



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Arthur and Helen Torr Dove
Papers, 1905-1975, in the Archives of American Art

Megan McShea

Funding for the processing and digitization of this collection
was provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art.

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Archives of American Art
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Arthur and Helen Torr Dove papers
Identifier:	AAA.dovearth
Date:	1905-1975
Extent:	3 Linear Feet
Creator:	Dove, Arthur Garfield, 1880-1946
Language:	English
Summary:	The papers of artists Arthur and Helen Torr Dove measure 3 linear feet and date from 1905 to 1975, with the bulk of material dating from 1920 to 1946. Arthur Dove's life as an artist, and his life with the artist Helen Torr, are documented in biographical narratives, personal documents, an audio recording, correspondence, diaries, essays, poetry, notes, exhibition catalogs, clippings, magazine illustrations, pamphlets, receipts, an accounting ledger, tax records, sketches, and photographs.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The papers of Arthur and Helen Torr Dove were loaned to the Archives of American Art by Arthur Dove's son, William Dove, for microfilming in several increments between 1970 and 1975. The papers were later donated to the Archives by William Dove via the Terry Distenfass Gallery of New York City in multiple accessions between 1982 and 1989, with two major exceptions: 177 letters from Alfred Stieglitz, sixteen letters from Georgia O'Keeffe, and two letters from William Einstein; and Arthur Dove's card catalog of paintings, a photocopy of which had been loaned for microfilming. The papers were digitized in 2006.

Separated Material

Arthur Dove's letters from Alfred Stieglitz (1918-1946) and Georgia O'Keeffe (1921-1948), and two letters from William Einstein (1937), were originally loaned to the Archives of American Art for microfilming. The original letters were later donated to the Beinecke Library at Yale University, which holds the Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archives. These letters can be viewed on microfilm reel 725 at the Archives of American Art.

Photocopies of Arthur Dove's card catalog of paintings were discarded after microfilming and can be viewed on reel 2803.

Alternative Forms Available

The papers of **Arthur and Helen Torr Dove** were digitized in 2006 by the Archives of American Art, and total 6,521 images.

Materials which were not scanned include duplicate originals, photocopies, tax records, and photographs of artwork. Exhibition catalogs and publications that reference Dove have been partially scanned, including title pages and pages which mention Dove and Torr. Material loaned for microfilming is available on 35 mm microfilm reels 725 and 2803 at Archives of American Art offices, and through interlibrary loan. Loaned material are not described in this finding aid.

Processing Information

The original loans were processed for microfilming. Later accessions and the loaned materials returned as gifts were all merged, fully processed, and a finding aid prepared by Megan McShea in 2005 as part of the Terra Foundation for American Art Digitization Project. The collection was digitized in 2006.

Preferred Citation

Arthur and Helen Torr Dove papers, 1905-1975. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions on Access

The collection is open for research. Microfilmed and digitized portions must be consulted on microfilm or the Archives website. Use of unmicrofilmed, undigitized portion requires an appointment.

Ownership and Literary Rights

The Arthur and Helen Torr Dove 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 Note

Arthur Garfield Dove was an early twentieth-century painter, collagist, and illustrator who was one of the first American artists to embrace abstraction in art. He was a part of Alfred Stieglitz's Circle of modern American artists introduced at Stieglitz's 291 Gallery along with John Marin and Georgia O'Keeffe. Dove spent his career developing his own idiosyncratic style of formal abstraction in painting based on his ideas about nature, feeling, and pure form, and characterized by experimentation with color, composition, and materials.

Born in Canandigua, NY in 1880, Dove grew up in the small, rural town of Geneva, NY. He was first exposed to art by a local farmer and painter named Newton Weatherly, who gave him canvas and paint, and who Dove himself cited as an early influence. Dove went to Cornell University to study law, but soon shifted to art and illustration. He graduated in 1903 and quickly became a success as a magazine illustrator, working for *Collier's*, *McClure's*, *St. Nicholas*, and *The Illustrated Sporting News*, among other publications. In 1904, he married Florence Dorsey, a Geneva woman, and they lived in New York City. Their son, William Dove, was born in 1910.

