



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Jay DeFeo Papers, circa
1940s-1970s, in the Archives of American Art

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Archives of American Art
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Jay DeFeo papers
Identifier:	AAA.defejay
Date:	circa 1940s-1970s
Extent:	1.3 Linear feet
Creator:	DeFeo, Jay, 1929-1989
Language:	English Collection is in English.
Summary:	The papers of artist Jay DeFeo measure 1.3 linear feet and date from circa 1940s to circa 1970s. The collection documents her career through biographical material, correspondence with friends, personal business records, writings, printed material, artwork, and photographs.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Donated between 1975-1981 by Jay DeFeo.

Related Materials

The Archives of American Art has an oral history interview with DeFeo conducted 1975 June 3-1976 January 23 by Paul Karlstrom for the Archives of America Art. An 83 page transcript is available online.

The Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley holds some of DeFeo's archival materials.

Available Formats

The collection is available on 35 mm microfilm reels 1645, 908, 2673, and 3957 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 to a minimal level and a finding aid prepared by Helen MacDiarmid in 2014. All materials have been rehoused in archival folders and boxes for long-term stability.

Preferred Citation

Jay DeFeo papers, circa 1940s-1970s. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

Use of original papers requires an appointment.

Conditions Governing Use

The Jay DeFeo 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.

Biographical / Historical

Jay DeFeo (1929-1989) lived and worked in Northern California where she was a prominent figure in the San Francisco Bay Area art scene as a painter in the progressive art community. She identified her artistic style as expressionist and symbolist.

DeFeo was born in Hanover, New Hampshire, and was three years old when her family moved to the Bay Area. She attended the University of California Berkeley and earned an Associate's Degree in 1948, a B.A. in 1950 and a M.A. in Fine Arts in 1951. After earning the M.A. she took 18 months to travel in France, Spain, northern Africa, and Italy. She spent 6 months in Florence where she painted and produced her first important body of work. DeFeo returned to San Francisco at the end of her trip.

DeFeo married fellow artist Wally Hedrick in 1954. They settled in a large Victorian flat at 2322 Fillmore Street and actively participated in Beat counter culture. DeFeo and Hedrick counted many artists among their friends and colleagues, including musicians, painters, poets, and photographers. They threw large parties with hundreds of guests. DeFeo produced a range of works during her four-decade long career. She began working on her most celebrated and massive painting, *The Rose*, in the Fillmore flat.

In the mid-1960s, DeFeo began teaching at the San Francisco Art Institute. She and Wally Hedrick divorced in 1969, and she moved to Larkspur in Marin County to regroup from personal set-backs and the draining experience of working on *The Rose*. In 1980 she joined the art faculty at Mills College. She maintained personal and professional correspondences with many people, and her papers include letters about conservation efforts for *The Rose*.

Scope and Contents

The papers of artist Jay DeFeo measure 1.3 linear feet and date from circa 1940s to circa 1970s. The collection documents her career through biographical material, correspondence with friends, personal business records, writings, printed material, artwork, and photographs.

About half of the collection is made up of correspondence and photographs. DeFeo maintained ongoing communications with many artists, friends, and business associates. Notable correspondence is with Wallace and Shirley Berman, Irving Blum/Ferus Gallery, Bruce Conner, Frank Lobdell, Fred Martin, Michael McClure, Margaret Peterson, Deborah Remington, Ruth Terrill, and Eleanor (Nell) Sinton. The photographs document her adult years, although there are some as a teenager. DeFeo, her artist husband Wally Hedrick, and friends appear in many of the images. The remainder of the collection includes printed

materials, exhibition information, some writings and some limited artwork. The collection is particularly rich in documentation on her artwork, *The Rose*.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 7 series

- Series 1: Biographical material, 1948-1969 (1 folder; Box 1)
 - Series 2: Correspondence, 1960-1970s (0.3 linear feet; Box 1)
 - Series 3: Writings, circa 1960s (3 folders; Box 1)
 - Series 4: Personal Business Records, 1964-1974 (2 folders; Box 1)
 - Series 5: Printed Material, circa 1950s-1970s (2 folders; Box 1, OV 3)
 - Series 6: Photographs, circa 1940s-1970s (0.4 linear feet; Box 1, OV 3)
 - Series 7: Artwork, circa 1950s-1960s (0.2 linear feet; Box 2)
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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:

Photographers -- California -- San Francisco Bay Area
Photography -- California -- San Francisco
Photography -- California -- San Francisco Bay Area
Women artists
Works of art

Types of Materials:

Photographs

Names:

Berman, Shirley
Berman, Wallace, 1926-1976
Blum, Irving, 1930-
Conner, Bruce
Hedrick, Wally, 1928-2003
Lobdell, Frank, 1921-
McClure, Michael
Peterson, Margaret, 1903-
Remington, Deborah
Sinton, Nell, 1910-1997
Terrill, Ruth

Occupations:

Painters -- California -- San Francisco Bay Area

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Material, 1948-1969

1 Folder (Box 1)

This series has limited materials about Jay DeFeo's life. These include a passport, her Associates Degree from the University of California, Berkeley, and the start and end dates of her marriage to Wally Hedrick.

Box 1, Folder 1 Biographical Documents, 1948-1969

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Series 2: Correspondence, 1960-1970s

0.3 Linear feet (Box 1)

This series makes up a significant portion of the collection. DeFeo maintained correspondence with a range of friends and colleagues. Letters and cards to and from friends include discussions of life in San Francisco, personal difficulties, references to DeFeo's jewelry-making, or supportive comments about DeFeo's artwork. Bruce Conner and DeFeo have an especially extensive set of letters about *The Rose*. Also included are several photo collage postcards from Wallace Berman, and a photo collage from Dean Stockwell to DeFeo. Letters from galleries or art institutions are also represented in the collection. Other correspondents include Fred Martin, Dorothy Miller, Frank Lobdell, Margaret Peterson, Irving Blum/Ferus Gallery, Michael McClure, Eleanor (Nell) Sinton, Wallace and Shirley Berman, Deborah Remington, and Ruth Terrill.

