



Smithsonian  
*Archives of American Art*

A Finding Aid to the Stuart Davis Papers,  
1934-1940, in the Archives of American Art

Sarah Mundy

2019/10/17

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

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Stuart Davis papers
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.davistua
<b>Date:</b>	1934-1940
<b>Extent:</b>	0.8 Linear feet
<b>Creator:</b>	Davis, Stuart, 1892-1964
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Summary:</b>	<p>The papers of painter Stuart Davis measure 0.8 linear feet and date from 1934 to 1940. The collection is comprised of correspondence that includes letters from Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Arnold Blanch, Rockwell Kent, and others regarding Pablo Picasso's statement against the fascist dictatorship in Spain, as well as a letter from Davis to Picasso inviting him to speak at the 2nd Annual American Artists' Congress meeting. Also found are files from Davis's position as editor of <i>Art Front</i> magazine; membership files documenting Davis's activities with the American Artists' Congress, Fine Arts Federation of New York, the New York World's Fair Artists Committee, and other organizations; printed materials; a project file for the Federal Art Project; and editorials. Additional items include an article manuscript and a draft of a letter to Ben Shahn suggesting that Downtown Gallery artists provide funding to Edith Halpert in order to open another gallery.</p>

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

The Stuart Davis papers were donated by Earl Davis from 1984-1988.

### Separated Materials

The Archives of American Art also holds material lent for microfilming including 9 scrapbooks (reels N584-N586 and N696) containing newspaper clippings, magazine articles, exhibition notices and catalogs that are in the possession of Earl Davis, son of Stuart Davis; 1 notebook (reel 3842) that is located at the Pierpont Morgan Library; and approximately 85 letters to Davis from his mother, Helen Stuart Davis (reel N70-12) dating from 1935-1939, in which she describes her work as a sculptor on the Federal Art Projects in Dade County, Florida and Berkeley, California, detailing administrative difficulties and daily work, and alluding to her son's work with the American Artists' Congress, his influence with Holger Cahill and other federal officials; her sketchbooks; and approximately 90 photographs of work done by her and others on the Federal Art Project in Florida. The material was returned to Mrs. Stuart Davis after microfilming.

## Related Materials

Also found in the Archives of American Art is an oral history interview with Stuart Davis conducted on May 18-June 19, 1962 by Harlan Phillips, for the Archives of American Art and Brandeis University.

Additional Stuart Davis papers are also located at the Fogg Museum at Harvard University and Pierpont Morgan Library.

## Available Formats

Two documents on microfilm reel 2803 are available at Archives of American Art offices and through interlibrary loan.

## Processing Information

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

## Preferred Citation

Stuart Davis papers, 1934-1940. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

## Restrictions

This collection is access restricted except for a handwritten draft of a letter to Ben Shahn and a photocopy of an article by Davis titled "Abstract Painting Today"; written permission is required. Contact Reference Services for more information.

Access, with permission, to original papers requires an appointment and is limited to the Archives' Washington, D.C. Research Center.

## Conditions Governing Use

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## Biographical / Historical

Stuart Davis (1892-1964) was a painter in New York, N.Y.

Davis was born in Philadelphia to Edward Wyatt Davis, who was the art editor of *The Philadelphia Press*, and sculptor Helen Stuart Foulke. He began his art training under Robert Henri at the Robert Henri School of Art in New York in 1909. His works were selected by artist William Glackens to be exhibited at the 1913 Armory Show making Davis one of the youngest artists to participate. In 1928, he traveled to Paris for a year where he painted street scenes of the city. While there, he married Bessie Chosak who later died in 1932. He remarried in 1938 to Roselle Springer. In 1933, Davis began painting murals for the for the Federal Art Project, a government project sponsored by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Throughout his career, Davis was involved with many art groups including the American Artists' Congress,

the Fine Arts Federation of New York, and others. Davis had a strong interest in politics that was often expressed through his artwork and as the editor of *Art Front*, a publication of the Artists Union in New York that was associated with communist ideology.

Davis taught at the Art Students League, New York School for Social Research, and Yale University. He was represented by the Downtown Gallery in New York. He died in 1964 in New York.

