



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Mary Frank papers, 1884-2017,
bulk 1957-1990, in the Archives of American Art

Jennifer E. Neal

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Archives of American Art
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Mary Frank papers
Identifier:	AAA.franmary
Date:	1884-2017 (bulk 1957-1990)
Extent:	4.2 Linear feet
Creator:	Frank, Mary, 1933-
Language:	Materials are primarily in English, with some materials in French and Spanish.
Summary:	The papers of sculptor and painter Mary Frank measure 4.2 linear feet and date from 1884-2017. Included are correspondence, writings, photographs, artwork and printed material documenting Frank's career. Correspondence is both personal and professional. Writings include dreams recounted in detail, poems, and ideas for works of art, some illustrated. Black and white photographs are of Frank, her sculptures, friends and family, and source material. Artwork includes drawings and sketches in dry point, pencil and watercolor. Printed material includes exhibition catalogs, announcements, brochures and clippings.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Donated in 2014 and 2019 by Mary Frank.

Related Materials

Also found in the Archives of American Art is an oral history interview with Mary Frank conducted by Judith Olch Richards on January 10, 11, and February 3, 2010.

Processing Information

The collection was processed, and a finding aid prepared by Jennifer E. Neal in 2019.

Preferred Citation

Mary Frank Papers, 1884-2017. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

This collection is open for research. Access to original papers requires an appointment and is limited to the Archives' Washington, D.C. Research Center.

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Biographical / Historical

Mary Frank (1933-) is a sculptor, ceramicist, and painter in New York, New York. She was born in London, England in 1933 to writer, Edward Lockspeiser, and artist, Eleanore Weinstein. In 1940, she and her mother moved to Brooklyn, New York and moved in with her mother's parents, Gregory and Eugenie Weinstein. Eventually Frank and her mother moved to the Village in Manhattan. Frank studied modern dance with Martha Graham and attended the High School of Music and Art, the Professional Children's School, and studied under artists Hans Hofmann and Max Beckmann. While still in high school, she met photographer, Robert Frank, whom she eventually married in 1950. They had two children, Pablo and Andrea, and divorced in 1969. Frank first exhibited her artwork at Poindexter Gallery in 1958 and traveled with Red Grooms across Italy in the 1960s, which had a significant impact on her artistic development. Her work is also influenced by her daughter's untimely death in 1974 and her son's illness that began in 1975 and ended in his death in 1994.

Mostly self-taught, Frank works across multiple disciplines including sculpture, painting, ceramics, and drawing. Reflected in her work are themes of grief, loss, love and sorrow. Her career has spanned over five decades where she has exhibited works at numerous galleries and museums around the country. She has been the recipient of many awards and honors, including two Guggenheim Foundation Fellowships, and taught classes at Bard College. Mary Frank's works are included in the permanent collections at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, Brooklyn Museum, National Museum of American Art, The Art Institute of Chicago, and many others. She has also been a longtime advocate of solar cooking.

Scope and Contents

The papers of sculptor and painter Mary Frank measure 4.2 linear feet and date from 1884-2017. Included are correspondence, writings, photographs, artwork and printed material documenting Frank's career. Correspondence is both personal and professional. Writings include dreams recounted in detail, poems, and ideas for works of art, some illustrated. Black and white photographs are of Frank, her sculptures, friends and family, and source material. Artwork includes drawings and sketches in dry point, pencil and watercolor. Printed material includes exhibition catalogs, announcements, brochures and clippings.

Materials in this collection document Mary Frank's career as an artist in New York through correspondence with family, friends, and artists; original drawings and watercolors; writings about ideas for her artwork; photographs of Frank in her studio and artwork; clippings reviewing her work and documenting her interest and support in the solar cooker movement; and exhibition catalogs and announcements. Also included are photographs from Frank's travels with Red Grooms and other artists in Italy in the 1960s, which was a formative experience in Frank's artistic development. The collection provides an illuminating context for Frank's artwork of the 1970s and 1980s, present in the collection as photographed sculpture but also as original drawings and watercolors.

The collection also offers a glimpse of her family life and early childhood documented through photographs of Robert Frank, and their children; photographs taken by Robert Frank and other known photographers; photographs that belonged to her parents and aunt; drawings by her son, Pablo, and aunt, Sylvia Weinstein; writings by her maternal grandfather; and writings that document personal struggles she experienced throughout her life. The collection provides a penetrating glimpse into the emotional turmoil of the years before Frank's divorce from Robert Frank, and documents through letters and writings Frank's struggles with her daughter's early death in 1974 and her son's illness that began in 1975 and ended in his death in 1994.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged in five series.

