



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Robert Franklin
Gates Papers, 1910-1988, bulk
1928-1988, in the Archives of American Art

Jean Fitzgerald

January 21, 2008

Archives of American Art
750 9th Street, NW
Victor Building, Suite 2200
Washington, D.C. 20001
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions>
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/>

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Robert Franklin Gates papers
Date:	1910-1988 (bulk 1928-1988)
Identifier:	AAA.gaterobe
Creator:	Gates, Robert Franklin, 1906-1982
Extent:	2.3 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	The papers of Washington, D.C. area painter and art instructor Robert Franklin Gates date from 1910-1988, bulk 1928-1988, and measure 2.3 linear feet. Found within the papers are biographical materials; letters from government agencies, museums, galleries, and colleagues; business records primarily concerning transactions with the Jack Rasmussen Gallery; artwork including scattered drawings by Gates and block prints by Joe Goethe and D. Neufeld; two scrapbooks; printed materials; and photographs of Gates, family members, models, artwork, and exhibition installations. There are also photograph albums and miscellaneous photographs documenting a 1936 voyage to the Virgin Islands commissioned by the U.S. Treasury Department.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The Robert Franklin Gates papers were donated in 1995 by Sarita W. Gates, the artist's widow, via legal representative Bradford G. Weekes III.

Related Material

Also in the Archives of American Art are the papers of Gates' first wife Margaret Casey Gates, 1934-1988,

Processing Information

The Robert Franklin Gates papers were processed in December 2007 by Jean Fitzgerald.

Preferred Citation

Robert Franklin Gates papers, 1910-1988, bulk 1928-1988. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions on Access

Use of original papers requires an appointment.

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Biographical Note

Robert Franklin Gates was born on October 6, 1906 in Detroit, Michigan. He studied at the Detroit School of Arts and Crafts, and from 1929 to 1930 attended the Art Students' League in New York. Between 1930 and 1932, Gates studied under C. Law Watkins at the Phillips Gallery Art School in Washington, D.C., later becoming an instructor in life drawing and painting there. During this time, he met fellow student Margaret Casey, and they married on January 7, 1933. Between 1934 and 1938, Robert Gates was an art instructor at the Studio House in Washington, D.C.

In 1934, Gates received a commission from the U.S. Treasury Department Section of Fine Arts to create a series of watercolors of Charles Gardens, South Carolina, and from 1929-1940, murals for post offices in Bethesda, Maryland, Oakland, Maryland, and Lewisburg, West Virginia. In 1936, the Treasury Department also commissioned Gates and fellow artists Mitchell Jamieson and Prentiss Taylor to create series of watercolors of the Virgin Islands, arranging for several voyages there.

Between 1937 and 1942, Gates was a guest instructor at the University of Florida, taught art classes at Hood College in Frederick, Maryland and at the Washington County Museum of Art in Hagerstown, Maryland. He also taught at the Phillips Gallery Art School in Washington, D.C. while his wife was employed as the school secretary. In 1938, Gates received a summer scholarship to study under Henry Varnum Poor at the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center.

During World War II, Gates worked as a civilian technician for the Navy Department doing model making and camouflage design, receiving the Distinguished Civilian Service Award for his work.

After the war, and the closing of the Phillips Gallery Art School, Gates attended classes taught by Bill Calfee at American University. In 1946, he joined the faculty and eventually became chairman of the Art Department in 1954. Robert and Margaret Gates were divorced sometime in the mid-1950s. From 1966 to 1967, Gates was Artist-in-Residence at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, Iraq, under the Department of State Educational and Cultural Exchange Program. In 1967, he married his second wife, Sarita, while in Baghdad.

Gates is represented in the permanent collections of the American University, the Baltimore Museum of Art, the Corcoran Gallery of Art, the Dumbarton Oaks collection, the Phillips Collection, and the Lewisshon collection.

Robert Franklin Gates died on March 11, 1982 in Alexandria, Virginia.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Washington, D.C. area painter and art instructor Robert Franklin Gates date from 1910-1988, bulk 1928-1988, and measure 2.3 linear feet. Found within the papers are biographical materials; letters from government agencies, museums, galleries, and colleagues; business records primarily concerning transactions with the Jack Rasmussen Gallery; artwork including scattered drawings by Gates and block prints by Joe Goethe and D. Neufeld; two scrapbooks; printed materials; and photographs of Gates, family members, models, artwork, and exhibition installations. There are also photograph albums and miscellaneous photographs documenting a 1936 voyage to the Virgin Islands commissioned by the U.S. Treasury Department.

