



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Dorothea Gilder Papers Regarding Cecilia Beaux, 1897-1920, 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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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Dorothea Gilder papers regarding Cecilia Beaux
Date:	1897-1920
Identifier:	AAA.gilddoro
Creator:	Gilder, Dorothea
Extent:	0.6 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	The Dorothea Gilder papers regarding Cecilia Beaux date from 1897 to 1920 and include correspondence between Beaux and Gilder, scattered printed materials, and two photographs of Beaux with Gilder and other friends. The papers are comprised primarily of correspondence between Cecilia Beaux and her close, life-long friend and intimate companion Dorothea Gilder between 1897 and 1920. The letters recount daily activities, travels, work, social life, attitudes, and aspects of their intimate relationship.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The papers were donated by Helena Newman, Dorothea Gilder's daughter, in two separate accessions in 1971 and 1978.

Related Material

The Archives of American Art holds the papers of Cecilia Beaux, as well as an oral history with Rosamund Gilder, Dorothea Gilder's sister and a prominent theater critic.

Alternative Forms Available

The papers of **Dorothea Gilder** in the Archives of American Art were digitized in 2007, and total 1,093 images.

Processing Information

The collection was microfilmed upon accession on microfilm reels 600 and 2786. Papers were merged and re-processed and described in this finding aid by Megan McShea in 2006 and digitized in 2007 as part of the Terra Foundation for American Art Digitization Project.

Preferred Citation

Dorothea Gilder papers regarding Cecilia Beaux, 1897-1920. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions on Access

The collection has been digitized and is available online via AAA's website.

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Biographical Note

Dorothea Gilder was born in 1882 to socially prominent parents Richard Watson Gilder, a poet and publisher of *Century Magazine*, and Helena De Kay Gilder, an artist who had studied with Albert Pinkham Ryder and John La Farge, and who helped to found the Art Students League and the Society of American Artists. Painter Cecilia Beaux enjoyed a close friendship with the New York family from the mid 1890s until the end of her life. They travelled together in France in 1896, where Beaux had gone to see her paintings hung at the Paris salon. In her memoir, *Background with Figures*, Beaux describes extended visits at the Gilder's summer farm in Tyringham, Massachusetts, where the Gilders set up a studio for her in a tobacco barn, in which she painted *Dorothea and Francesca*, a.k.a. *The Dancing Lesson* (1899). She also attended the Gilders' private salon in New York, frequented by prominent artists, writers, musicians, and actors including Mark Twain and Walt Whitman.

Dorothea Gilder was a favorite portrait subject of Beaux's, sitting for numerous sketches and several major paintings, including *Dorothea and Francesca*, *Dorothea in the Woods* (1897), and *After the Meeting* (1914). Letters between Beaux and Dorothea Gilder contain constant references to their intimate, often physical affection for one another, and suggest a romantic relationship between them. In 1911, Gilder began what was to be a brief stage career under the name of Dorothea Coleman. In 1916, she married Dallas D.L. McGrew, a New York architect who had designed Beaux's summer home in Gloucester, Massachusetts and who had recently returned from the ambulance service in France. She had a child, Helena Gilder McGrew in 1917, and died in 1920 at the age of 38.

Scope and Content Note

The Dorothea Gilder papers regarding Cecilia Beaux date from 1897 to 1920 and include correspondence between Beaux and Gilder, scattered printed materials, a photograph of Beaux with Gilder, and a photograph of the two with other friends. The papers are comprised primarily of correspondence between Cecilia Beaux and her close, life-long friend and intimate companion Dorothea Gilder between 1897 and 1920. The letters recount daily activities, travels, work, social life, attitudes, and aspects of their intimate relationship. Also found is scattered third party correspondence. Two folders of printed materials include newspaper reviews of Beaux's 1903 exhibition, and four exhibition catalogs, several of which are not found in the papers of Cecilia Beaux. The photograph is a single snapshot of Beaux with Gilder. One additional photograph of Beaux, Gilder, and friends is found attached to a 1906 letter.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into 3 series:

Missing Title:

- Series 1: Correspondence, 1897-1920 (Boxes 1-2; 0.6 linear feet)
- Series 2: Printed Material, 1897-1910 (Box 2; 2 folders)
- Series 3: Photograph, undated (Box 2; 1 item)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Art -- Collectors and collecting
- Painting
- Women artists
- Women painters

Types of Materials:

- Photographs

Names:

- Beaux, Cecilia, 1855-1942

Occupations:

- Collectors -- New York (State) -- New York
- Painters -- Pennsylvania -- Philadelphia

Container Listing

Series 1: Correspondence, 1897-1920

(Boxes 1-2, 0.5 linear feet)

Scope and Contents: The majority of letters in this series are from Cecilia Beaux to Gilder (about 235) and recount daily activities, travels, social life, work, including details of work in the studio, attitudes, and aspects of Beaux and Gilder's close relationship. Beaux frequently mentions fellow artists and prominent people she meets in her letters, including her experiences painting Admiral Beatty (1919) and Georges Clemenceau (1919-1920). Letters from Beaux were sent from Boston, Philadelphia, Gloucester, New York, Washington (the White House, 1902 and 1904), Paris, and London.

