



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Jan de Swart Papers Papers, 1916-1994, in the Archives of American Art

Catherine S. Gaines

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Archives of American Art
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Jan de Swart papers
Identifier:	AAA.deswjan
Date:	1916-1994
Creator:	De Swart, Jan, 1908-
Extent:	4.3 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	The papers of southern California sculptor and inventor Jan de Swart measure 4.3 linear feet and are dated 1916-1994. They consist of correspondence, records concerning de Swart's inventions, writings, printed material, miscellaneous records, and photographs.

Administrative Information

Provenance

Gift of the artist's son, Jock de Swart, in 1996, with an addition received in 2001.

Processing Information

The collection was processed to a preliminary level by Catherine S. Gaines in 2006.

Preferred Citation

Jan de Swart papers, 1916-1994. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions on Access

Use of original papers requires an appointment.

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Biographical Note

Jan de Swart (1908-1987) was a sculptor and inventor that lived and worked primarily in southern California.

Jan de Swart was born in Breda, Holland in 1908. At age 13, he began a five-year apprenticeship in the atelier of Master Yonkers in S'Hertgenbosch, run by a famous carver of ecclesiastical sculpture and furniture, and then completed compulsory military service before emigrating to the United States in 1929.

During his early years in California, de Swart worked as a furniture maker. He prospected for gold in Arizona, and lived in an artists' colony at Calabasas, California, during the 1930s, eventually settling in Eagle Rock, outside of Los Angeles, where he remained for the rest of his life. In the 1940s, he devoted himself to sculpture in wood, metal, and plastic, and participated in many exhibitions. His many commissions included murals, jewelry, furniture, and sculptured screens in a wide variety of media.

In addition, de Swart was an inventor who held over 100 scientific patents. Many of his inventions were for rivets, grommets, and other types of fasteners used for ships, aircraft, and machinery; he also developed a strong, honey-combed core material that was used for a variety of structural purposes.

He died in 1987 after suffering a heart attack.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of southern California sculptor and inventor Jan de Swart measure 4.3 linear feet and are dated 1916-1994. They consist of correspondence, records concerning de Swart's inventions, writings, printed material, miscellaneous records, and photographs.

Correspondence mostly concerns de Swart's career as an artist and, to a lesser extent, his personal life. Series 2: Invention Files documents many of de Swart's inventions through drawings, patents, contracts, licensing and royalty agreements, printed material, and related correspondence.

Writings by de Swart consist of "Notes on My Film *Metamorphoses*" and brief notes for remarks to students during the run of his exhibition at San Fernando Valley State University. Included among the writings by other authors is an extensive manuscript by Ursula de Swart about her life and that of her husband. Printed material includes articles about Jan de Swart, exhibition reviews, exhibition catalogs and announcements, and an article by Jan and Ursula de Swart about plastic as a sculptural medium.

Among the miscellaneous records are a few biographical notes, guest books from many of de Swart's exhibitions, and pencil drawings by Jacobs and Jock D. Peters. The 1942 calendar/diary of Ursel Peters (Ursula de Swart) records her marriage to Jan de Swart. A grant proposal for the completion of *Jan - A Tribute to Jan de Swart*, a film by Judith Bronowski and Lauren Rickey, includes biographical information and photographs.

Photographs are of artwork by Jan de Swart, exhibition installations, people (among them Jan and Ursula de Swart, and their granddaughter), places (including "Allegro," the de Swart home, and de Swart's studio), miscellaneous topics, and a photograph album of de Swart's work. Also included are a large number of negatives, slides, and transparencies.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 6 series.

Missing Title:

- Series 1: Correspondence, 1925-1991 (Box 1; 5 folders)
- Series 2: Invention Files, 1930-1980 (Box 1; 0.5 linear ft.)
- Series 3: Writings, 1920-1983 (Box 1; 0.3 linear ft.)
- Series 4: Printed Material, 1919-1994 (Boxes 2, 4; 0.3 linear ft.)
- Series 5: Miscellaneous Records, 1916-1989 (Boxes 2, 4; 14 folders)
- Series 6: Photographs, 1933-1987 (Boxes 2-4, OVs 5-14; 2.5 linear ft.)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Inventors -- California -- Los Angeles
Modernism (Art)
Sculptors -- California -- Los Angeles

Types of Materials:

Blueprints
Drawings
Essays
Manuscripts
Notes
Patents
Photographs
Slides (photographs)
Visitors' books

Names:

De Swart, Ursula

Container Listing

Series 1: Correspondence, 1925-1991

(Box 1; 5 folders)

Scope and Contents: Correspondence documents de Swart's artistic career and, to a lesser extent, his personal life. Additional correspondence is found in Series 2: Invention Files.

