
Christopher DeMairo

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Collection Overview

Repository: Archives of American Art
Title: Janet Kardon papers
Identifier: AAA.kardjane
Date: 1905
 circa 1950-1995
Extent: 6.7 Linear feet
Creator: Kardon, Janet
Language: English
Summary: The Janet Kardon papers measures 6.7 linear feet and date from 1905, and circa 1950-1995, with the bulk of the records dating from 1975-1991. Papers include exhibition files, professional records, legal records, photographs, printed material, and some audiovisual material. The collection primarily documents Kardon's work on various exhibitions during her time at the Philadelphia College of Art (PCA) and the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), University of Pennsylvania.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information
The collection was donated by Janet Kardon in 2005.

Processing Information
The collection was processed and a finding aid written by Christopher DeMairo in 2019.

Preferred Citation

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.

Researchers interested in accessing audiovisual recordings in this collection must use access copies. Contact References Services for more information.

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Biographical / Historical

Art museum director and curator Janet Kardon, curated multiple exhibitions at the Philadelphia College of Art and then served as director of the Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania, before her appointment as director of the American Craft Museum in New York City.

Kardon received her B.S. in education from Temple University in 1955, and her M.A. in Art History from the University of Pennsylvania in 1966. In 1984 she received an honorary Doctor of Humanities from Moore College of Art.

Kardon was a lecturer at Gwynedd Mercy College (1967) and the Philadelphia College of Art (PCA), from 1968 to 1975, and was hired by the PCA in 1975 as director of exhibitions. While at PCA, Kardon curated fifteen exhibitions including Labryinth (1975) Time (1977), Projects for PCA (1976-1978), and Artists’ Sets and Costumes (1977). In 1979 Kardon accepted a position at the Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania (ICA).

During her decade-long career at ICA, Kardon curated twenty-three exhibitions including Urban Encounters: Art Architecture Audience (1980), Machineworks: Vito Acconci, Alice Aycock, Dennis Oppenheim (1981), Red Grooms' Philadelphia Cornucopia and Other Sculptopictoramas (1982), Siah Armajani (1985), David Salle (1986), and Robert Mapplethorpe: The Perfect Moment (1988). Kardon’s traveling Mapplethorpe exhibition made national headlines in 1990 when Ohio prosecutors charged ICA Director Dennis Barre with obscenity due to the graphic nature of Mapplethorpe’s photographs. Kardon was brought into court as an expert on the topic of photographic art and curation. The charges were ultimately dropped.

In 1989 Kardon became the director of the American Craft Museum.

Scope and Contents

The Janet Kardon papers measures 6.7 linear feet and date from 1905, and circa 1950-1995, with the bulk of the records dating from 1975-1991. Papers include exhibition files, professional records, legal records, photographs, printed material, and some audiovisual material.

The collection primarily documents Kardon’s work on various exhibitions during her time at the Philadelphia College of Art (PCA) and the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), University of Pennsylvania. The files include photographs of artwork, correspondence, audiovisual material, some insurance information, photographs of exhibitions, printed material, and ephemera. Notable people represented include David Salle, Robert Mapplethorpe, Alice Aycock, and Red Grooms.

Professional records consist of papers related to Kardon’s administrative duties while at ICA, PCA, and the American Craft Museum, as well as a few panels and review boards that Kardon served on. The records consist of correspondence, printed material, a resume, audiovisual material, and some artist files.
Printed Material consists of clippings and periodicals, artist books, exhibition catalogs and announcements, and event pamphlets.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged as 3 series.

- Series 1: Exhibition Files, circa 1950-circa 1995

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:
- Women museum curators

Types of Materials:
- Sound recordings
- Video recordings

Names:
- Grooms, Red
- Mapplethorpe, Robert
- Philadelphia College of Art
- University of Pennsylvania. Institute of Contemporary Art

Occupations:
- Art museum curators -- Pennsylvania -- Philadelphia
- Art museum directors -- Pennsylvania -- Philadelphia
Container Listing

Series 1: Exhibition Files, circa 1950-1995

4.1 Linear feet (Box 1-5; OV 9)

Exhibition files relate to Kardon's curated exhibitions while at the Philadelphia College of Art and the Institute of Contemporary Arts. Included are correspondence with artists regarding the installation and completion of artwork; artist files consisting of photographs and research material; and ephemera and printed material. Notable artists represented in the files include Alice Aycock, David Salle, and Robert Mapplethorpe. Also included is a file related to Kardon's work on the 39th Venice Biennale exhibition *Drawings: The Pluralist Decade* (1980).