Eleven letters from Gilder to Beaux are found for 1902, and two are found for 1914. Letters to Gilder from her mother Helena De Kay Gilder are found from 1904 and 1908 (one from each year). Letters enclosed with the correspondence are found from Margaret Lesley Bush-Brown (1902), Julia Leavitt Richards (1903), and M.B. Ford of the New Gallery (New York, 1909).

A group photograph of Beaux, Gilder, and others in costume is found enclosed with a letter from 1906, and a clipping with a negative review of Beaux's painting *After The Meeting*, for which Gilder was Beaux's sitter, is found with a letter of 1914.

Letters are arranged chronologically. Most of the letters appear to be complete, but scattered fragments of letters are found.

Box 1, Folder 1	Correspondence, 1897-1899
Box 1, Folder 2	Correspondence, 1900 February-April
Box 1, Folder 3	Correspondence, 1900 May-July
Box 1, Folder 4	Correspondence, 1900 October
Box 1, Folder 5	Correspondence, 1901 January-February
Box 1, Folder 6	Correspondence, 1901 May-December
Box 1, Folder 7	Correspondence, 1902 April-June Notes: Box 1, folders 7-11 contains letter from Dorothea Gilder to Cecilia Beaux, as well as a letter from Margaret Lesley Bush-Brown
Box 1, Folder 8	Correspondence, 1902 February-April
Box 1, Folder 9	Correspondence, 1902 June-August
Box 1, Folder 10	Correspondence, 1902 August-September
Box 1, Folder 11	Correspondence, 1902 October-December

Box 1, Folder 12	Correspondence, 1903 January-April
Box 1, Folder 13	Correspondence, 1903 May-June
Box 1, Folder 14	Correspondence, 1903 July-December
Box 1, Folder 15	Correspondence, 1904 January-February
Box 1, Folder 16	Correspondence, 1904 March-April
Box 1, Folder 17	Correspondence, 1904 May-June
Box 1, Folder 18	Correspondence, 1904 July-December
Box 1, Folder 19	Correspondence, 1905 March-August
Box 1, Folder 20	Correspondence, 1905 September-November
Box 1, Folder 21	Correspondence, 1906 January-February
Box 1, Folder 22	Correspondence, 1906 May-November Notes: Includes photograph depicting Beaux and Gilder in costume with others
Box 1, Folder 23	Correspondence, 1907
Box 2, Folder 1	Correspondence, 1908
Box 2, Folder 2	Correspondence, 1909
Box 2, Folder 3	Correspondence, 1910 April-June
Box 2, Folder 4	Correspondence, 1910 July-October
Box 2, Folder 5	Correspondence, 1911
Box 2, Folder 6	Correspondence, 1912
Box 2, Folder 7	Correspondence, 1913-1914
Box 2, Folder 8	Correspondence, 1916-1917
Box 2, Folder 9	Correspondence, 1919-1920

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Series 2: Printed Materials, 1897-1910, undated

(Box 2; 2 folders)

Scope and Contents: This series contains newspaper clippings and exhibition catalogs. Clippings from 1903 are reviews of Beaux's 1903 exhibition at Durand-Ruel Gallery, and an undated anecdote related to Beaux overheard in a gallery. Exhibition catalogs are from Beaux's exhibitions at American Art Galleries (1897), Durand-Ruel Gallery (1903), Boston Art Club (1907), Macbeth Gallery (1910), and an undated exhibition of Florence Scovel Shinn at Kraushaar Galleries.

Box 2, Folder 10	Clippings, 1903, undated
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Box 2, Folder 11	Exhibition Catalogs, 1897-1910, undated
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Series 3: Photograph, after 1913

(Box 2; 1 item)

Scope and Contents: This series contains a single, undated photograph of the two women with a photographic envelope depicting Woodrow Wilson. Another photograph is found in the Correspondence series with a 1906 letter.

Box 2, Folder 12

[Dorothea Gilder and Cecilia Beaux, after 1913](#)

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