Biographical material includes resumes, biographical accounts, award certificates, records for employment through a State Department Specialists Grant, address lists, teaching notes, writings about Gates, and a guest book signed by colleagues celebrating Gates' forty years at American University. There is also a group of Navy Department records documenting Gates' employment designing three-dimensional photo-surfaced topography models for use by troops during World War II.

Letters are primarily from the U.S. Treasury Department and the Federal Works Agency discussing commissions, including the painting of post office murals in Maryland and West Virginia, and from various museums and galleries discussing exhibitions and other art-related activities. There are one or two letters each from colleagues Alice Acheson, Adelyn Breeskin, Charles Burchfield, Alida Conover, John Gernand, Duncan Phillips, Henry Varnum Poor, and Prentiss Taylor. Some letters are Christmas cards decorated with original block prints.

Business records primarily document Gates' interaction with the Jack Rasmussen Gallery in Washington, D.C., but also include miscellaneous sales records and pay stubs from American University.

Artwork consists of scattered drawings of modern houses by Gates and abstract sketches by others, and small block prints by Joe Goethe and D. Neufeld. Two Scrapbooks contain clippings, exhibition announcements and catalogs, and scattered letters.

Additional printed material includes clippings, exhibition announcements and catalogs for Gates and others, prospectuses for art exhibitions, press releases, calendars of events, booklets about color and lenses, brochures for art schools and books, and an unannotated calendar containing a reproduction of one of Gates' paintings.

Photographs are of Robert Gates, various family members including Gates with his first wife photographed by Prentiss Taylor, models, artwork, and exhibition installations. There are two photograph albums and unbound photographs documenting a 1936 voyage to the Virgin Islands commissioned by the U.S. Treasury Department. Images of this trip are of Gates and colleagues including Mitchell Jamieson, the ship Doris Hamlin, the crew, markets, a cock fight, miscellaneous buildings, town squares, and the countryside of the Virgin Islands.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into 7 series. Each series is arranged chronologically:

Missing Title:

- Series 1: Biographical Material, 1928-1975 (Box 1, OV 4; 34 folders)
- Series 2: Letters, 1930-1988 (Box 1; 25 folders)
- Series 3: Business Records, 1961-1982 (Box 1; 5 folders)
- Series 4: Artwork, circa 1962 (Box 1; 6 folders)
- Series 5: Scrapbooks, 1932-1939 (Box 1-2; 4 folders)
- Series 6: Printed Material, 1916-1988 (Box 2; 48 folders)
- Series 7: Photographs, 1910-1982 (Boxes 2-3, OV 4; 20 folders)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Mural painting and decoration, American
Post office buildings
World War, 1939-1945 -- Art and the war

Types of Materials:

Christmas cards
Drawings
Photographs
Scrapbooks

Names:

American University (Washington, D.C.). Fine Arts Dept. -- Faculty
Jack Rasmussen Gallery (Washington, D.C.)
Taylor, Prentiss, 1907-1991
United States. Dept. of the Treasury. Section of Fine Arts

Occupations:

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

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Material, 1928-1975

(Box 1, OV 4; 34 folders)

Scope and Contents: Biographical material includes resumes, biographical accounts, award certificates, and Navy Department employment records which include letters, writings, floor plan drawings, and photographs concerning Gates's designs for three-dimensional photo-surfaced topography models during World War II. Also included are records of employment through a State Department Specialists Grant, address lists, teaching notes, writings about Gates, and a guest book signed by colleagues celebrating Gate's forty years at American University.

Box 1, Folder 1	Student Pilot Permit, 1928
Box 1, Folder 2	Resumes and Biographical Accounts, 1957-1967, undated
Box 1, Folder 3-4	Award Certificates, 1933-1975 (2 folders)
Box 1, Folder 5-24	Navy Department Employment Records, 1942-1951 (20 folders; oversized items housed in OV 4)
Box 1, Folder 25-27	State Department Specialists Grant Employment Records, 1966-1967 (3 folders)
Box 1, Folder 28-29	Address Lists, 1956, undated (2 folders)
Box 1, Folder 30	Teaching Notes, undated
Box 1, Folder 31-32	Writings about Robert Gates, 1962, undated (2 folders)
Box 1, Folder 33	Guest Book for Roberts Gates "Gala," 1975
Box OV 4, Folder	Nine Oversize Drawings of Floor Plans for the Photo-Surfaced Model Project from the Navy Department Employment Records, 1945 (removed from Box 1, F 5-24)

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Series 2: Letters, 1930-1988

(Box 1; 25 folders)

Scope and Contents: Letters are from the U.S. Treasury Department and the Federal Works Agency regarding commissions, and from various museums and galleries discussing exhibitions and other art-related activities. There are one or two letters each from colleagues Alice Acheson, Adelyn Breeskin, Charles Burchfield, Alida Conover, John Gernand, Duncan Phillips, Henry Varnum Poor, and Prentiss Taylor. Some letters are Christmas cards decorated with original block prints.