- Series 1: Correspondence, 1943-2001 (0.4 linear feet; Box 1)
- Series 2: Writings, 1936-circa 1990 (0.2 linear feet; Box 1)
- Series 3: Printed Material, circa 1960-2013 (0.6 linear feet; Box 1-2)
- Series 4: Artwork, circa 1930-circa 1990s (0.6 linear feet; Box 2, 4; OV 5)
- Series 5: Photographic Material, 1884-circa 2006 (2.4 linear feet; Box 2-3; OV 6-12)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Women artists

Types of Materials:

Drawings
Sketchbooks

Names:

Frank, Robert, 1924-
Gibson, Ralph, 1939-
Lockspeiser, Eleanore, 1900-1986
Meyerowitz, Joel, 1938-
Steichen, Edward, 1879-1973

Occupations:

Ceramicists -- New York (State) -- New York
Painters -- New York (State) -- New York
Sculptors -- New York (State) -- New York

Container Listing

Series 1: Correspondence, 1943-2001

0.4 Linear feet (Box 1)

Correspondence document Frank's personal and professional life, which often overlapped. Materials include mostly incoming letters, deeply personal and professional, from friends, family, and other artists, including three postcards from Anthony Caro. Some of the correspondence contain drawings. Also included are letters Frank received from students she taught in an early 1970s drawing class.

Box 1, Folder 1-7	Correspondence, 1943-2001
Box 1, Folder 8	Correspondence, drawing class, 1973-1974

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Series 2: Writings, 1936-circa 1990

0.2 Linear feet (Box 1)

Writings include dreams recounted in detail, poems, ideas for artwork, and loose pages from journals, sometimes with sketches. There are also writings by Frank's maternal grandfather, Gregory Weinstein. These materials reflect Frank's personal struggles, thoughts and feelings which are a deep source of inspiration for her work.

Box 1, Folder 9	Artwork, circa 1981
Box 1, Folder 10	Dreams, circa 1970s-circa 1980s
Box 1, Folder 11	Personal, Gregory Weinstein, 1936-1957
Box 1, Folder 12	Personal, loose pages from journals, circa 1975-circa 1985

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Series 3: Printed Material, circa 1960-2013

0.6 Linear feet (Box 1-2)

Printed Material document Frank's career as an artist and her interest in solar cooking. Materials include exhibition catalogs, announcements, and reviews spanning across five decades of Frank's career; two books of poetry illustrated by Mary Frank; one copy of John Cohen's documentary film, "Visions of Mary Frank," released in 2014; a 1977 Brandeis University Creative Arts Award; an Occupy Wall Street button; and clippings, newsletters, and pamphlets related to exhibition reviews and solar cooking.

Box 1, Folder 13	Brandeis University Creative Arts Award, 1977
Box 1, Folder 14	Books, "Desert Quartet: An Erotic Landscape", 1995
Box 1, Folder 15	Books, "Skies in Blossom: The Nature Poetry of Emily Dickinson", 1995
Box 1, Folder 16-18	Clippings, Artwork, 1961-2013
Box 1, Folder 19	Exhibition Announcements, 1957-2014
Box 1, Folder 20-21	Exhibition Catalogs, 1962-1980
Box 2, Folder 1-5	Exhibition Catalogs, 1981-2003
Box 2, Folder 6	Exhibition and Performance Posters, circa 1966-1988
Box 2, Folder 7	Occupy Wall Street Button, circa 2011
Box 2, Folder 8	Postcards, circa 1960s-circa1986
Box 2, Folder 9	Solar Cookers, 1987-2017
Box 2, Folder 10	Visions of Mary Frank documentary, 2013 <i>1 Videodiscs (DVD)</i>

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Series 4: Artwork, circa 1930-circa 1990s

0.6 Linear feet (Box 2, 4; OV 5)

1 electronic_discs_dvd

Artwork documents different stages in Frank's career and includes drawings and sketches in dry point, pencil and watercolor, and three small paintings. Also included are Frank's son, Pablo's, sketchbook and loose drawings, which reflect his artistic lineage, and drawings by her aunt, Sylvia Weinstein.