Arrangement: Correspondence is arranged in chronological order.

Box 1, Folder 1-4 Correspondence, 1925-1991, undated
(4 folders)

Box 1, Folder 5 Correspondence regarding Miscellaneous Commissions, 1947-1961, undated

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Series 2: Inventions, 1930-1980

(Box 1; 0.5 linear ft.)

Scope and Contents: This series consists of drawings, patents, contracts, licensing and royalty agreements, printed material, and correspondence relating to de Swart's inventions.

Arrangement: The series is arranged alphabetically by folder title.

Box 1, Folder 6	Agreements, Royalty Statements, Related Correspondence, 1942-1965, undated
Box 1, Folder 7	Applicator Tool for Electrical Pass-Throughs, 1949
Box 1, Folder 8	Bolts, 1945-1948, undated
Box 1, Folder 9	Bottle Cap, 1954-1957, undated
Box 1, Folder 10	Bottle Carrier, 1949
Box 1, Folder 11	Container Closure, 1945
Box 1, Folder 12	Core Material, 1949-1973, undated (3 folders)
Box 1, Folder 13	Core Material (American Thermoform Corp. v. Jess R. Hale), 1977-1980, undated
Box 1, Folder 14	Correspondence with Charles A. Breskin (agent) and Lawyers, 1942-1969, undated
Box 1, Folder 15	Correspondence with Mr. Martin, Progress Reports, 1945-1946
Box 1, Folder 16	Dispensers, 1945-1950
Box 1, Folder 17	Door Knobs, undated
Box 1, Folder 18	Fastener, 1945-1946
Box 1, Folder 19	Grommets and Grommet Applicator, 1945-1948
Box 1, Folder 20	Lipstick Holder, 1947
Box 1, Folder 21	Lists of Patents, 1941-1947
Box 1, Folder 22	Miscellaneous Inventions, 1950
Box 1, Folder 23	Paper Clip, Plastic, undated
Box 1, Folder 24	Pass-Through Insulator, 1947

Box 1, Folder 25	Products Incorporating de Swart Patents, undated
Box 1, Folder 26-27	Rivet, Plastic, 1952-1959 (2 folders)
Box 1, Folder 28	Rivets and Rivet Applicator, 1947-1949, undated
Box 1, Folder 29	Self-Closing Top, 1941
Box 1, Folder 30	Shelf Supports, undated
Box 1, Folder 31	Unidentified Inventions, 1930-1945, undated

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Series 3: Writings, 1920-1983

(Box 1; 0.3 linear ft.)

Arrangement: This series is arranged as 2 subseries:

- 3.1: Writings By de Swart, circa 1974
- 3.2: Writings By Other Authors, 1920-1983

3.1: Writings by de Swart, circa 1974

Box 1, Folder 32 "Notes on My Film Metamorphoses," undated

Box 1, Folder 33 "To the Students of SFVS" (San Fernando Valley State), circa 1974

3.2: Writings by Other Authors, 1920-1983

Box 1, Folder de Swart, Ursula

Box 1, Folder 34-37 "This is about the Lives of Ursula and Jan de Swart?," undated
(4 folders)

Box 1, Folder 38 "The Fairytale Grandmother," 1954

Box 1, Folder 39 Travers, David. "de Swart ? de Swart," 1969

Box 1, Folder Unknown Authors

Box 1, Folder 40 Christmas Play, "The Street of Hearts," 1941

Box 1, Folder 41 Lists of Artwork (consignments, inventories, price lists), 1968-1983,
undated

Box 1, Folder 42 "Report on the Jan de Swart Exhibit March 15-April 10," undated

Box 1, Folder 43 Untitled Manuscripts (in German), 1920, undated

Box 1, Folder 44 Various Authors, Inspirational Quotations, undated

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Series 4: Printed Material, 1919-1994

(Boxes 2, 4; 0.3 linear ft.)