Box 1, Folder 34	Letters from Correspondents with Unknown Surnames, undated
Box 1, Folder 35	Letters from Correspondents with Surnames "A-G," undated
Box 1, Folder 36	Letters from Correspondents with Surnames "H-Z," undated
Box 1, Folder 37	Letters, 1930-1935
Box 1, Folder 38	Letters, 1936-1938
Box 1, Folder 39	Letters, 1939
Box 1, Folder 40	Letters, 1940
Box 1, Folder 41	Letters, 1941
Box 1, Folder 42	Letters, 1942-1946
Box 1, Folder 43	Letters, 1947
Box 1, Folder 44	Letters, 1948
Box 1, Folder 45	Letters, 1949
Box 1, Folder 46	Letters, 1950-1951
Box 1, Folder 47	Letters, 1952
Box 1, Folder 48	Letters, 1953
Box 1, Folder 49	Letters, 1954
Box 1, Folder 50	Letters, 1955-1959
Box 1, Folder 51	Letters, 1960
Box 1, Folder 52	Letters, 1961-1969

Box 1, Folder 53 Letters, 1970-1971

Box 1, Folder 54 Letters, 1973-1975

Box 1, Folder 55 Letters, 1977-1978

Box 1, Folder 56 Letters, 1979

Box 1, Folder 57 Letters, 1980

Box 1, Folder 58 Letters, 1981-1988

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Series 3: Business Records, 1961-1982

(Box 1; 5 folders)

Scope and Contents: This series consists primarily of business transactions with the Jack Rasmussen Gallery in Washington, D.C. Also included are miscellaneous sales records and pay stubs from American University.

Box 1, Folder 59-61	Records Concerning the Jack Rasmussen Gallery, 1975-1982 (3 folders)
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Box 1, Folder 62	Miscellaneous Sales Records, 1963-1980
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Box 1, Folder 63	Pay Stubs from American University, 1961-1966
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Series 4: Artwork, circa 1962

(Box 1; 6 folders)

Scope and Contents: Artwork consists of scattered drawings by Gates, including images of Bauhaus style houses. There are also block prints by Joe Goethe and D. Neufeld.

Box 1, Folder 64	Drawings by Robert Gates, circa 1962
Box 1, Folder 65	Drawings by an Unidentified Artist, undated
Box 1, Folder 66-68	Block Prints by Joe Goethe, undated (3 folders)
Box 1, Folder 69	Block Print by D. Neufeld, undated

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Series 5: Scrapbooks, 1932-1939

(Box 1, 2; 4 folders)

Scope and Contents: Two scrapbooks contain clippings, exhibition announcements and catalogs, and scattered letters documenting the beginning of Gates's career. One scrapbook has been disbound.

Box 1, Folder 70 Scrapbook 1, 1932-1933

Box 2, Folder 1-3 Scrapbook 2, 1933-1939
(3 folders)

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Series 6: Printed Material, 1916-1988

(Box 2; 48 folders)

Scope and Contents: Printed material includes clippings, exhibition announcements and catalogs, prospectuses for art exhibitions, press releases, calendars of events, booklets about color and lenses, brochures for art schools and books, and an unannotated calendar containing a reproduction of one of Gates's paintings.

