



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Margaret Casey Gates Papers, 1934-1988, in the Archives of American Art

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November 2007

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

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Margaret Casey Gates papers
Date:	1934-1988
Identifier:	AAA.gatemarg
Creator:	Gates, Margaret Casey, 1903-1989
Extent:	1 Linear foot
Language:	English .
Summary:	The papers of Washington, D.C. painter Margaret Casey Gates date from 1934-1988, and measure 1.0 linear foot. Gates' papers document her work as a painter, her projects for the New Deal federal arts programs, the Phillips Memorial Gallery and its art school, where she attended school and later worked as secretary and where her husband Robert Franklin Gates was a teacher, and the Washington, D.C. arts scene. Found are scattered correspondence, seven sketchbooks by Gates and two sketchbooks of her divorced husband Robert Franklin Gates. Miscellaneous notes and writings, a scrapbook, printed material, and photographs of Gates, her husband, friends, artwork, and views of the Virgin Islands are also included in the papers.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The Margaret Casey Gates papers were a bequest from Gates' estate in 1994, executed by her niece Joyce D. Svedberg.

Related Material

Also found in the Archives of American Art are the papers of Gates' divorced husband Robert Franklin Gates dating from 1910-1988.

Processing Information

The Margaret Casey Gates papers were processed by Jean Fitzgerald in 2007.

Preferred Citation

Margaret Casey Gates papers, 1934-1988. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions on Access

Use of original papers requires an appointment.

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Biographical Note

Margaret Casey was born in 1903 in the Georgetown section of Washington, D.C. She studied art in the studio of Bertha Perry, and from 1924 to 1926 at the Corcoran Art School. She later studied under Henry Varnum Poor at the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center.

After working as a commercial artist from 1928-1929, Casey began studying at the Phillips Memorial Gallery in 1931 under C. Law Watkins. There, she met her husband, painter Robert Franklin Gates, and married on January 7, 1933. Robert Franklin Gates (1906-1982), who came to Washington, D.C. in 1930, also studied at the Phillips Gallery Art School and worked with Karl Knaths between 1934 and 1947.

Between 1934 and 1941, Robert Gates, with other artists including Mitchell Jamieson and Prentiss Taylor, made several painting trips to the Virgin Islands on a fine arts commission from the U. S. Treasury Department. Margaret Gates accompanied her husband and produced artwork of her own. She also documented their travels. During this same time, Robert taught at the Phillips Gallery Art School and Margaret was employed as the Art School's secretary. In 1937, they purchased a house in McLean, Virginia where Margaret lived until 1980.

In 1939, Margaret Gates won honorable mention in a national mural competition held by the Section of Fine Arts of the U. S. Public Buildings Administration and was subsequently commissioned by the Federal Works Agency to execute a mural for the Post office at Mebane, North Carolina. The mural was completed and installed in 1941.

During the late 1940s and early 1950s, Margaret Gates wrote articles on art for Washington, D. C. publications including the column "The People vs. Art" for American University's *Right Angle*, and for the magazine *The Washington Spectator*.

Margaret and Robert Gates were divorced circa 1955. They had no children.

Margaret Gates exhibited her work in the first exhibition at the National Gallery of Art in 1941, as one of many winners of a national competition sponsored by the Federal Works Agency for artwork to decorate a Marine hospital for lepers in Louisiana. She also exhibited in the "Group Show of Washington Painters" at the Bignou Gallery in New York City, as well as at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, the Phillips Collection, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, the Cincinnati Art Museum, and the Baltimore Museum of Art. A retrospective of her work was exhibited at the Watkins Gallery of American University in 1981. Several of her paintings are in the collection of the Phillips Gallery.