In 1908 the couple traveled to Paris to enable Dove to pursue his interest in painting. In Paris, he met Alfred Maurer, Jo Davidson, and other American artists living abroad. The influence of his European and expatriate contemporaries would prove to be a lasting one, exposing him to ideas about abstraction and experimentation that he would develop in his work for the rest of his life.

Soon after Dove's return to the United States, he met Alfred Stieglitz and began a lifelong friendship. Stieglitz ran the Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession, which came to be known as 291, in New York. His daring, avant-garde exhibitions of both European and American modern art at 291 provided a venue and gathering-place for progressive American artists that was unique for its time. Dove's first solo exhibition at 291 was held in 1912, and consisted of ten pastel drawings that have come to be known as the "Ten Commandments." The attention it received established Dove as a prominent abstract painter.

Around 1920, Dove met another Westport artist named Helen S. Torr, also known as Reds. A Philadelphia-born painter who had studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art, Reds was married at the time to the cartoonist Clive Weed. Torr and Dove eventually left their unhappy marriages and began a life together, moving to a houseboat docked in Manhattan. In 1922, they moved to Halesite, Long Island, New York, where Dove's artwork once again flourished. By the mid-1920s, he was exhibiting regularly, paralleled by the rise of Stieglitz's new Intimate Gallery in 1925. His work continued to explore abstraction and organic forms, and, in addition to paintings, he produced assemblages made of found materials.

Although a building teardown brought the Intimate Gallery to a sudden end in 1929, the financial support of friends enabled Alfred Stieglitz to open An American Place soon thereafter. There Stieglitz would focus on the work of a few American artists, including Dove, John Marin, and Georgia O'Keeffe. Helen Torr was also exhibited at An American Place, in a group show with Arthur in 1933. It was also at this gallery that the art collector Duncan Phillips was introduced to Dove's artwork. Phillips' interest in Dove grew into an ongoing patronage of Dove that would see them through the Depression and periods of serious illness in the 1930s and 1940s. Their arrangement, whereby Phillips had first refusal on all of Dove's new artwork, enabled him to gradually assemble the largest collection of Dove's work held anywhere.

In 1938, while on a trip to New York to attend his exhibition, Dove became suddenly ill. Although he recovered somewhat that year, his health never entirely returned to normal, and he spent long periods during what remained of his life housebound and in a wheelchair. He and Reds bought a home in Centreport, on Long Island, where they would stay the rest of his life. In 1939 he was so ill that neither his family nor Stieglitz thought he would ever paint again. Despite his physical limitations, he continued to work, turning to the less physically strenuous media of drawing and watercolor, and produced new work for five solo exhibitions in the 1940s. His work of this period embraces pure abstraction more fully than ever, and is regarded by some to be a culmination or crystallization of his singular style and approach to abstract painting.

Arthur Dove suffered a stroke in 1946 and died that November, just four months after his lifelong friend and mentor Alfred Stieglitz died of a heart attack. Reds lived until 1967 in their Centreport home. Dove's importance to American art has since been recognized with more than a dozen retrospective exhibitions at major museums and galleries.

This biography relied heavily on the monograph *Arthur Dove: Life and Work, with a Catalogue Raisonné* (1984) by Ann Lee Morgan.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Arthur and Helen Torr Dove measure 3 linear feet and date from 1905 to 1975, with the bulk of material dating from 1920 to 1946. Arthur Dove's life as an artist, and his life with the artist Helen Torr, are documented in biographical narratives, personal documents, an audio recording, correspondence, diaries, essays, poetry, notes, exhibition catalogs, clippings, magazine illustrations, pamphlets, receipts, an accounting ledger, tax records, sketches, and photographs.