Box 1, Folder 2	A, miscellaneous, 1969
Box 1, Folder 3	Berman, Wallace, circa 1960s
Box 1, Folder 4	Conner, Bruce, 1972-1974
Box 1, Folder 5	Demetron, Jim, circa 1960s
Box 1, Folder 6	Ferus Gallery, 1964-1965, 1960
Box 1, Folder 7	Green, Mark, 1971-1975
Box 1, Folder 8	G, miscellaneous, circa 1960s
Box 1, Folder 9	Hedrick, Wally, circa 1960s
Box 1, Folder 10	Hoobby, Wendi, circa 1970s
Box 1, Folder 11	H, miscellaneous, circa 1950s
Box 1, Folder 12	L, miscellaneous, 1967-1973
Box 1, Folder 13	Martin, Fred, circa 1960s
Box 1, Folder 14	M, miscellaneous, 1961-1972
Box 1, Folder 15	N, miscellaneous, 1969-1972
Box 1, Folder 16	Pasadena Art Museum, 1962-1969
Box 1, Folder 17	P, miscellaneous, circa 1970s

Box 1, Folder 18	R, miscellaneous, 1969-1973
Box 1, Folder 18	San Francisco Museum of Art, 1968-1974
Box 1, Folder 19	S, miscellaneous, 1967-1974
Box 1, Folder 20	Sinton, Nell, circa 1960s
Box 1, Folder 21	Terrill, Ruth, circa 1960s-1970s
Box 1, Folder 22	U, miscellaneous, 1964
Box 1, Folder 23	Unidentified or First name Only, circa 1960s-1970s
Box 1, Folder 24	W, miscellaneous, circa 1970s
Box 1, Folder 25	Y, miscellaneous, circa 1960s

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Series 3: Writings, circa 1960s

3 Folders (Box 1)

This series contains lengthy reflections by Fred Martin on art and travel, sheet music from Wally Hedrick's *Studio 13 Jazz Band*, bits of draft text for a Frank Lobdell catalogue by Walter Hopps, and poems published in SEMINA.

Box 1, Folder 26	Martin, Fred, circa 1960s
Box 1, Folder 27	Hedrick, Wally, circa 1960s
Box 1, Folder 28	Miscellaneous, undated

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Series 4: Personal Business Records, 1964-1974

2 Folders (Box 1)

The personal and business records series contains various financial information, including receipts for art supplies, a checking account registry, and the lease for 2322 Fillmore Street. Purchase information for her painting *Incision* is available. A check that DeFeo wrote to the San Francisco Museum of Art Conservation Laboratory to cover initial costs for preservation of *The Rose* is present. Also found is contract information for teaching at the San Francisco Art Institute.

Box 1, Folder 29 Financial, 1967-1968

Box 1, Folder 30 San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco Museum of Art, 1964-1974

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Series 5: Printed Material, circa 1950s-1970s

3 Folders (Box 1, OV 3)

This series contains catalogs, announcements and posters from galleries and museums for exhibitions of work by Jay DeFeo, Wallace Berman, Wally Hedrick, Weyman Lew, Fred Martin, Michael McClure, and Arthur Richer. Also includes articles about *The Rose* conservation, and other writings from newspapers and periodicals.

Box 1, Folder 31	Exhibition Announcements, circa 1950s-1970s
Box 1, Folder 32	Newspaper Articles, 1960-1975
Box OV 3	Oversize Magazine <i>Artforum</i> , 1963
Box OV 3	Magazine Fragment of DeFeo with <i>The Rose</i> , 1961

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Series 6: Photographs, circa 1940s-1970s

0.4 Linear feet (Box 1, OV 3)

Photographs include an extensive collection of friends, parties, and trips to the beach. DeFeo appears in a large number of the images. Joan Brown and Wally Hedrick are in many pictures, Manuel Neri in some. Linus Pauling is in one large photograph. Photos of the Fillmore Street flat are present, as well as many images of Christmas time. Some photographs were taken by Wallace Berman. Also included are some photographs on contact sheets and some which measure approximately 1 inch by 1 inch. Also included is one folder of negatives.

Box 1, Folder 33	DeFeo, Jay, circa 1940s-1970s
Box 1, Folder 34	Friends, Pets, Others, circa 1960s-1970s
Box 1, Folder 35	Friends, Pets, Others, circa 1960s-1970s
Box 1, Folder 36	Beaches and Other Trips, undated
Box 1, Folder 37	DeFeo Artwork, circa 1960s
Box 1, Folder 38	Fillmore St. Flat and Parties, circa 1950s-1960s
Box 1, Folder 39	Hedrick, Wally, undated One oversized item housed in OV 3.
Box 1, Folder 40	Works of Art (not DeFeo), undated
Box 1, Folder 41	Negatives, undated
Box OV 3	Oversized Photograph of Wally Hedrick from Box 1, Folder 39

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Series 7: Artwork, circa 1950s-1960s

0.2 Linear feet (Box 2)

This series contains many collages, some created by DeFeo. A slice of *The Rose* is included, with note from DeFeo that one year she sent pieces of the work as Christmas cards. Sketches by Al Wong are present.

Box 2, Folder 1	Collage "Batman Gallery", circa 1950s
Box 2, Folder 2	Collage "Bunk Johnson", circa 1960s
Box 2, Folder 3	Collages, Piece of <i>The Rose</i> , Sketches, circa 1960s

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