



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the John DeWitt Papers, 1962-1979, in the Archives of American Art

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Archives of American Art
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<https://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions>
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	John DeWitt papers
Date:	1962-1979
Identifier:	AAA.dewijohn
Creator:	DeWitt, John, 1910-1984
Extent:	1.4 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	The scattered papers of federal arts administrator John DeWitt date from 1962-1979, and measure 1.4 linear feet. The collection primarily documents 1970s arts programs sponsored by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, an agency of the Department of the Interior. Found within the papers are correspondence concerning the department's art projects and exhibition files for <i>The American Artist and Water Reclamation, 1972</i> , and <i>America 1976</i> .

Administrative Information

Provenance

The John DeWitt papers were donated in 1987 by DeWitt's widow, Miriam Hapgood DeWitt.

Preferred Citation

John DeWitt papers, 1962-1979. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions on Access

Use of original papers requires an appointment.

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Biographical Note

John DeWitt was born in 1910 and was a wood sculptor and federal arts administrator in Washington, D.C.

DeWitt began his career as a professional writer and was a wood sculptor connected with the Veerhoff Gallery in Washington, D.C. His wife, Miriam Hapgood DeWitt, was a painter. In the late 1960s, DeWitt was the Director of Art Programs for the Bureau of Reclamation, an agency of the Department of Interior responsible

for water conservation in arid regions of the United States. At this time, the Bureau initiated a program to present its accomplishments to the public through arts commissions and exhibitions. Under the direction of DeWitt and Lloyd Goodrich of the Whitney Museum of American Art, some 40 artists including Ralston Crawford, Peter Hurd, and Norman Rockwell, were invited to depict the scope of reclamation projects in the American West. The artists were given a free hand to depict any scene in any medium as long as the subject matter pertained to the Bureau of Reclamation's program. The resulting artwork was displayed in an exhibition, *The American Artist and Water Reclamation*, that opened at the National Gallery of Art in April 1972, and then toured the country in a traveling exhibition sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution.

As the Director of the Visual Arts Program for the Department of the Interior, DeWitt celebrated the Bicentennial by organizing the exhibition *America 1976*, for which he hired over forty realist painters including Vija Celmins, Ralston Crawford, Alex Katz, Philip Pearlstein, and Wayne Thiebaud, to depict a diverse range of Americana. DeWitt was employed by the Department of the Interior until 1977.

John DeWitt died in 1984.

Scope and Content Note

The scattered papers of federal arts administrator John DeWitt date from 1962-1979, and measure 1.4 linear feet. The collection primarily documents 1970s arts programs organized by DeWitt while working for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, an agency of the Department of the Interior. Found within the papers are scattered correspondence concerning the department's art projects, including the Preservation of Endangered Species Art Program and activities of the Hereward Lester Cooke Foundation. There are letters from artists Vija Celmins, Lamar Dodd, and Ethel Magafan.

Files for the two exhibitions organized by DeWitt for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, *The American Artist and Water Reclamation* and *America 1976*, include a wide variety of materials. There are correspondence, lists of artwork, printed materials, a scrapbook, financial materials, audio recordings of interviews with DeWitt, audio recordings of a symposium on *America 1976*, and numerous photographs of exhibited artwork and participating artists. There are also additional photographs of DeWitt and his colleagues and artists Joseph Raffael and Ann Wyeth McCoy.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 3 series; each series is arranged chronologically.

Missing Title:

- Series 1: Correspondence, 1965-1979 (Box 1; 10 folders)
- Series 2: Exhibition Files, 1962-1978 (Box 1, 2; 1.3 linear feet)
- Series 3: Photographs, 1970-1974 (Box 2; 1 folder)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Photographs
- Scrapbooks
- Sound recordings

Names:

America 1976 (1976-1978: Washington, D.C.)
American artist and water reclamation (1973: Washington, D.C.)
Celmins, Vija, 1938-
Dodd, Lamar
Hereward Lester Cooke Foundation
Magafan, Ethel, 1915 or 6-1993
McCoy, Ann Wyeth
Raffael, Joseph, 1933-
United States. Bureau of Reclamation

Occupations:

Arts administrators -- Washington (D.C.)