Margaret Casey Gates died on November 4, 1989, in Mitchellville, Maryland.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Washington, D.C. painter Margaret Casey Gates date from 1934-1988, and measure 1.0 linear foot. Gates' papers document her work as a painter, her projects for the New Deal federal arts programs, the Phillips Memorial Gallery and its art school, where she attended school and later worked as secretary and where her husband Robert Franklin Gates was a teacher, and the Washington, D.C. arts scene. Found are scattered correspondence, seven sketchbooks by Gates and two sketchbooks of her divorced husband Robert Franklin Gates. Miscellaneous notes and writings, a scrapbook, printed material, and photographs of Gates, her husband, friends, artwork, and views of the Virgin Islands are also included in the papers.

Twelve folders of scattered correspondence include letters from the Federal Works Agency and one or two letters each from friends and individuals that reflect Gates' wide range of interests and activities. Correspondents include Betty Jean Clark, Arthur G. Dove, D. R. Fitzpatrick, Alice Garrett, John Gernand, Karl

Knaths, John L. Lewis, a Brazilian artist named Portinari, Julian Lee Rayford, Alfred Stieglitz, and Prentiss Taylor.

Artwork consists of seven of Margaret Casey Gates' sketchbooks and two of Robert Franklin Gates' sketchbooks of both abstract and figural sketches. Margaret's sketchbooks contain landscapes that illustrate her travels to Colorado, Florida, Maine, Maryland, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia, and the Virgin Islands. Sketchbook #2 contains pencil, ink, and pastel drawings of St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands and an intimate drawing of Robert Franklin Gates, Mitchell Jamieson, and Prentiss Taylor asleep on a ship. Artwork also includes a fine caricature of Robert Franklin Gates by Karl Knaths.

Notes and writings primarily consist of scattered notes and brief descriptive accounts of Gates's experiences at the Phillips Gallery, and at the Colorado Springs Art Center. Her extensive descriptions of her travels to the Virgin Islands are also illustrated.

A scrapbook primarily contains clippings, but also includes an award certificate, letters concerning various topics including Pepsi-Cola's annual art competition and Federal Works Agency projects, brochures for the Phillips Gallery Art School and for the McLean Art Club, and a photograph of the mural at the Mebane, North Carolina post office.

Printed material consists of clippings including copies of the rare magazines *The Washington Spectator* and the American University publication *Right Angle*, announcements and catalogs for exhibitions of Gates's work, and miscellaneous booklets and brochures. There is also printed material concerning the Armory Show including a copy of the booklet *The Story of the Armory Show* by Walt Kuhn.

Photographs are of Margaret Casey Gates, Robert Franklin Gates, friends including Prentiss Taylor, her home, and her artwork. Photographs of Margaret and Robert Gates and their artist friends during their visits to the Virgin Islands in the 1930s are of primary interest, offering unique glimpses of that culture during the 1930s. These photographs include aerial photographs of St. Thomas and photographs by Prentiss Taylor.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into 6 series. Each series is arranged chronologically.

Missing Title:

- Series 1: Correspondence, 1934-1986 (Box 1; 12 folders)
- Series 2: Artwork, 1935-1965 (Box 1; 12 folders)
- Series 3: Notes and Writings, 1939-1984 (Box 1; 7 folders)
- Series 4: Scrapbook, 1938-1961 (Box 1; 3 folders)
- Series 5: Printed Material, 1935-1988 (Box 1; 20 folders)
- Series 6: Photographs, 1934-1976 (Box 1; 19 folders)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Art, Modern -- 20th century -- Washington (D.C.)
New Deal, 1933-1939
Post office buildings -- North Carolina
Women artists
Women educators
Women painters

Types of Materials:

Photographs
Scrapbooks
Sketchbooks
Writings

Names:

Armory Show (1913: New York, N.Y.)
Clark, Betty Jean
Dove, Arthur Garfield, 1880-1946
Federal Art Project
Federal Works Agency
Fitzpatrick, Daniel Robert, 1891-1969
Garrett, Alice Warder
Gates, Robert Franklin, 1906-1982
Gernand, John, 1913-1990
Knaths, Karl, 1891-1971
Lewis, John L.
Phillips Collection
Phillips Memorial Gallery. Art School
Rayford, Julian Lee
Stieglitz, Alfred, 1864-1946
Taylor, Prentiss, 1907-1991

Occupations:

Art teachers -- Washington (D.C.)
Painters -- Washington (D.C.)