Biographical Materials include a last will and testament, biographical narratives, and other official documents, as well as an audio recording of an interview with William Dove made around 1961 by George

Wolfer. Correspondence includes letters from friends, clients, other artists, and Dove's patron Duncan Phillips. There is also correspondence with family members Helen Torr and Paul Dove. Drafts of outgoing letters from Dove to various correspondents including Phillips and Alfred Stieglitz are found.

Writings are extensive and include diaries, autobiographical essays, essays about art, artists, and other subjects, and poetry by Arthur Dove; as well as essays, reminiscences, and notes of Helen Torr. Printed Materials include exhibition catalogs for Dove's shows and the shows of other artists in the Stieglitz Circle, examples of Dove's early magazine illustration work, newspaper reviews of Dove's exhibitions, and various pamphlets related to modern art. Personal Business Records include an accounting ledger of the Doves' expenses, sales receipts, tax records, and an undated art inventory. Artwork consists of ten items, mostly sketches in pencil, watercolor, ink, and colored pencil. Photographs are undated and unidentified, but depict mostly family, homes, and coastal scenes.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into 7 series:

- Series 1: Biographical Materials, 1928-1937, circa 1961 (Box 1; 2 folders)
- Series 2: Correspondence, circa 1920-1974 (Box 1; 0.8 linear feet)
- Series 3: Writings, circa 1924-1945 (Boxes 1-3; 1.5 linear feet)
- Series 4: Printed Materials, circa 1905-1975 (Box 3; 0.3 linear feet)
- Series 5: Personal Business Records, circa 1921-1965 (Box 3; 0.3 linear feet)
- Series 6: Artwork, undated (Box 3; 1 folder)
- Series 7: Photographs, 1909, undated (Box 3; 4 folders)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Collagists -- New York (State)
Painters -- New York (State)
Women painters -- New York (State)
Works of art

Types of Materials:

Audiotapes
Diaries
Photographs
Sketches

Names:

Phillips, Duncan, 1886-1966
Stieglitz, Alfred, 1864-1946
Torr, Helen, 1886-1967

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Materials, 1928-1937, circa 1961

(2 folders)

Biographical materials include narratives by Arthur Dove's brother Paul Dove and patron Duncan Phillips, genealogical notes, certificates, and a last will and testament. Also found is a reel-to-reel audio recording of an interview with Arthur Dove's son, William Dove (Side 2), in which he discusses his father's early career, his family, the family business and estate, and his father's illnesses.

Additional biographical information can be found in Series 3.

Box 1, Folder 1	Documents, 1928-1937, undated Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 2	Interview of William Dove by George Wolfer (Side 2), circa 1961 Image(s)

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Series 2: Correspondence, circa 1920-1974

(0.8 linear feet)

The arrangement of this series is divided into a general, chronological file of correspondence with multiple persons, and four separate groups of significant correspondence with associates Duncan Phillips and Alfred Stieglitz, and family members Helen "Reds" Torr Dove and Paul Dove.

General Correspondence contains Arthur Dove's personal and professional correspondence with other artists, friends, gallery owners, illustration clients, art critics, writers, and others. The bulk of correspondence consists of letters received by Dove and is arranged chronologically. Significant correspondents include Berenice Abbott (1938), Sherwood Anderson (1937, copy), Oscar Bleumner (undated), Van Wyck Brooks (1920, 1925, 1933, 1935), Ellis Parker Butler (1923, 1924), Florence Cane (1921, 1924, 1944, undated), Stuart Davis (1946), William Einstein (1940), C.H. Fuerstenberg (sister to Alfred Maurer, 1937), Edward Alden Jewell (undated, see also outgoing), Gaston LaChaise (1928), Lawson (probably Ernest, undated), John Marin (1938), Elizabeth McCausland (1940, undated), Dorothy Norman (1934, 1937, 1939, undated), Herbert Seligmann (1932), Paul Strand (1920, 1921, 1932), and Emil Zoler (undated). Drafts and copies of outgoing letters are mostly undated and are filed separately; in a few cases, Dove's letters are paired with a response among the outgoing letters, including a draft of a letter to Gaston LaChaise (1928).

