



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Carl Holty Papers,
circa 1860s-1972(bulk 1940-1967),
in the Archives of American Art

Catherine S. Gaines

2007

Archives of American Art
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Table of Contents

Collection Overview	1
Administrative Information	1
Biographical/Historical note.....	2
Scope and Content Note.....	3
Arrangement note.....	3
Names and Subjects	3
Container Listing	5
Series 1: Correspondence, 1940-1972.....	5
Series 2: Writings, 1944-1967.....	6
Series 3: Printed Material, 1931-1972.....	7
Series 4: Miscellaneous Records, 1900, 1966.....	8
Series 5: Photographs, circa 1860s-1972.....	9

Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Carl Holty papers
Identifier:	AAA.holtcarl
Date:	circa 1860s-1972 (bulk 1940-1967)
Creator:	Holty, Carl, 1900-1973
Extent:	1.8 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	The Carl Holty papers are dated circa 1860s-1972 (bulk 1940-1967), measure 1.8 linear feet and contain correspondence, writings, printed material and photographs documenting Holty's career as an abstract painter and painting teacher.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The Carl Holty papers were donated in increments between 1972 and 2006. The bulk of the papers were originally loaned in 1968, and later donated by Holty in 1972. Charles Byrne, a friend of Holty, donated a small amount of correspondence, printed material, and photographs in 1976-1977; family photographs were given by Holty's biographer, Virginia Liles, in 2006.

Separated Materials

The Archives of American Art also holds microfilm of material lent for microfilming (reels N68-93 and N68-105), much of which was subsequently donated. Loaned material that was not later donated includes Holty's letters to his wife, Elizabeth, and daughter, Antonia, letters to Zoe Dusanne, letters from Ulfert Wilkie and Erwin Breithaupt, a small amount of general correspondence, and a typescript copy of Holty's journal. This material remains with the lender and is not described in the collection container inventory.

Related Archival Materials

Six interviews with Carl Holty (in addition to the one described in this finding aid) are available at the Archives of American Art. Three are oral histories conducted by the Archives of American Art, 1964-1968. The others are parts of interview collections accessioned by the Archives: Interviews relating to American Abstract Artists (Ruth Bowman), Anne Bowen Parsons collection of Interviews on Art, and Collette Roberts Interviews with Artists.

In addition, substantial correspondence with Carl Holty is included among the Hilaire Hiler papers and Romare Bearden papers owned by the Archives of American Art.

Available Formats

The bulk of the collection is available on microfilm reels N68-93, N68-105, 439, 670, and 1625 at Archives of American Art offices and through interlibrary loan. Researchers should note that the arrangement of the material described in the container inventory does not reflect the arrangement

of the collection on microfilm. However, when known, references to reel numbers have been added to folder headings.

Processing Information

The bulk of the collection was microfilmed in several installments in the order in which it was received and/or loaned on reels N68-93, N68-105, 439, 670, and 1625. The entire collection was merged and re-processed, arranged and described by Catherine S. Gaines in 2007.

Preferred Citation

Carl Holty papers, circa 1860s-1972 (bulk 1940-1967). Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

The collection is open for research. Use requires an appointment.

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Biographical Note

Carl Holty was born in 1900 to American parents in Freiburg, Germany, where his father was studying medicine. Carl was still an infant when the family returned to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where they lived with his grandparents in a traditional German neighborhood. It was Carl's grandfather who first introduced him to art through visits to a small local commercial gallery.

After showing an interest in being an artist at around age 12, Holty began taking lessons with a local painter. As a teenager he began drawing cartoons and soon set his sights on becoming a poster artist. With that in mind, Holty enrolled at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1919. He soon headed to New York and took courses at the Parsons School of Design and then at the National Academy of Design. In 1923 he returned to Milwaukee and opened a portrait painting studio.

Holty married in 1925 and took his bride to Europe, remaining abroad for the next decade. He entered Hans Hofmann's school in Munich in 1926, and exposure to Hofmann's ideas about color, space, and form greatly influenced and transformed his work. In 1927, the Holtys relocated to Switzerland in search of treatment for Mrs. Holty's tuberculosis. Holty and Hofmann remained in touch, and while in Switzerland, Holty increasingly incorporated Hofmann's teachings into his paintings as they grew more abstract in style.

After his wife's death in 1930, Holty moved to Paris for five years where he participated in several exhibitions and his work was well-received. Robert Delaunay invited him to join *Abstraction-Création*, and the group published some of Holty's work in its magazine.

Upon returning to the United States in 1935, Holty settled in New York City where he eventually remarried and had a daughter. He renewed friendships with Hans Hofmann, Vaclav Vytlacil, and Stuart Davis, whom he had known in Paris. A figure in vanguard art circles, Holty was involved in meetings that resulted in the formation of the American Abstract Artists, and in 1938 he served as the group's chairman.

Holty taught drawing and painting at Brooklyn College from 1950 until his retirement in 1970, when he was designated Professor Emeritus. His years at Brooklyn College were punctuated by brief stints as a visiting instructor at the Art Students League, Washington University (St. Louis), and University of Louisville; he

served as artist-in-residence at the universities of Georgia, Florida, California (Berkeley), and Wisconsin, and the Corcoran School of Art.