Container Listing

Series 1: Correspondence, 1934-1986

(Box 1; 12 folders)

Scope and Contents: Correspondence consists of scattered letters concerning art-related activities including letters from the Federal Works Agency enclosing a contract for the post office mural in Mebane, North Carolina. There are also one or two letters from Betty Jean Clark, Arthur G. Dove, D. R. Fitzpatrick, Alice Garrett, John Gernand, Karl Knaths, John L. Lewis, a Brazilian artist named Portinari, Julian Lee Rayford, Alfred Stieglitz, and Prentiss Taylor.

Box 1, Folder 1	Correspondence, undated
Box 1, Folder 2	Correspondence, 1934
Box 1, Folder 3	Correspondence, 1935
Box 1, Folder 4	Correspondence, 1936
Box 1, Folder 5	Correspondence, 1938-1939
Box 1, Folder 6-7	Correspondence, 1940 (2 folders)
Box 1, Folder 8	Correspondence, 1941-1945
Box 1, Folder 9	Correspondence, 1946
Box 1, Folder 10	Correspondence, 1947-1948
Box 1, Folder 11	Correspondence, 1952-1985
Box 1, Folder 12	Correspondence, 1986

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Series 2: Artwork, 1935-1965

(Box 1; 12 folders)

Scope and Contents: Seven sketchbooks by Margaret Casey Gates are of landscapes from travels in Colorado, Florida, Maine, Maryland, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia, and the Virgin Islands. Sketchbook #2 contains drawings of St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands and of Robert Franklin Gates, Mitchell Jamieson, and Prentiss Taylor asleep on a ship. There are two sketchbooks by Robert Franklin Gates of figural and abstract studies. There is also a caricature of Robert Franklin Gates by Karl Knaths.

Box 1, Folder 13	Sketchbook 1 by Margaret Casey Gates, undated
Box 1, Folder 14-15	Sketchbook 2 by Margaret Casey Gates, 1935-1940 (2 folders)
Box 1, Folder 16	Sketchbook 3 by Margaret Casey Gates, 1938-1948
Box 1, Folder 17	Sketchbook 4 by Margaret Casey Gates, 1939
Box 1, Folder 18	Sketchbook 5 by Margaret Casey Gates, 1939
Box 1, Folder 19	Sketchbook 6 by Margaret Casey Gates, 1946-1947
Box 1, Folder 20-21	Sketchbook 7 by Margaret Casey Gates, 1949-1965 (2 folders)
Box 1, Folder 22	Sketchbook by Robert Franklin Gates, undated
Box 1, Folder 23	Sketchbook by Robert Franklin Gates, 1950-1953
Box 1, Folder 24	Caricature Drawing of Robert Franklin Gates by Karl Knaths, undated

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Series 3: Notes and Writings, 1939-1984

(Box 1; 7 folders)

Scope and Contents: Notes and writings primarily consist of descriptive accounts of Gates's experiences at the Phillips Gallery, at the Colorado Springs Art Center, and of her travels to the Virgin Islands in the 1930s. Some of the writings are also illustrated.