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## Scope and Contents

The papers of painter Stuart Davis measure 0.8 linear feet and date from 1934 to 1940. The collection is comprised of correspondence that includes letters from Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Arnold Blanch, Rockwell Kent, and others regarding Pablo Picasso's statement against the fascist dictatorship in Spain, as well as a letter from Davis to Picasso inviting him to speak at the 2nd Annual American Artists' Congress meeting. Also found are files from Davis's position as editor of *Art Front* magazine; membership files documenting Davis's activities with the American Artists' Congress, Fine Arts Federation of New York, the New York World's Fair Artists Committee, and other organizations; printed materials; a project file for the Federal Art Project; and editorials. Additional items include an article manuscript and a draft of a letter to Ben Shahn suggesting that Downtown Gallery artists provide funding to Edith Halpert in order to open another gallery.

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## Arrangement

Due to the small size of this collection the papers are arranged as one series.

- Series 1: Stuart Davis papers, 1934-1940 (Boxes 1-2; 0.8 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:

Modernism (Art)

Names:

American Artists' Congress  
Downtown Gallery (New York, N.Y.)  
Federal Art Project (N.Y.)  
Kuniyoshi, Yasuo, 1889-1953  
Picasso, Pablo, 1881-1973

Occupations:

Painters -- New York (State) -- New York

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Stuart Davis papers, 1934-1940

#### *0.8 Linear feet (Boxes 1-2)*

The collection is comprised of correspondence that includes letters from Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Arnold Blanch, Rockwell Kent, and others regarding Pablo Picasso's statement against the fascist dictatorship in Spain, as well as a letter from Davis to Picasso inviting him to speak at the 2nd Annual American Artists' Congress meeting. Also found are files from Davis's position as editor of *Art Front* magazine; membership files documenting Davis's activities with the American Artists' Congress, Fine Arts Federation of New York, the New York World's Fair Artists Committee, and other organizations; printed materials; a project file for the Federal Art Project; and editorials. Additional items include an article manuscript and a draft of a letter to Ben Shahn suggesting that Downtown Gallery artists provide funding to Edith Halpert in order to open another gallery.

Box 1, Folder 1-2	Correspondence, 1934-1939
Box 1, Folder 3	Correspondence, undated
Box 1, Folder 4	Employment, <i>Art Front</i> Magazine, Correspondence, 1935-1936
Box 1, Folder 5	Employment, <i>Art Front</i> Magazine, Editorials, circa 1935
Box 1, Folder 6	Employment, <i>Art Front</i> Magazine, Memos and Notes, circa 1935
Box 1, Folder 7-15	Member, American Artists' Congress, Agendas and Minutes, 1936-1937
Box 2, Folder 1	Member, American Artists' Congress, Agendas and Minutes, 1938-1939
Box 2, Folder 2	Member, American Artists' Congress, Constitution and By-Laws, 1936
Box 2, Folder 3	Member, American Artists' Congress, Membership Records, circa 1938
Box 2, Folder 4	Member, American Artists' Congress, Newsletters, 1937-1939
Box 2, Folder 5	Member, American Artists' Congress, Printed Material, circa 1936
Box 2, Folder 6	Member, American Artists' Congress, Reports, 1936-1940
Box 2, Folder 7	Member, Artists' Committee of Action, Artists Union, 1934-1936
Box 2, Folder 8	Member, Artists' Coordination Committee, 1936

Box 2, Folder 9	Member, American Society of Painters, Sculptors and Gravers, Rental Committee, 1935-1939
Box 2, Folder 10	Member, Fine Arts Federation of New York/Federal Arts Bill, circa 1936
Box 2, Folder 11	Member, League of American Writers, 1935-1939
Box 2, Folder 12	Member, New York World's Fair, Artists Committee, 1938-1939
Box 2, Folder 13	Printed Materials, circa 1938
Box 2, Folder 14	Project, Federal Art Project/Permanent Art Project, circa 1937-1940
Box MMS014	Writing, "Abstract Painting Today," <i>Art for the Millions</i> Edited by Francis V. O'Connor, 1940
Box 2, Folder 15	Writing, Editorial Regarding Forbes Watson's Comments on American Artists' Congress, circa 1935
Box 2, Folder 16-17	Writings, Exhibition Catalog for Federal Art Project Exhibition, 1936-1938
Box MMS014	Writings, Letter Draft to Ben Shahn, circa 1930s

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