He exhibited widely at major museums throughout the United States including: the San Francisco Art Museum, Seattle Art Museum, Whitney Museum of American Art, Carnegie Institute, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Museum of Modern Art, and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Holty's work was shown at major New York galleries such as J. B. Neumann, Samuel Kootz Gallery, and Graham Gallery, and is in the permanent collections of many museums including: Addison Gallery of American Art, Brooklyn Museum, Butler Institute of Art, Carnegie Institute, Smithsonian American Art Museum, and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

Carl Holty died March 22, 1973 in New York City, after a short illness.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Carl Holty are dated circa 1860s-1972 (bulk 1940-1967), measure 1.8 linear feet and consist of correspondence, writings, printed material and photographs documenting Holty's career as an abstract painter and painting teacher.

Correspondence with Romare Bearden, Charles Byrne and Hilaire Hiler concerns art, exhibitions and reviews, education, and news of mutual friends. Holty's writings include articles, autobiographical writings, unpublished manuscripts of a monograph, *Art In America*, and an untitled novel. Also found among his writings is a journal which contains his reminiscences of artist friends and acquaintances, and reflections on art, art history, and his life, personal plans and aspirations.

Printed material consists mainly of clippings about or mentioning Holty, and reviews and publicity relating to *The Painter's Mind*, a book Holty wrote with Romare Bearden. Miscellaneous records consist of a transcript of an interview with Carl Holty and an identification card issued to his father.

Photographs are of artwork, people and places. Also included are 6 photograph albums of Holty's artwork, and a small number of negatives. The people pictured are mainly Holty, friends and family. There is also a group photograph that includes Joan Miró.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 5 series:

Missing Title:

- Series 1: Correspondence, 1940-1972 (Box 1; 5 folders)
- Series 2: Writings, 1944-1967 (Box 1; 0.6 linear ft.)
- Series 3: Printed Material, 1931-1972 (Box 1; 5 folders)
- Series 4: Miscellaneous Records, 1900, 1966 (Box 1; 2 folders)
- Series 5: Photographs, circa 1860s-1972 (Boxes 1-3; 0.9 linear ft.)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Painters -- New York (State) -- New York
Painting -- Study and teaching
Painting, Modern -- 20th century -- New York (State) -- New York

Types of Materials:

Interviews
Photograph albums
Photographs

Names:

Bearden, Romare, 1911-1988
Byrne, Charles B.
Hiler, Hilaire, 1898-1966

Container Listing

Series 1: Correspondence, 1940-1972

Scope and Contents: Carl Holty's correspondence with Romare Bearden, Charles Byrne, and Hilaire Hiler concerns art, exhibitions and reviews, education, and news of mutual friends. Also included are a letter from Margaret Bush-Brown, and a letter and postcard from Hélión.

Box 1, Folder 1 [Bearden Romare, 1948-1953](#)

Box 1, Folder 2 Bush-Brown, Marjorie, undated

Box 1, Folder 3 Byrne, Charles, 1966-1972

Box 1, Folder 4 Hélión, 1948

Box 1, Folder 5 Hiler, Hilaire, 1940-1962

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 2: Writings, 1944-1967

Scope and Contents: Carl Holty's writings consist of a journal, articles, autobiographical writings, and unpublished manuscripts of a monograph titled *Art In America*, and an untitled novel.

Journal entries include reminiscences of artist friends and acquaintances, as well as reflections on art, art history, past experiences, routine events of daily life, plans and aspirations. Included is an incomplete, handwritten copy of Carl Holty's journal covering the periods January 1963-October 1964 and April 1966-May 1967.

Box 1, Folder 6	Articles, "The Way to Creativity" and "Art," , undated
Box 1, Folder 7	Autobiographical Writings (7 mss.), undated
Box 1	Book, Art in America
Box 1, Folder 8	Outlines, undated
Box 1, Folder 9	Section I: "A Million People are Painting," , undated
Box 1, Folder 10	Section I a: "Motives of the Amateur - From Without," , undated
Box 1, Folder 11	Section I b: "Motives of the Amateur - From Within," , undated
Box 1, Folder 12	Section III: [untitled], undated
Box 1, Folder 13	Section IV: "An Historical Survey of American Painting and Recent Trends in Our Taste," , undated
Box 1, Folder 14	Section V: "The Amateur and Modern Art," , undated
Box 1, Folder 15	Section VI: "The Depression and Art in America," , undated
Box 1, Folder 16	Section VII: "Collectors and Patrons," , undated
Box 1, Folder 17	Section VIII: "The Commercial Triumph of Modern Art (and the influence it exerts on all painting today)," , undated
Box 1, Folder 18	Section IX: "Art Appreciation," , undated
Box 1, Folder 19	Section X: "Teaching," , undated
Box 1, Folder 20-22	Journal, 1963-1964, 1966-1967
Box 1, Folder 23	Novel (untitled, unfinished), 1944

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 3: Printed Material, 1931-1972

Scope and Contents: Printed material primarily comprises clippings about or mentioning Holty, and reviews and publicity relating to *The Painter's Mind*, a book Holty wrote with Romare Bearden.