Box 1, Folder 25	List of Groceries and Household Items, 1939
Box 1, Folder 26	Notes about Early Days at the Phillips Gallery, 1947
Box 1, Folder 27	Typescript Describing Margaret Casey Gates's Approach to Painting, undated
Box 1, Folder 28	Typescript "The Future of Evolution,", undated
Box 1, Folder 29	Manuscript "The Amateur Traveler at St. Thomas, or Facts and Fancies About the Virgin Islands,", 1936
Box 1, Folder 30	Typescript about Colorado Springs Art Center, 1936
Box 1, Folder 31	Writings by Others, "Dedication of Woodcarving for the Lewinsville Retirement Residence,", 1984

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Series 4: Scrapbook, 1938-1961

(Box 1; 3 folders)

Scope and Contents: The scrapbook contains an award certificate, letters concerning various topics including Pepsi-Cola's annual art competition and Federal Works Agency projects, clippings, exhibition announcements and catalogs, brochures for the Phillips Gallery Art School and for the McLean Art Club, and a photograph of the mural at the Mebane, North Carolina post office.

Box 1, Folder 32-34	Scrapbook, 1938-1961 (3 folders)
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Series 5: Printed Material, 1935-1988

(Box 1; 20 folders)

Scope and Contents: Printed material consists of clippings including copies of the rare magazines *The Washington Spectator* and the American University publication *Right Angle*, announcements and catalogs for exhibitions of Gates's work, and miscellaneous booklets and brochures. There is also printed material concerning the Armory Show including a copy of the booklet *The Story of the Armory Show* by Walt Kuhn.

Box 1, Folder 35	Clippings, undated
Box 1, Folder 36	Clippings, 1936-1949
Box 1, Folder 37	Clippings, 1952
Box 1, Folder 38	Clippings, 1955-1966
Box 1, Folder 39	Clippings, 1968-1979
Box 1, Folder 40	Clippings, 1982-1985
Box 1, Folder 41	Clippings, 1986-1987
Box 1, Folder 42	Clippings, 1988
Box 1, Folder 43	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1935-1939
Box 1, Folder 44	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1943-1945
Box 1, Folder 45	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1946
Box 1, Folder 46	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1947-1949
Box 1, Folder 47	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1953-1981
Box 1, Folder 48	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs for Robert Franklin Gates and for Sarah Baker, 1976-1980, undated
Box 1, Folder 49	Printed Material Concerning the Armory Show, 1938-1988
Box 1, Folder 50	Booklet American Paintings - Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1947
Box 1, Folder 51	Brochures for the Phillips Gallery Art School, 1943-1945
Box 1, Folder 52	Travel Brochures for Key West and the Virgin Islands, undated
Box 1, Folder 53	Picture Postcards, undated

Box 1, Folder 54

Miscellaneous Printed Material, 1946-1988

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Series 6: Photographs, 1934-1976

(Box 1; 19 folders)

Scope and Contents: Photographs are of Margaret Casey Gates, Robert Franklin Gates, friends including Prentiss Taylor, Gates' home, and artwork. There are also photographs of various views of the Virgin Islands in the 1930s including aerial photographs of St. Thomas, and photographs by Prentiss Taylor.

Box 1, Folder 55	Photographs of Margaret Casey Gates, 1934, undated
Box 1, Folder 56	Photographs of Robert Franklin Gates, 1934, undated
Box 1, Folder 57-59	Photographs of Margaret and Robert Gates, 1951, undated (3 folders)
Box 1, Folder 60	Photographs of Margaret and Robert Gates with Friends in the Virgin Islands, 1936, undated
Box 1, Folder 61	Photographs of Miscellaneous Friends, 1973, undated
Box 1, Folder 62	Photographs of the Virgin Islands by Prentiss Taylor, undated
Box 1, Folder 63	Photographs of St. Croix, Virgin Islands, undated
Box 1, Folder 64-67	Miscellaneous Photographs of the Virgin Islands, undated (4 folders)
Box 1, Folder 68	Photographs of McLean, Virginia, Residence, undated
Box 1, Folder 69	Photographs of the Washington, D. C. Area, 1937, undated
Box 1, Folder 70	Photographs of Miscellaneous Locations, 1949, undated
Box 1, Folder 71-72	Photographs of Artwork by Margaret Casey Gates, 1976, undated (2 folders)
Box 1, Folder 73	Miscellaneous Photographs, undated

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