Duncan Phillips corresponded steadily with Arthur Dove from the late 1920s until Dove's death in 1946. Their correspondence provides a detailed view of the long and unusual relationship between the artist and the patron. Included are two letters to Alfred Stieglitz, from 1934 (a copy) and 1936, in which Phillips discusses their financial arrangement and the acquisition of paintings. Drafts and copies of letters written by Dove are mostly undated, and while all are ostensibly from Dove, several of them are in Helen Torr Dove's handwriting. Additional correspondence between Dove and the staff of the Phillips Memorial Gallery can be found in General Correspondence.

Dove's letters to Alfred Stieglitz consist of drafts and copies of seven letters. Some of the letters appear to be copies made by Helen Torr Dove, and some are unfinished. Subjects include painting habits, art criticism, mutual friends, anecdotes, gallery business, and Dove's thoughts about being offered a government salary through the Public Works of Art Project, which he ultimately turned down. Many letters from Stieglitz and Georgia O'Keeffe to Dove were loaned for microfilming and are available on AAA microfilm reel 725. The originals reside in the Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive at the Beinecke Library of Yale University.

Letters between Arthur Dove and his second wife, Helen "Reds" Torr Dove, were written during periods of separation, usually due to health and family concerns. Each chronological sequence contains one side of their daily and detailed correspondence, with the earlier letters (1933-1936) written by Arthur Dove, and later letters (1939) written by Helen Torr Dove. Scattered letters to and from other family members related to the circumstances at hand are also present. Correspondence between Arthur Dove and his younger brother, Paul Dove, concerns family property and other personal matters. Their wives, Helen Torr Dove and Betty Dove, are often included in their correspondence, but the brothers are the primary authors.

Where possible, letters are arranged chronologically. Undated letters are filed at the end of each group.

Box 1

General Correspondence

Box 1, Folder 3-21

General Correspondence, 1920-1974, undated
(19 folders)

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Box 1, Folder 22-23	Outgoing Letters, Drafts and Copies, 1928, undated (2 folders) Image(s) Image(s)
Box 1	Correspondence with Duncan Phillips
Box 1, Folder 24-27	Duncan Phillips to Arthur Dove, 1926-1946 (4 folders) Image(s) Image(s) Image(s) Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 28-29	Arthur Dove to Duncan Phillips, Drafts and Copies, 1928-1937, undated (2 folders) Image(s) Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 30	Arthur Dove to Alfred Stieglitz, Drafts and Copies, 1923, undated Image(s)
Box 1	Family Correspondence
Box 1, Folder 31-41	Arthur Dove to Helen Torr Dove, 1933-1934, 1936, undated (11 folders) Image(s) Image(s) Image(s) Image(s)

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Box 1, Folder 42-44

Helen Torr Dove to Arthur Dove, 1939, undated
(3 folders)

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[Image\(s\)](#)
[Image\(s\)](#)

Box 1, Folder 45-48

Paul and Betty Dove to Arthur and Helen Torr Dove, 1940-1945, undated
(2 folders)

[Image\(s\)](#)
[Image\(s\)](#)
[Image\(s\)](#)
[Image\(s\)](#)

Box 1, Folder 49-50

Arthur Dove to Paul and Betty Dove, 1944-1946, undated
(2 folders)

[Image\(s\)](#)
[Image\(s\)](#)

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Series 3: Writings, circa 1924-1945

(1.5 linear feet)

This series includes logs, diaries, notes, essays, and poetry written by Arthur Dove, his wife, and others.

