



# Smithsonian

*Archives of American Art*

A Finding Aid to the Buffie Johnson Papers,  
circa 1920-2010, in the Archives of American Art

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2017 April 25

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Buffie Johnson papers
<b>Date:</b>	circa 1920-2010
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.johnbuff
<b>Creator:</b>	Johnson, Buffie
<b>Extent:</b>	3.4 Linear feet
<b>Language:</b>	Collection is in English
<b>Summary:</b>	The papers of New York-based painter Buffie Johnson measure 3.4 linear feet and date from circa 1920-2010. While the collection is primarily composed of printed materials that document her career and exhibition history, a small amount of biographical material, correspondence, writings, exhibition and project files, and photographic material provide more in depth documentation of her personal and professional life.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Donated to Archives of American Art in 1972 and 1980 by Buffie Johnson and in 2016 by Johnson's daughter, Jenny Johnson Sykes.

### Related Materials

Also found in the Archives of American Art are two oral history interviews with Buffie Johnson conducted by Paul Cummings in 1977 and Barbara Shikler in 1982.

### Processing Information

The collection was processed to a minimal level and a finding aid prepared by Hilary Price in 2017.

### Preferred Citation

Buffie Johnson papers, circa 1920-2010. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

### Restrictions

Use of original papers requires an appointment and is limited to the Archives' Washington, D.C. Research Center. Contact Reference Services for more information.

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## Biographical / Historical

Buffie Johnson (1912-2006) was a painter in New York. Born in New York City, Johnson studied art at the University of California, Los Angeles, and then traveled to Europe to study painting with Francis Picabia and Stanley William Hayter. Her first exhibition was in Paris in 1938, after which she showed extensively for more than sixty years in the United States and Europe. In 1959, Johnson was commissioned to paint an abstract mural for the Astor Theatre in New York. She was also known for imaginative restorations of her two Upper East Side homes, and for her friendships with prominent American writers and artists.

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## Scope and Contents

The papers of New York-based painter Buffie Johnson measure 3.4 linear feet and date from circa 1920-2010. While the collection is primarily composed of printed materials that document her career and exhibition history, a small amount of biographical material, correspondence, writings, exhibition and project files, and photographic material provide more in depth documentation of her personal and professional life.

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## Arrangement

The collection is arranged as six series

- Series 1: Biographical Material, circa 1940-2007 (3 folders; Box 1)
  - Series 2: Correspondence, 1950-2009 (0.2 linear feet; Box 1)
  - Series 3: Writings, circa 1960-1995 (3 folders; Box 1)
  - Series 4: Exhibition and Project Files, circa 1959-1995 (0.2 linear feet; Box 1)
  - Series 5: Printed Material, circa 1920-2010 (2.5 linear feet; Box 1-4, OV 5)
  - Series 6: Photographic Material, 1920-2006 (0.5 linear feet; Box 3-4)
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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:

Painters -- New York (State) -- New York  
Women artists  
Women muralists  
Women painters

Types of Materials:

Photographs

Occupations:

Muralists -- New York (State) -- New York

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Biographical Material, circa 1940-2007

#### 3 Folders (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Biographical material dates from circa 1940-2007 and includes an address book, a posthumously received lifetime achievement award, and a few resumes.

Box 1, Folder 1	Address Book, 1940s-1950s
Box 1, Folder 2	Award, Lifetime Achievement, 2007
Box 1, Folder 3	Resumes, 1970s

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## Series 2: Correspondence, 1950-2009

### 0.2 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Correspondence dates from 1950-2009 and is primarily letters from friends and colleagues, with a few back and forth exchanges between Johnson and Paul Bowles. Letters and postcards were received from E.E. Cummings, Sonia Delaunay, Marion Moorhouse, Georgia O'Keeffe, Betty Parsons, Kathleen Raine, and Virgil Thomson. One item of correspondence from Tracy Boyd dates from after Johnson's death and seeks to correct the credit line for an image of Johnson's painting posted online.

Box 1, Folder 4	Bowles, Paul, 1990-1992
Box 1, Folder 5	Boyd, Tracy regarding Johnson's portrait of Tennessee Williams, 2009
Box 1, Folder 6	McNay Art Institute, 1974-1976
Box 1, Folder 7	Betty Parsons Gallery, 1967, 1950
Box 1, Folder 8	Thomson, Virgil, 1982
Box 1, Folder 9	General, 1953-1996

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## Series 3: Writings, circa 1960-1995

### 3 Folders (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Writings date from circa 1960-1995 and include several artist and biographical statements by Johnson, as well as other writings about women and the arts. Titles include, "Archetypes of the Feminine," "The Roots of Feminine Power, and "Women in Art." Also found here are two writings about Johnson by her second husband, Gerald Sykes.