Box 4, Folder 1	Diorama depicting a forest at night with three figures, undated
Box 2, Folder 11	Drawings by Pablo, circa 1950s-circa1970s
Box 2, Folder 12	Drawings by Pablo, Sketchpad, undated
Box 2, Folder 13	Drawings by Sylvia Weinstein, circa 1930s
Box 2, Folder 14	Drawings, Dry Points and Stencils from trip to Italy with Red Grooms, circa 1960
Box 2, Folder 15	Loose Drawings, circa 1970s-circa1980s
Oversize 5	Oversize Drawings, Original and Copies, circa 1969-circa 1973
Box 2, Folder 16	Paintings, circa 1990s

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Series 6: Photographic Material, 1884-circa 2006

2.4 Linear feet (Box 2-3; OV 6-12)

Photographic material document Frank's personal and professional life and how they often intertwined. Included are black and white photographs and a few slides and negatives of Frank's sculpture and paintings; Frank and family members at various stages of her life; and family photographs dating back to 1884 that belonged to her mother, Eleanore Lockspeiser, her aunt, Florence Weinstein, and her paternal grandfather, Gregory Weinstein. Photographs include views of pre-Columbian ruins in Mexico, of Frank's sculpture in outdoor settings, of people and landscapes she gathered as source material, and her travels in Italy with Red Grooms during the early 1960s. Many of the oversize photographs, and some of the smaller ones, were taken by known American photographers, including Robert Frank, Max Kozloff, Joel Meyerowitz, Ralph Gibson, and Edward Steichen. Numerous photographs of Frank's artwork were taken by these and other known photographers throughout her career and are found in the folders related to her artwork and studio. Additional photographers include Nancy Crampton, Ralph Gabriner, Jerry L. Thompson, William Suttle, John Cohen, Barbara Brodick, Suzanne Szasz, Wayne Miller, Leo Holub, Elsa Dorfmar, Paul Kolnik, John Gruen, and Robert Delpire.

Box 2, Folder 17	Artwork, color photos, circa 1980s-circa 2000s
Box 2, Folder 18-21	Artwork, Painting and Sculpture, 1975-1990
Box 2, Folder 22-23	Artwork, sculpture, circa 1957-1982
Box 2, Folder 24	Artwork, Studio and Mary Frank in Studio, 1974-1987
Box 2, Folder 25	First Opening at Poindexter Gallery, NYC, 1958
Box 2, Folder 26	Personal; Artwork, Friends, Nature, Travel, circa 1960s-circa 2003
Box 3, Folder 1	Personal, Brazilian Photographer Robert Delpire, circa 1960s
Box 3, Folder 2	Personal, Eleanore and Edward, circa 1909-circa 1945
Box 3, Folder 3	Personal, Eleanore's Photographs, 1933-1988
Box 3, Folder 5-8	Personal, Family, circa 1933-circa 1982
Box 3, Folder 9	Personal, Family and Studio, 1933-circa 1985
Box 3, Folder 10	Personal, Florence Weinstein's Photographs, 1884-1957
Box 3, Folder 11	Personal, Gregory Weinstein's photographs, circa 1909-circa 1985
Oversize 6	Personal, Oversize Photograph taken by Edward Steichen for Andrea, circa 1960s

Oversize 7	Personal, Oversize Photographs of Mary Frank and Artwork, circa 1940s-circa 1970s
Oversize 8	Personal, Oversize Photograph of Mary Frank taken by John Gruen, 1996
Oversize 9	Personal, Oversize Photographs of Mary Frank and Family taken by Joel Meyerowitz, circa 1950s
Oversize 10	Personal, Oversize Photograph of Mary Frank taken by Leo Holub, 1984
Oversize 11	Personal, Oversize Photographs of Mary Frank taken by Max Kozloff, circa 1970s
Oversize 12	Personal, Oversize Photograph of Mary Frank taken by Ralph Gibson, circa 1970s
Box 3, Folder 12	Personal, Photographs Given to Mary Frank, circa 1985
Box 3, Folder 13	Personal, Photographs of Family Taken by Robert Frank, circa 1955-circa 1985
Box 3, Folder 14-15	Personal, Photographs of Mary Frank, circa 1940s-circa 1980s
Box 3, Folder 16	Personal, Photographs of Mary Frank and Nature, circa 1960s-1979, circa 2006
Box 3, Folder 17	Personal, Photographs of Mary Frank's Children taken by John Cohen, 1957
Box 3, Folder 18	Personal, Photographs of Mary Frank taken by Ralph Gabriner, 1981
Box 3, Folder 19	Personal, Ruins in Mexico, circa 1940
Box 3, Folder 20	Studio and Artwork, circa 1973-circa 1989
Box 3, Folder 21	Studio, Artwork and People, circa 1976-circa 1984
Box 3, Folder 22	Studio, Lake Hill, circa 1978
Box 3, Folder 23	Studio; Lake Hill clay, bronze, plaster, rocks, circa 1979
Box 3, Folder 24	Studio, Photographs taken by Jerry L. Thompson

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