Box 2, Folder	Articles
Box 2, Folder 1	About or Mentioning de Swart, 1944-1993, undated
Box 2, Folder 2	About Jock D. Peters, 1920-1931, undated
Box 2, Folder 3	About Miscellaneous Topics, 1919-1964, undated (see also: Box 4)
Box 2, Folder 4	By Jan and Ursula de Swart, "A Medium for Sculpture" in Modern Plastics (Nov. issue), 1944
Box 2, Folder	Exhibition Catalogs and Announcements
Box 2, Folder 5-6	de Swart, 1945-1994, undated (2 folders)
Box 2, Folder 7	Other Artists, 1962-1986
Box 2, Folder 8	Exhibition Reviews (de Swart), 1945-1987, undated
Box 2, Folder 9	Miscellaneous Items Mentioning de Swart, 1948-1989
Box 2, Folder 10	Poems by Ursel Peters (Ursula de Swart), in Flights, Literary Magazine of Eagle Rock High School, 1931-1932
Box 2, Folder 11	Postcards and Reproductions, undated
Box 4, Folder	Oversized Articles about Miscellaneous Topics, 1933 (see also: Box 2, F3)

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Series 5: Miscellaneous Records, 1916-1989

(Boxes 2, 4; 14 folders)

Box 2, Folder 12	Artwork, Pencil Drawing by Jock D. Peters and Jacobs, 1916-1928, undated
Box 2, Folder 13	Biographical Data, undated
Box 2, Folder 14	Business Cards, undated
Box 2, Folder 15	Calendar/Diary of Ursel Peters/Ursula de Swart, 1942
Box 2, Folder 16	Grant Proposal, Judith Bronowski and Lauren Rickey, "Application for Grant Funds to Complete the Film Project Jan - A Tribute to Jan de Swart," undated
Box 2, Folder 17-19	Guest Books, 1968-1989 (6 vols. in 3 folders)
Box 2, Folder 20	Scrapbook, 1950s (see: Box 4)
Box 2, Folder 21	Ticket to Olympic Games, Los Angeles (Ursel Peters/Ursula de Swart), 1932
Box 4, Folder	Oversized Scrapbook, 1950s (loose pages; see also Box 2, F 20)

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Series 6: Photographs, 1933-1987

(Boxes 2-4, OVs 5-14; 2.5 linear ft.)

Arrangement: This series is arranged as 7 subseries:

- 6.1: Artwork, circa 1940s-circa 1980s
- 6.2: Exhibition Installations, 1984-1986
- 6.3: Miscellaneous Subjects, circa 1940s-circa 1980s
- 6.4: People, 1961-1987
- 6.5: Places, circa 1940s-circa 1980s
- 6.6: Photograph Album, circa 1940s-circa 1980s
- 6.7: Negatives, Slides, Transparencies, 1933-1985

6.1: Artwork, circa 1940s-circa 1980s

Box 2, Folder	Artwork By de Swart
Box 2, Folder 22	Furniture, undated
Box 2, Folder 23	Lucite Sculpture, undated
Box 2, Folder 24	Metal Sculpture, undated
Box 2, Folder 25	"Sold (by trade) to Geo. Turner for Jock's and Ulli's estate planning," undated
Box 2, Folder 26	Wood Sculpture, undated
Box 2, Folder 27-31	Unsorted, circa 1940s-circa 1980s (5 folders; see also: OVs 5-11)
Box 2, Folder 32	Artwork by Other Artists, circa 1940s-circa 1980s
Box OV 5, Folder	Oversized, Unsorted Artwork by de Swart, circa 1940s-circa 1980s (see also Box 2, F 27-31)
Box OV 6, Folder	Oversized, Unsorted Artwork by de Swart, circa 1940s-circa 1980s (see also Box 2, F 27-31)
Box OV 7, Folder	Oversized, Unsorted Artwork by de Swart, circa 1940s-circa 1980s (see also Box 2, F 27-31)
Box OV 8, Folder	Oversized, Unsorted Artwork by de Swart, circa 1940s-circa 1980s (see also Box 2, F 27-31)
Box OV 9, Folder	Oversized, Unsorted Artwork by de Swart, circa 1940s-circa 1980s (see also Box 2, F 27-31)
Box OV 10, Folder	Oversized, Unsorted Artwork by de Swart, circa 1940s-circa 1980s