Box 1, Folder 24 Clippings about/mentioning Carl Holty, 1931-1970

Box 1, Folder 25 Exhibition Catalog and Announcement, 1972, undated

Box 1, Folder 26 Miscellaneous Printed Material, undated

Box 1, Folder 27 Reviews and Publicity for *The Painter's Mind* by Romare Bearden and Carl Holty, 1969-1970

Box 1, Folder 28 Reviews and Publicity for *The Painter's Mind* by Romare Bearden and Carl Holty, 1969

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 4: Miscellaneous Records, 1900, 1966

Scope and Contents: Miscellaneous records consist of a transcript of an interview with Carl Holty and an identification card issued to his father.

Box 1, Folder 29 "Carl Holty Interviewed by Nina Wayne, New York University Art Department," 1966

Box 1, Folder 30 University of Freiburg Identification Card issued to Dr. Karl Holty, 1900

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 5: Photographs, circa 1860s-1972

Scope and Contents: Photographs are mainly of Holty, friends and family. Among the folders titled "Carl Holty with Others" is a group shot that includes Joan Miró, as well as several classroom views with students. The albums (6 vols.) contain photographs of art work by Holty, and a few of the artist posed with his paintings.

Arrangement: The series is arranged into 5 subseries:

- 5.1: Artwork, circa 1925-1965
- 5.2: People, circa 1860s-1972
- 5.3: Places, 1962-1964
- 5.4: Photograph Albums, 1936-1972
- 5.5: Negatives, circa 1950s-circa 1970s

5.1: Artwork, circa 1925-1965

Box 1, Folder 31	By Holty, circa 1925-1965, undated
Box 1, Folder 32	By Holty, 1940-1963, undated
Box 1, Folder 33	By Others [student assignment?], undated

5.2: People, circa 1860s-1972

Box 1, Folder 34	Carl Holty, 1936-1972, undated
Box 1, Folder 35	Carl Holty in Studio (119 East 119th St., New York), 1948
Box 1, Folder 36	Carl and Mrs. Holty; Mrs. Holty with Others, undated
Box 1, Folder 37	Carl Holty with Others, 1947, undated
Box 1, Folder 38	Carl Holty with Students and Others, circa 1960s, undated
Box 1, Folder 39	Carl Holty with Students; Students in Classroom, 1958, undated
Box 1, Folder	Friends and Relatives
Box 1, Folder 40	Clara (great aunt), circa 1870-1936
Box 1, Folder 41	Engelman, Peter; Geuder, George, Aunt Geuder, Tina Gauder (sic); Hofmann, circa 1890-1900
Box 1, Folder 42	Grandmother, circa 1860s
Box 1, Folder 43	Holty Family, 1900-1938, undated

Box 1, Folder 44	Jacoby, Sigmund; Kiewert (?); Kisling, Dr.; Kroeck, John, circa 1880s-circa 1900s
Box 1, Folder 45	Landauer Family, circa 1890s-1900s
Box 1, Folder 46	Landauer and Wallace Families, circa 1900
Box 1, Folder 47	Law, Adolf (great uncle); Rindstropp, Samuel; Seeman, John P.; Seligmann, Yetti, circa 1890s-1900s
Box 1, Folder 48	Stern Family, circa 1890s-1900s
Box 1, Folder 49	Wallace Family, circa 1890s-1920s
Box 1, Folder 50	Wasserman, Rabbi and Mrs. (Landauer relatives), circa 1870s-1890s
Box 1, Folder 51	Weinberg, E. Schaefer, circa 1900
Box 1, Folder 52	Unknown (identified, but illegible), 1868-1892, undated
Box 1, Folder	Unidentified
Box 1, Folder 53	Children, circa 1870s-1900s
Box 1, Folder 54	Couples and Groups, circa 1860s-1926, undated
Box 1, Folder 55	Men, circa, 1870s-1900s
Box 1, Folder 56	Women, circa 1870s-1900s

5.3: Places, 1962-1964

Box 1, Folder 57	Carl Holty's Studio, 1964, undated
Box 1, Folder 58	Interiors (unidentified), 1962, undated
Box 1, Folder 59	Lenz Farm; Buildings (unidentified); Landscape, "Near Amerika!!", undated

5.4: Photographs Albums, 1936-1972

Box 2, Folder 1	Vol. 1:, 1936-1942
Box 2, Folder 2	Vol. 2:, 1942-1948
Box 2, Folder 3	Vol. 3:, 1947-1950
Box 3, Folder 1	Vol. 4:, 1950-1957

Box 3, Folder 2 Vol. 5:, 1957-1959

Box 3, Folder 3 Vol. 6:, 1959-1972

5.5: Negatives, circa 1950s-circa 1970s

Box 3, Folder 4 Artwork by Others [student assignment?], undated

Box 3, Folder 5 Carl Holty with Students; Students in Classroom, undated

[Return to Table of Contents](#)