The Dove diaries begin in 1924 with Arthur Dove's "Log of the Mona," the boat on which he and Reds lived at the time. The log records weather conditions, daily activities, and occasionally his thoughts about art. From late 1924 until 1945, Reds and Arthur Dove seem to have shared a responsibility for keeping a daily account of their lives. Diaries record the couple's activities, including social visits, letter writing, chores, trips, and art-making. Reds was the primary author of the diaries from 1925 until 1935. Her records are very brief in early diaries, but gradually became more detailed, and are especially rich with information about Arthur Dove's artwork. In 1935, a separate notebook was kept for information about paintings in. In 1936 and 1937, the diaries include entries by both Arthur and Reds, and by 1939 Arthur took over entirely and continued keeping diaries for them until early 1945. A notebook of excerpts from earlier diary entries about Dove's artwork was later created by Reds, and may have been compiled for a retrospective exhibition held in 1956.

Arthur Dove's writings include handwritten and typewritten essays, poems, notes, and aphoristic statements that deal with the subjects of abstraction in art, modern art, nature, color, and the artists he admired. Typewritten essays include brief, dated statements of Dove's methods and ideas about art, and longer, titled essays on a range of subjects. Five essays about Alfred Stieglitz and one about John Marin are also included, some in multiple drafts. One of the Stieglitz pieces was written on the occasion of his death. Notes documenting a conversation between Arthur Dove and Alfred Maurer about American painting appear in two versions, one written by Arthur Dove, the other by Helen Torr. Occasionally, a handwritten copy of Dove's writings made by Helen is found with the original. A small compilation of early writings entitled "Prose and Poetry" includes a photograph of Dove circa 1925.

Many of Helen's notes and writings have to do with her recollections her husband. Unattributed essays and poems are in Helen's handwriting and may be copies of Dove's writings that, because they do not appear elsewhere in this collection, cannot be attributed with certainty.

Research Notes on the Dove Papers are notes made by art historians who went through the papers, presumably after Dove's death but before the papers came to the Archives.

Box 1	Diaries
Box 1, Folder 51	Log of the <i>Mona</i> , 1924-1925 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 52-54	Diaries, 1924-1926 (3 folders) Image(s) Image(s) Image(s)
Box 2, Folder 1-14	Diaries, 1927-1945 (14 folders) Image(s) Image(s) Image(s) Image(s) Image(s)

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Box 2, Folder 15	Excerpts (1925-1939), undated Image(s)
Box 2	Writings by Arthur Dove
Box 2, Folder 16	Autobiographical Sketches, circa 1930, undated Image(s)
Box 2, Folder 17-20	Handwritten Essays, undated (4 folders) Image(s) Image(s) Image(s) Image(s)
Box 2, Folder 21	Handwritten Essays, Fragments, undated Image(s)
Box 3, Folder 1-5	Typewritten Essays, 1928-1929, undated (5 folders) Image(s) Image(s) Image(s) Image(s) partially scanned
Box 3, Folder 6	Essays about Stieglitz and Marin, undated Image(s)
Box 3, Folder 7	Notes from a Conversation with Alfred Maurer, undated Image(s)
Box 3, Folder 8	"Prose and Poetry," 1924-1925 Image(s) (contains photograph of Arthur Dove)
Box 3, Folder 9-10	Poems, undated (2 folders) Image(s)

	Image(s)
Box 3, Folder 11	Notes and Aphorisms, undated Image(s)
Box 3	Writings by Helen Torr Dove
Box 3, Folder 12	Essays, undated Image(s)
Box 3, Folder 13	Notes, undated Image(s)
Box 3, Folder 14	"Reds Reminiscences," undated Image(s)
Box 3, Folder 15	Copies of Writings by Arthur Dove (1916-1943), undated Image(s)
Box 3, Folder 16	Unattributed Essays and Poems, undated Image(s)
Box 3	Writings by Others
Box 3, Folder 17-18	Transcripts of Essays about Dove (1914-1980), undated (3 folders) Image(s) partially scanned
Box 3, Folder 19	Research Notes on Dove Papers, undated (not scanned)
Box 3, Folder 20	James Mellquist re: Paul Rosenfeld, undated Image(s)

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Series 4: Printed Materials, circa 1905-1975

(0.3 linear feet)

This series includes exhibition catalogs, Dove's magazine illustrations, news clippings, pamphlets, and other printed miscellany. Most of the material in this series is directly related to Dove's art career.