Kardon’s 1988 traveling exhibit, *Robert Mapplethorpe: The Perfect Moment*, became a topic of national debate when the Corcoran Gallery of Art decided to cancel the exhibition. Janet Kardon was brought in as a topical expert in the court case that followed. The *Perfect Moment* material found here includes papers related to both the exhibition and the court case, such as correspondence, printed material, photographs, notes, and legal proceedings.

Box 1, Folder 1  Artists Shown at PCA Gallery, 1976-1977, circa 1977
Box 1, Folder 2  *Labyrinths* (1975), 1975-1977
Box 1, Folder 3  *Labyrinths* (1975), Interviews, 1975
Box 1, Folder 4-6  *Projects for PCA* (1976), circa 1975-1976
Box 1, Folder 7-8  *Line* (1976), 1976-1977
Box 1, Folder 9-10  *Artists Sketchbooks I and 2* (1976), 1976
Box 1, Folder 11  *Artists' Maps* (1977), circa 1977
Box 1, Folder 12-13  *Time* (1977), 1975-1978
Box 1, Folder 14  *Time* (1977), Scott Burton, 1977-1980
Box 1, Folder 15  *Time* (1977), Performances, circa 1976-1978
Box 1, Folder 16  *Duane Michels: Photographs* (1977), circa 1977
Box 1, Folder 17-20  *Artists' Sets and Costumes* (1977), Artist Files A-M, circa 1977
Box 2, Folder 1-3  *Artists' Sets and Costumes* (1977), Artist Files N-W, circa 1977
Box 2, Folder 4-5  *Artists' Sets and Costumes* (1977), Printed Material, circa 1974-1979
Box 2, Folder 6  
*Artists' Sets and Costumes* (1977), Correspondence, 1977-1978

Box 2, Folder 7  
*George Trakas* (1977), 1977

Box 2, Folder 8-9  

Box 2, Folder 10-11  
*Project for PCA 4* (1978); *Alice Aycock*, circa 1978

Box 2, Folder 12  
*Point* (1978), 1978

Box 2, Folder 13  

Box 2, Folder 14  

Box 2, Folder 15  
1 videocassettes (vhs)

Box 2, Folder 16-17  

Box 2, Folder 18-19  
*David Salle* (1986), 1986

Box 2, Folder 20  
David Salle, Interviewed by Janet Kardon, Transcripts, 1983-1989

Box 2, Folder 21  
David Salle, Interview, undated
1 Sound cassette

Box 2, Folder 22  
David Salle, Biographical Photographs, 1973-1985

Box 3, Folder 1-2  
David Salle, Images, circa 1950-1983

Box 3, Folder 3  
David Salle, General Source Material, circa 1950-1983

Oversize 9  
David Salle, Drawings, circa 1970-1985

Box 3, Folder 4  
David Salle, "Short Videos", circa 1972-1973
1 videoreels (1/2 inch)

Box 3, Folder 5  
David Salle, "What's Cooking"; "Dream/Flowers", 1974
1 videocassettes (u-matic)

Box 3, Folder 6  
David Salle, "What's Cooking"; "Dream/Flowers", 1974
1 videoreel (1/2 inch)

Box 3, Folder 7    David Salle, Images from "What's Cooking", circa 1974
Box 3, Folder 8    David Salle, Exhibition Announcements, circa 1978-1984
Box 3, Folder 9    David Salle, Installation View of Exhibitions, 1976-1980
Box 3, Folder 10   David Salle, Bibliographic Material, 1979-1985, undated
Box 3, Folder 11   David Salle, Periodicals, 1982, 1987
Box 3, Folder 12   Siah Armajani (1985), Meeting at ICA, 1985

Box 3, Folder 13  

Box 3, Folder 14  
1 videocassettes (vhs)

Box 3, Folder 15-16  
Mapplethorpe, Exhibition and Collection Material, circa 1980-1993

Box 3, Folder 17  
Mapplethorpe, XYZ Portfolio, undated

Box 3, Folder 18  
Mapplethorpe, "Lady", 1984  
1 videocassettes (vhs)

Box 3, Folder 19  
Mapplethorpe, "Patti Smith", undated  
1 videocassettes (vhs)

Box 4, Folder 1  
Mapplethorpe, Interview, 1987 August 13  
1 Sound cassette

Box 4, Folder 2  
Mapplethorpe, Exhibit Letters of Congratulations, 1988

Box 4, Folder 3  
Mapplethorpe, Senators' Remarks on NEA, 1989

Box 4, Folder 4-6  
Mapplethorpe, Legal Proceedings, Correspondence and Notes, 1989-1993

Box 4, Folder 7  
Mapplethorpe, Miller Test; Government and Obscenity, circa 1990

Box 4, Folder 8-10  
Mapplethorpe, Legal Proceedings, 1990

Box 4, Folder 11  
Mapplethorpe, Papers Related to a Docudrama on the Trial, 1991

Box 4, Folder 12  
Mapplethorpe, Corcoran Gallery of Art Clippings, 1989

Box 4, Folder 13-20  
Mapplethorpe, Clippings, 1989-1993

Box 4, Folder 21  
Mapplethorpe, Periodicals, 1989-1995

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Series 2: Professional Files, 1967-1993

0.8 Linear feet (Box 5)

This series consists of letters of congratulations to Kardon, papers from symposiums and talks, some gallery reports and financial papers, artist files, a resume, and correspondence related to various organizations that sought out Kardon to sit on panels and review boards.

