



# Smithsonian

*Archives of American Art*

## A Finding Aid to the Sonia Gechtoff Papers, 1950-1980, in the Archives of American Art

Jayna M. Josefson

Processing of this collection received federal support from the Collections  
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Women's History Initiative and the National Collections Program

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Sonia Gechtoff papers
<b>Date:</b>	1950-1980
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.gechsoni
<b>Creator:</b>	Gechtoff, Sonia, 1926-2018
<b>Extent:</b>	0.4 Linear feet
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Summary:</b>	The papers of abstract expressionist painter Sonia Gechtoff measure 0.4 linear feet and date from 1950 to 1980. The scattered papers include artwork, biographical material, correspondence, personal business records, photographs, printed material, and writings by Gechtoff.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Sonia Gechtoff donated her papers to the Archives of American Art in 1980.

### Processing Information

The collection was processed, and a finding aid prepared by Jayna Josefson in 2020.

### Preferred Citation

Sonia Gechtoff papers, 1950-1980. 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.

### Conditions Governing Use

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## Biographical / Historical

Sonia Gechtoff (1926-2018) was a painter and printmaker active in San Francisco, California, and New York City, New York.

Gechtoff was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and raised in San Francisco, California. Her parents, Ethel (Etya) and Leonid Gechtoff, were active in the art industry--her mother ran art galleries and her father was a successful painter. Gechtoff studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and, after graduation, moved to San Francisco where she became acquainted with Beat culture and continued her studies at the San Francisco Art Institute. Over the course of her career her style moved toward abstract expressionism. Her works were included at the Guggenheim Museum's Younger American Painters in 1954.

Gechtoff married artist Jim Kelly and together they moved to New York City in the late 1950s, where she continued to paint and was active in the New York art world. Additionally, Gechtoff taught at various institutions later in her career. With Kelly, Sonia Gechtoff had two children, Susannah and Miles. She died in 2018 in New York City.

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## Scope and Contents

The papers of abstract expressionist painter Sonia Gechtoff measure 0.4 linear feet and date from 1950 to 1980. The scattered papers include artwork, biographical material, correspondence, personal business records, photographs, printed material, and writings by Gechtoff.

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## Arrangement

Due to the small size of this collection the papers are arranged as one series.

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## Names and Subject Terms

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

### Subjects:

- Abstract expressionism
- Women artists
- Women painters

### Occupations:

- Painters -- California -- San Francisco
- Painters -- New York (State) -- New York

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Sonia Gechtoff papers, 1950-1980

#### 0.4 Linear feet (Box 1)

**Scope and Contents:** Artworks consist of rough sketches of Gechtoff's paintings that specify dimension and creation dates. Biographical materials include resumes and biographical sketches. The bulk of Gechtoff's correspondence focuses on the exhibition and gallery representation of her works. Correspondents include Carnegie Institute, Fairweather-Hardin Gallery, Ferus Gallery, Oakland Art Gallery, Poindexter Gallery, San Francisco Museum of Art, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, and the Walker Art Center. Also found are letters written by Gechtoff to her family in the late 1960s while she was in Europe.

Personal business records contain loan receipts, a letter of representation from the Ferus Gallery, and a faculty contract with the California School of Fine Arts. Photographs are of works of art and exhibitions. Printed materials include exhibition announcements and catalogs, and clippings. Writings by Gechtoff include a short story, a poem, an open letter to the Women's Caucus for Art, and a notebook used as an exercise in her painting procedure.

Box 1, Folder 1	Artwork, circa 1970s
Box 1, Folder 2	Biographical Material, 1963-1966
Box 1, Folder 3	<a href="#">Correspondence from Sonia Gechtoff to Family, 1969</a>
Box 1, Folder 4	<a href="#">Correspondence, 1950-1969</a>
Box 1, Folder 5	<a href="#">Correspondence, 1970-1980</a>
Box 1, Folder 6	<a href="#">Correspondence - Undated, circa 1970s</a>
Box 1, Folder 7	<a href="#">Personal Business Records, 1954-1963</a>
Box 1, Folder 8-11	Photographs, 1960s-1970s
Box 1, Folder 12-14	Printed Material, 1956-1980
Box 1, Folder 15-16	Writings by Sonia Gechtoff, 1953-circa 1975

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