Container Listing

Series 1: Correspondence, 1965-1979

(Box 1; 10 folders)

Scope and Contents: General correspondence discusses miscellaneous proposed art projects for the Bureau of Reclamation, most notably the Preservation of Endangered Species Art Program. There are scattered letters from Vija Celmins, Lamar Dodd, and Ethel Magafan, and a photocopy of a letter from Miriam Hapgood DeWitt's father, Hutchins Hapgood to Bernard Berenson, discussing Berenson's books, their friendship and Hapgood's travels on the Amalfi coast of Italy.

Box 1, Folder 1	Correspondence, 1965-1971, undated
Box 1, Folder 2	Correspondence, 1972
Box 1, Folder 3	Correspondence, 1973
Box 1, Folder 4	Correspondence, 1976
Box 1, Folder 5	Correspondence, 1977-1978
Box 1, Folder 6-7	Correspondence Concerning the Preservation of Endangered Species Art Program, 1974-1977 (2 folders)
Box 1, Folder 8-10	Correspondence Concerning the Hereward Lester Cooke Foundation, 1975-1979 (3 folders)

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Series 2: Exhibition Files, 1962-1978

(Boxes 1-2; 1.3 linear feet)

Scope and Contents: Exhibition files concern two exhibitions, *The American Artist and Water Reclamation* in 1972 and *America 1976*. Files contain a wide variety of materials, such as scattered correspondence, a drawing by William Palmer, scattered financial material, lists of exhibited artwork, miscellaneous notes, a scrapbook, clippings, exhibition catalogs; photographs of scenes of the American West; photographs of participating artists including Vija Celmins, Hereward Lester Cooke, Ralston Crawford, Richard Diebenkorn, Lamar Dodd, Michael Frary, Xavier Gonzalez, Peter Hurd, Billy Morrow Jackson, Mitchell Jamieson, Dong Kingman, Ethel Magafan, Carl Morris, William Palmer, Norman Rockwell, and Fritz Scholder; and photographs of their artwork. There is also an album of photographs of the opening of the exhibition *The American Artist and Water Reclamation*. Audio recordings on cassettes and reel-to-reel tapes contain interviews concerning the exhibition, as well as a tape of a symposium on the exhibition *America 1976*.

Box 1, Folder	The American Artist and Water Reclamation, 1962-1974, undated
Box 1, Folder 11	Correspondence, 1969-1972
Box 1, Folder 12	Correspondence, 1973
Box 1, Folder 13	Drawing by William Palmer, 1970
Box 1, Folder 14	Lists of Artwork, 1962-1974, undated
Box 1, Folder 15-21	Scrapbook, 1969-1973 (7 folders)
Box 1, Folder 22-23	Clippings, 1971-1974 (2 folders)
Box 1, Folder 24	Exhibition Catalog, 1973
Box 1, Folder 25	Photographs of Glen Canyon, Utah, 1965-1969
Box 1, Folder 26-31	Photographs of Miscellaneous Canyons, 1962-1974 (6 folders)
Box 1, Folder 32	Photographs of Vincent Arcilesi, 1974
Box 1, Folder 33	Photographs of Elmer Bischoff, 1970
Box 1, Folder 34	Photographs of Vija Celmins and Hereward Lester Cooke, 1970, 1974
Box 1, Folder 35	Photographs of Ralston Crawford, 1969-1973
Box 1, Folder 36	Photographs of Horace Day and James Dean, 1970