Box 1, Folder 10	Artist and Biographical Statements, circa 1960-1995
Box 1, Folder 11	Other Writings by Johnson, circa 1960-1985
Box 1, Folder 12	Writings by Gerald Sykes regarding Buffie Johnson, 1964, 1969

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## Series 4: Exhibition and Project Files, circa 1959-1995

### 0.2 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Exhibition and project files date from circa 1959-1995 and include documentation of one exhibition, an exhibition proposal, and a mural Johnson completed for the Astor Theatre. Items include correspondence, writing, printed material, and photographic material.

Box 1, Folder 13	Exhibition, Plants (1995), circa 1995
Box 1, Folder 14	Exhibition Proposal for Guggenheim Museum, "The Art of the American Woman, 1943-1983", 1979-1983
Box 1, Folder 15-16	Astor Theatre Mural, circa 1959-1982

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## Series 5: Printed Material, circa 1920-2010

### 2.5 Linear feet (Box 1-4, OV 5)

Scope and Contents: Printed material dates from circa 1920-2010 and extensively documents Johnson's career and dozens of exhibitions through announcements, bulletins, catalogs, clippings, newsletters, periodicals, a few published interviews, and posters. Books include *The Grey Fairy* which Johnson colored as a child, and numerous books from her library inscribed by the authors including, Slate Brown, Lawrence Durrell, Anaïs Nin, and others. A few other items of printed matter include a merchandise catalog, programs, and reports.

Box 1, Folder 17	Book, <i>The Grey Fairy</i> , Hand-Colored by Johnson as a Child, circa 1920
Box 1, Folder 18-22	Books, Inscribed, circa 1928-1959
Box 1, Folder 23	List of Books in Johnson's Library, circa 2010
Box 2, Folder 1-3	Announcements, 1930s-2000s
Box 2, Folder 4	Bulletins and Newsletters, 1950s-1970s
Box 2, Folder 5-7	Clippings, 1940s-1990s Notes: Oversized clippings housed in Box 4, Folders 1-5
Box 2, Folder 8-16	Exhibition Catalogs, 1940s-1980s
Box 3, Folder 1	Exhibition Catalogs, 1990s-2000s
Box 3, Folder 2-11	Periodicals, circa 1940-1991
Box 3, Folder 12	Published Interviews, 1976-1977
Box 3, Folder 13	Other Printed Matter, 1970s-2000s
Box 4, Folder 1-5	Oversized Clippings from Box 2, Folders 5-7
Box OV 5	Posters, 1949-1977

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## Series 6: Photographic Material, 1920-2006

### 0.5 Linear feet (Box 3-4)

Scope and Contents: Photographic material dates from 1920-2006 and is primarily photographic prints, with a few negatives that show Johnson at all stages of her life, in her studio, at exhibitions and openings, and in professional portraits. Other photographs capture the interiors of her residences in New York and document her paintings. One folder contains portraits given to Johnson by her sitters including Ruth Ford, Gypsy Rose Lee, Peter van Eyck, Tennessee Williams, and others.

Box 3, Folder 14	<a href="#">Buffie Johnson, circa 1940-2000</a> Notes: Oversized photograph housed in Box 4, Folder 6
Box 3, Folder 15	Buffie Johnson and Schoolmates, Class Portrait, 1920
Box 3, Folder 16	Exhibition Opening at Grandville Gallery, New York City, 1964
Box 3, Folder 17	Other Exhibitions, 1950s-1960s
Box 3, Folder 18	Family and Friends, circa 1940, circa 1990
Box 3, Folder 19	Portraits Given to Johnson by her Sitters, 1950s-1960s
Box 3	Residences
Box 3, Folder 20	102 Greene Street, New York City, 1998-2006, circa 1980
Box 3, Folder 21	231 East 77 Street, New York City, circa 1969
Box 3, Folder 22	235 East 58 Street, New York City, circa 1946
Box 3, Folder 23	Windover, East Hampton, New York, circa 1960
Box 3, Folder 24	Photographs of Artwork, 1960s-1990s
Box 4, Folder 6	Oversized Photograph of Buffie Johnson from Box 3, Folder 14

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