Box 2, Folder 4	Clippings, undated
Box 2, Folder 5	Clippings, 1916-1932
Box 2, Folder 6	Clippings, 1933-1934
Box 2, Folder 7	Clippings, 1935
Box 2, Folder 8-9	Clippings, 1936 (2 folders)
Box 2, Folder 10	Clippings, 1937-1939
Box 2, Folder 11	Clippings, 1940-1942
Box 2, Folder 12	Clippings, 1946-1947
Box 2, Folder 13	Clippings, 1948-1949
Box 2, Folder 14	Clippings, 1950-1953
Box 2, Folder 15	Clippings, 1954
Box 2, Folder 16	Clippings, 1955-1959
Box 2, Folder 17	Clippings, 1960-1969
Box 2, Folder 18	Clippings, 1977-1978
Box 2, Folder 19	Clippings, 1980-1988
Box 2, Folder 20	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, undated
Box 2, Folder 21	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1932-1933
Box 2, Folder 22	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1934
Box 2, Folder 23	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1935
Box 2, Folder 24	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1936

Box 2, Folder 25	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1937
Box 2, Folder 26	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1938
Box 2, Folder 27	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1939
Box 2, Folder 28	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1940
Box 2, Folder 29	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1941
Box 2, Folder 30	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1942
Box 2, Folder 31	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1943-1944
Box 2, Folder 32	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1946-1947
Box 2, Folder 33	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1948
Box 2, Folder 34	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1949
Box 2, Folder 35	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1950-1952
Box 2, Folder 36	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1953
Box 2, Folder 37	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1954
Box 2, Folder 38	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1955-1959
Box 2, Folder 39	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1960-1962
Box 2, Folder 40	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1975-1978
Box 2, Folder 41	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1980-1988
Box 2, Folder 42	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs for Others, 1931-1940
Box 2, Folder 43	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs for Others, 1947-1982
Box 2, Folder 44	Prospectuses for Art Exhibitions, 1939-1940
Box 2, Folder 45	Press Releases, 1941-1960, undated
Box 2, Folder 46	Calendars of Events, 1948-1953
Box 2, Folder 47	Booklets Concerning Color, undated
Box 2, Folder 48	Booklet Concerning Lenses, 1944

Box 2, Folder 49	Brochures for Schools, 1941-1944
Box 2, Folder 50	Brochure for Books, 1952
Box 2, Folder 51	Unannotated Calendar Containing a Reproduction of a Painting by Robert Gates, 1969

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Series 7: Photographs, circa 1910-1982

(Boxes 2-3, OV 4; 20 folders)

Scope and Contents: Photographs are of Robert Gates, various family members, models, artwork, and exhibition installations. There are also two photograph albums and miscellaneous photographs documenting a 1936 voyage to the Virgin Islands commissioned by the U.S. Treasury Department that include images of Gates and colleagues including Mitchell Jamieson, the ship Doris Hamlin, the crew, markets, a cock fight, miscellaneous buildings, town squares, and the countryside of the Virgin Islands.

Box 2, Folder 52	Photographs of Robert Gates, circa 1910-1982 (2 folders; oversized items housed in OV 4)
Box 2, Folder 53	Photographs of Robert Gates, circa 1910-1982
Box 2, Folder 54-55	Photographs by Sam Tamashiro of Robert Gates Conducting Class, undated (2 folders)
Box 2, Folder 56	Photographs of Family Members, 1934-1967, undated (oversized items housed in OV 4)
Box 2, Folder 57	Photographs by Prentiss Taylor of Robert Gates and Margaret Casey Gates in Charleston, South Carolina, 1934
Box 3, Folder 1	Album 1 of Photographs of Voyage to the Virgin Islands, 1936
Box 3, Folder 2	Album 2 of Photographs of Voyage to the Virgin Islands, 1936
Box 3, Folder 3	Photographs of Voyage to the Virgin Islands, 1936
Box 3, Folder 4	Photographs of Voyage to the Virgin Islands, 1936
Box 3, Folder 5	Photographs of Voyage to the Virgin Islands, 1936
Box 3, Folder 6	Photographs of Voyage to the Virgin Islands, 1936
Box 3, Folder 7	Photographs of Voyage to the Virgin Islands, 1936
Box 3, Folder 8-9	Photographs of Nude Models, undated (2 folders)
Box 3, Folder 10	Photographs of Artwork by Robert Gates, 1939-1972, undated (oversized items housed in OV 4)
Box 3, Folder 11	Photographs of Artwork by Others, undated
Box 3, Folder 12	Photographs of Exhibition Installations, 1940, undated
Box 3, Folder 13	Miscellaneous Photographs, undated

Box OV 4, Folder Three Oversize Photographs of Robert Gates, undated
(separated from Box 2, F52-53)

Box OV 4, Folder Oversize Photograph of a Member of Robert Gates' Family, undated
(separated from Box 2, F54-55)

Box OV 4, Folder Oversize Photograph of Post Office Mural, Bethesda, Maryland, 1939
(separated from Box 3, F10)

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