Box 1, Folder 37	Photographs of Lamar Dodd, 1970-1973
Box 1, Folder 38	Photographs of Ethel Edwards and Dean Fausett, 1969-1970
Box 1, Folder 39	Photographs of Michael Frary, 1970, undated
Box 1, Folder 40	Photographs of Lloyd Lozes Goff and Xavier Gonzalez, 1969-1970
Box 1, Folder 41	Photographs of Peter Hurd, 1969
Box 1, Folder 42	Photographs of Billy Morrow Jackson and Mitchell Jamieson, 1970-1971
Box 1, Folder 43	Photographs of Dong Kingman, 1971
Box 1, Folder 44	Photographs of Edward Laning and Ethel Magafan, 1969-1970
Box 1, Folder 45	Photographs of Herman Maril and Fletcher Martin, 1969-1970
Box 1, Folder 46	Photographs of Alfred McAdams and Carl Morris, 1970, undated
Box 1, Folder 47	Photographs of William Palmer, 1970
Box 1, Folder 48	Photographs of Roland Peterson, 1970
Box 1, Folder 49	Photographs of Norman Rockwell, 1969
Box 1, Folder 50	Photographs of Fritz Scholder, 1970
Box 1, Folder 51	Photographs of Arthur Smith, 1970
Box 1, Folder 52-53	Photographs of Unidentified Artists, 1969-1973 (2 folders)
Box 1, Folder 54-58	Photographs of De Witt and Groups of Colleagues and Artists including Richard Diebenkorn, Lamar Dodd, Michael Frary, Carl Morris, William Palmer, and Fritz Scholder, 1970, undated (5 folders)
Box 1, Folder 59	Photographs of Artwork by Oliver Chafee, Michael Frary, Edward Laning, and Fletcher Martin, 1969-1972
Box 1, Folder 60	Slides of Artwork by Richard Diebenkorn, 1972
Box 1, Folder 61	Photographs of Artwork by Ethel Magafan, undated
Box 1, Folder 62	Photographs of Artwork by Norman Rockwell, undated
Box 1, Folder 63	Photographs of Artwork by William Palmer, 1971

Box 1, Folder 64-65	Slides of Miscellaneous Artwork, 1973 (2 folders)
Box 1, Folder 66	Slides of Artwork not Included in the Exhibition, 1971-1972, undated
Box 1, Folder 67	Album of Photographs of the Exhibition Opening, 1972
Box 1, Folder 68	Audio Recording on reel-to-reel tape of Interview with DeWitt, 1972
Box 1, Folder 69	Audio Recording on Cassette of Interview with De Witt, 1972
Box 1, Folder	America 1976, 1974-1978, undated
Box 1, Folder 70	Correspondence, 1974-1976
Box 1, Folder 71-72	Correspondence, 1977 (2 folders)
Box 1, Folder 73	Correspondence, 1978
Box 1, Folder 74	Financial Material, 1976-1977
Box 1, Folder 75	Exhibition Guestbook, 1976
Box 2, Folder 1-3	Miscellaneous Notes, 1975-1976 (3 folders)
Box 2, Folder 4-5	Clippings, 1976-1978 (2 folders)
Box 2, Folder 6	Exhibition Catalog, 1976
Box 2, Folder 7	Photograph of Artwork by Vija Celmins, undated
Box 2, Folder 8-9	Slides of Miscellaneous Artwork, 1975 (2 folders)
Box 2, Folder 10	Photographs of the Exhibition Opening, 1976
Box 2, Folder 11	Audiocassette of Interview with DeWitt, 1975
Box 2, Folder 12-14	Audio recordings on Reel-to-Reel Tapes of a Symposium on the Exhibition including panelists Michael Mazur, Susan Shatter, and Alex Katz, 1975-1976 (3 folders)

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Series 3: Photographs, 1970-1974

(Box 2; 1 folder)

Scope and Contents: Photographs are of John DeWitt at unidentified locations, and of artists Joseph Raffael and Ann Wyeth McCoy in Hawaii.

Box 2, Folder 15	Photographs of DeWitt and of artists Joseph Raffael and Ann Wyeth McCoy, 1970-1974, undated
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