



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Helen Boyd Keen Papers,
1936-1986, in the Archives of American Art

Jayna M. Josefson

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Women's History Initiative and the National Collections Program

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Helen Boyd Keen papers
Identifier:	AAA.keenhele
Date:	1936-1986
Extent:	1.5 Linear feet
Creator:	Keen, Helen Boyd, b. 1899
Language:	English .
Summary:	The papers of painter Helen Boyd Keen measure 1.5 linear feet and date from 1936 to 1986. Found are scattered biographical materials, correspondence, writings and notes, subject files on colleagues, printed material, photographs, one scrapbook, sketches, and one sketchbook.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Helen Boyd Keen donated her papers to the Archives of American Art in several installments between 1975 and 1984.

Processing Information

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

Preferred Citation

Helen Boyd Keen papers, 1936-1986. 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.

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Biographical / Historical

Helen Boyd Keen (1899-1992) was a painter active in New York City, New York. She was influenced by Asian art techniques and the landscape of her childhood in the Pacific Northwest.

Helen Boyd Keen attended the Annie Wright School in Tacoma, Washington. She studied art under Mark Tobey for ten years in the Seattle area. In 1945, she moved to New York City where she enrolled at the Art Students League. She exhibited her works in many group shows around the country.

Scope and Contents

The papers of painter Helen Boyd Keen measure 1.5 linear feet and date from 1936 to 1986. Found are scattered biographical materials, correspondence, writings and notes, subject files on colleagues, printed material, photographs, one scrapbook, sketches, and one sketchbook.

Arrangement

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

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Women artists
Women painters

Types of Materials:

Drawings
Scrapbooks
Sketchbooks

Names:

Tobey, Mark

Occupations:

Painters -- New York (State) -- New York

Container Listing

Series 1: Helen Boyd Keen papers, 1936-1986

1.5 Linear feet (Boxes 1-2, OV3)

Helen Boyd Keen's artworks include sketches of children, animals, and foliage, and one sketchbook dated 1947. The sketchbook contains sketches, notes on Keen's Art Students League calligraphy class, and writings by Eduard Corvin, Isak Dinesen, and D.T. Suzuki. Biographical material consists of a resume and excerpts of criticisms of Keen's artwork. Correspondents include the Annie Wright School, John Edgar Bailes, John Ford, Ruth Jenkins, and Dodie Snapp. Photographs depict Keen's artwork and the Pacific Northwest and may be annotated. Keen's writings include two notebooks kept during her lessons under Tobey (1936-1945). A scrapbook consists of news clippings and a photograph of Keen in London.

Subject files represent the bulk of the collection, and concern Keen's friends, colleagues, and teachers, and may include correspondence, printed material, photographs, and writings. Subjects include Mario Bambagini, Phyllis Cummins, Frederick Dockstader, Jonathan Gibson, Colin Graham, Mildred Johnstone, Mary Kennedy, Sally Lewis, Dr. E.A. Lowe, Barbara Morgan, Ben Nicholson, Nancy Wilson Ross, Walter Starcke, Lynne Thompson, and Vaclav Vytlačil. Of note are forty-one letters from Tobey to Keen.

Series is arranged alphabetically by folder title.

Box 1, Folder 1	Artwork, by Helen Boyd Keen, 1972-1974
Box 1, Folder 2	Artwork, Sketchbook, 1947
Box 1, Folder 3	Biographical Material, 1972
Box 1, Folder 4	Correspondence, 1958-1986
Box 1, Folder 5	Photographs, of Pacific Northwest, circa 1940s
Box 1, Folder 6	Photographs, of Works of Art, 1950s-1960s
Box 1, Folder 7-9	Printed Material, Books, 1948-1956
Box 1, Folder 10	Printed Material, Clippings, 1940-1976
Box 1, Folder 11	Printed Material, Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1945-1973
Box 1, Folder 12-13	Printed Material, General, 1947-1984
Box 1, Folder 14	Scrapbook, Mixed Media, 1945-1972
Box 1, Folder 15	Subject File, Mario Bambagini, 1972-1975

Box 1, Folder 16	Subject File, Phyllis Cummings, 1948-1963
Box 1, Folder 17	Subject File, Frederick Dockstander (Heye Foundation), 1966
Box 1, Folder 18	Subject File, Jonathan Gibson, 1968-1974
Box 1, Folder 19	Subject File, Colin Graham, 1962-1979
Box 1, Folder 20	Subject File, Mildred Johnstone, 1960-1975
Box 1, Folder 21-22	Subject File, Mary Kennedy, 1954-1972
Box 1, Folder 23	Subject File, Sally Lewis, 1956-1975
Box 1, Folder 24	Subject File, Dr. E. A. Lowe, 1961
Box 1, Folder 25	Subject File, Barbara Morgan, 1967-1972
Box 1, Folder 26	Subject File, Nguyen Van Dinh, 1965-1975
Box 1, Folder 27	Subject File, Ben Nicholson, 1945-1956
Box 1, Folder 28	Subject File, Nancy Wilson Ross, 1942-1972
Box 1, Folder 29	Subject File, Walter Stracke, 1968-1975
Box 1, Folder 30	Subject File, Lynne Thompson and Vaclav Vytacil, 1956-1964
Box 1, Folder 31-33	Subject File, Mark Tobey, 1938-1974
Box 2, Folder 1-5	Subject File, Mark Tobey, 1938-1974
Oversize 3	Subject File, Mark Tobey, 1938-1974
Box 2, Folder 6-7	Writings, by Helen Keen, 1976-1977
Box 2, Folder 8-9	Writings, by Others, 1960-1973
Box 2, Folder 10	Writings, Notebooks, 1936-1945

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