(see also Box 2, F 27-31)

Box OV 11, Folder	Oversized, Unsorted Artwork by de Swart, circa 1940s-circa 1980s (see also Box 2, F 27-31)
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6.2: Exhibition Installations, 1984-1986

Box 2, Folder 33	Laguna Art Museum, 1986
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Box 2, Folder 34	Unidentified Locations, 1984, undated
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6.3: Miscellaneous Subjects, circa 1940s-circa 1980s

Box 2, Folder 35	Chairs, circa 1940s-circa 1980s (see: OV 12)
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Box 2, Folder 36	Flowers, Wreath, circa 1940s-circa 1980s
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Box 2, Folder 37	Inventions, circa 1940s-circa 1980s
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Box 2, Folder 38	Ursula de Swart Projects, circa 1940s-circa 1980s (see: OV 13)
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Box OV 12, Folder	Oversized, Chairs, circa 1940s-circa 1980s (see also: Box 2, F 35)
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Box OV 13, Folder	Oversized, Ursula de Swart Projects, circa 1940s-circa 1980s (see also: Box 2, F 38)
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6.4: People, 1961-1987

Box 2, Folder 39	Jan de Swart, circa 1940s-circa 1980s
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Box 2, Folder 40	Jan de Swart at Work/in Studio, circa 1940s-circa 1980s
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Box 2, Folder 41	Jan de Swart with Others, 1987, undated
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Box 2, Folder 42	Jan and Ursula de Swart (wife); Jan and Lisi de Swart (granddaughter), 1979-1987, undated
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Box 2, Folder 43	Jock de Swart [?] (son), undated
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Box 2, Folder 44	Lisi de Swart (granddaughter), undated
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Box 2, Folder 45	Ursula de Swart (wife); Ursula de Swart with Others, circa 1940s-circa 1980s
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Box 2, Folder 46 Unidentified Individuals, 1961, undated

6.5: Places, circa 1940s-circa 1980s

Box 2, Folder 47 "Allegro" (de Swart home), circa 1940s-circa 1980s

Box 2, Folder 48 Studio, circa 1940s-circa 1980s
(see also: OV 14)

Box OV 14, Folder Oversized, de Swart Studio, circa 1940s-circa 1980s
(see also: Box 2, F 48)

6.6: Photograph Album, circa 1940s-circa 1980s

Box 4, Folder Photograph Album, circa 1940s-circa 1980s

6.7: Negatives, Slides, Transparencies, 1933-1985

Scope and People include Jan de Swart at work, and with his wife (Ursula de Swart) and his
Contents: granddaughter (Lisi de Swart). There are also separate images of Ursula de Swart and Lisi
de Swart, as well as a number of unidentified individuals.

Box 3, Folder Negatives

Box 3, Folder 1 Artwork by de Swart, circa 1940s-circa 1980s
(in 4 x 6 card file)

Box 3, Folder 2 Miscellaneous Subjects, People, Places, circa 1940s-circa 1980s

Box 3, Folder Slides

Box 3, Folder 3-4 Artwork by de Swart, 1970s-1980s, undated
(2 folders)

Box 3, Folder Exhibition Installations

Box 3, Folder 5 Chicago Tower (includes opening), 1973

Box 3, Folder 6 San Fernando Valley State College, 1974

Box 3, Folder 7 Miscellaneous Subjects, Tea Service, Welcome Banner, Wreath,
1974-1983

Box 3, Folder 8 People, circa 1940s-circa 1980s

Box 3, Folder Places

Box 3, Folder 9-10	"Allegro" (de Swart home), 1971-1985, undated (2 folders)
Box 3, Folder 11	Tunisia, undated
Box 3, Folder 12	Unidentified Landscapes, 1980-1983, undated
Box 3, Folder 13	Stereo Slides, Various Unidentified Subjects, circa 1940s-circa 1980s
Box 3, Folder	Transparencies
Box 3, Folder	Artwork by de Swart
Box 3, Folder 14	Kaiser Screen, undated
Box 3, Folder 15	Unsorted, circa 1940s-circa 1980s
Box 3, Folder 16	People, Unidentified Individuals, circa 1940s-circa 1980s
Box 3, Folder 17	Places, "Allegro" (de Swart home), circa 1940s-circa 1980s

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