Exhibition Catalogs include solo and group exhibition catalogs for Arthur Dove and others, including other exhibitions at the galleries of Alfred Stieglitz in New York, The Intimate Gallery and An American Place. The catalogs in this collection do not represent all of the exhibitions of Arthur Dove. Other artists represented include Georgia O'Keeffe, John Marin, Alfred Stieglitz, and a group show including Helen Torr. All are unmarked, except for a 1932 catalog for a Dove show.

Dove's Magazine Illustrations include clippings from illustrated magazines such as *Illustrated Sporting News*, *The Evening Mail*, *Judge*, *Pearson's Magazine*, and *The Saturday Evening Post*, among others.

Clippings are almost exclusively reviews of Arthur Dove's exhibitions. Publications include pamphlets, newsletters, press releases, mailings, and other miscellany. Among these are several articles from a pamphlet series called "It Might Be Said" published by An American Place gallery, two radio reviews by E.M. Benson, and several articles about John Marin, Georgia O'Keeffe, and modernism.

Box 3, Folder 21-25 Exhibition Catalogs, 1921-1946, 1956-1973, undated
(5 folders)

[Image\(s\)](#)

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partially scanned

Box 3, Folder 26-28 Dove's Magazine Illustrations, 1905-1908

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

Box 3 Clippings

Box 3, Folder 29-34 General, 1912-1975, undated
(6 folders)

[Image\(s\)](#)

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Box 3, Folder 35 Stieglitz and O'Keeffe, 1924-1969, undated

[Image\(s\)](#)

Box 3, Folder 36 Publications, 1922-1969, undated

[Image\(s\)](#)
(partially scanned)

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Series 5: Personal Business Records, circa 1921-1965

(0.3 linear feet)

This series documents expenses, income, painting sales, taxes, and artwork inventory of Arthur Dove.

An accounting ledger details Arthur and Helen Dove's personal and business expenses and contains notes and a sketch in the later and end-pages of the volume. Receipts from the period of Dove's lifetime document the purchase of their boat, art supplies, and a painting at a 1923 O'Keeffe exhibition. Receipts for sales of Dove's paintings are mostly from the Downtown Gallery in NY, and mostly date to after Dove's death in 1946. Gallery receipts record the price, title of work, date of sale, and often the buyer's last name.

Also found are tax records and an undated inventory of artwork at An American Place gallery and in storage.

Box 3, Folder 37	Ledger, 1923-1927 Image(s)
Box 3, Folder 38-48	Receipts, 1921-1965, undated <i>(11 folders)</i> Image(s) Image(s) Image(s) Image(s) Image(s) Image(s) Image(s) Image(s) Image(s) Image(s) Image(s)
Box 3, Folder 49	Tax Records, 1923-1928, 1942-1943, undated <i>(not scanned)</i>
Box 3, Folder 50	List of Artwork (1923-1943), undated Image(s)

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Series 6: Artwork, undated

(1 folder)

Artwork in this series includes three cartoons; six sketches; and one small drawing. Sketches are in watercolor, pencil, pen and ink, colored pencil, and graphite. Two of the sketches are double-sided.

Box 3, Folder 51

Artwork, undated

[Image\(s\)](#)

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Series 7: Photographs, 1909, undated

(4 folders)

Photographs in this series include personal photographs and photographs of artwork. Personal photographs are unidentified and undated and depict mostly family, homes, and coastal scenes.

An additional photograph of Arthur Dove, used to illustrate a collection of writings entitled "Prose and Poetry," can be found in Series 3.

Box 3, Folder 52-54	Personal Photographs, undated <i>(3 folders)</i> Image(s) Image(s) Image(s)
Box 3, Folder 55	Photographs of Artwork, 1909, undated <i>(not scanned)</i>

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