |
| Box 17, Folder 9-15  | Works of Art by Cummings, circa 1950-circa 1960s<br>Includes photographs of portraits, a few photographs of Cummings painting, and a photograph of cellist Pablo Casals.   |
| Box 17, Folder 16    | Works of Art, Drawings of Building Interiors, circa 1965   |
| Box 17, Folder 17    | Works of Art, General, circa 1950s<br>Includes photographs of a mural and portraits that may be by Cummings.   |
| Box 17, Folder 18-21 | Works of Art by Others, circa 1950-circa 1960s<br>Includes works by Ethel Edwards, Ben Shahn, Rico Lebrun, and others. Two glass slides are also included.   |
| Box 18, Folder 8     | Works of Art, Student Work, circa 1934   |
| Box 17, Folder 22-26 | World War II Military Service, circa 1943  |



The photographs depict soldiers, barracks, and landscapes during World War II.

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