This series is arranged as 4 sub-series.

- 2.1: Philadelphia College of Art, 1975-1979 (3 folders)
- 2.2: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1967-1989 (5 folders)
- 2.4: Other Professional Files, 1970-1987 (12 folders)

2.1: Philadelphia College of Art, 1975-1979

Box 5, Folder 1  PCA Shows and Events, Letters, 1975-1978

Box 5, Folder 2  Gallery Report, 1978

Box 5, Folder 2  Pennsylvania Council on the Arts Testimony, "State of the Arts", 1979

2.2: Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, 1967-1989

Box 5, Folder 4-5  Congratulation Letters for Position at ICA, 1979

Box 5, Folder 6  Catalog Comments and Appreciation Letters, 1981-1988

Box 5, Folder 7  General Correspondence, 1980-1989

Box 5, Folder 8  Financial Operations, 1967-1986

2.3: American Craft Museum, 1989-1993

Box 5, Folder 9  Announcement, Printed Material, 1989-1990

Box 5, Folder 10  Congratulation Letters for Position at ACM, 1989

Box 5, Folder 11  Resume, circa 1990


1 Sound cassette
2.4: Other Professional Files, 1970-1987

Box 5, Folder 15  Organizational Art Movement Letter to J. Edgar Hoover, 1970

Box 5, Folder 16  Artist Files, Miscellaneous, 1973-1979

Box 5, Folder 17-19  Smithson, Robert, 1973-1974

Box 5, Folder 20  Purchase of "Marcel Duchamp" Print by Irving Penn, 1976

Box 5, Folder 21  Panels and Affiliations, College Art Association, Frank Jewett Mather Award, 1983-1984

Box 5, Folder 22  Panels and Affiliations, National Endowment for the Arts, 1984-1986

Box 5, Folder 23  Panels and Affiliations, School of Art and Design at the University of Chicago, 1987

Box 5, Folder 24  Panels and Affiliations, International Exhibitions Panel, 1987

Box 5, Folder 25  Panels and Affiliations, Wexner Center for the Visual Arts, circa 1987

Box 5, Folder 26  "A Lexicon of the Sixties," Janet Kardon, undated

Box 5, Folder 27  Photographs of Janet Kardon, undated

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2 Linear feet (Boxes 5-8)

This series consists primarily of exhibition catalogs and artist books that are seemingly unrelated to Kardon's curatorial work, and also includes press clippings from magazines and newspapers, exhibition announcements and posters, and pamphlets from the College Art Association of America's annual meeting (1983-1984). Names include Martha Haslanger, Pati Hill, Maria Nordman, Larie Simmons, Richard Kostelanetz, Jean-Pierre Armeaux, George Griffin, Athena Tacha, Stu Horn, Robert Barry, Lucas Sumaras, Hundert Wasser, Dotty Attie, Laurie Anderson, and Ida Applebroog. Also found in this series is a 1905 copy of Elbert Hubbard's publication, *The Philistine*.

Box 5, Folder 28  
Exhibition Ephemera, PCA, circa 1975-1978

Box 5, Folder 29  
Exhibition Ephemera, ICA, circa 1980-1989

Box 5, Folder 30  
Miscellaneous Clippings, circa 1975-1986

Box 5, Folder 31  
Press Clippings, 1980

Box 6, Folder 1-5  
Press Clippings, 1981-1985

Box 6, Folder 6  

Box 6, Folder 7  
*The Philistine*, by Elbert Hubbard, 1905

Box 6, Folder 8  
Aspen No. 5 + 6, The Minimalist Issue, 1967

1 Film reel (8 mm)

Also includes 5 sound reels (vinyl).

Box 6, Folder 9  

Box 6, Folder 10  
*Sick of Love*, by Sue Hertz, 1982

Box 6, Folder 11-15  

Box 6, Folder 16-18  
Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, circa 1973-1991

Box 7, Folder 1-6  
Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, circa 1973-1991

Box 8, Folder 1-2  
Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, circa 1973-1991