



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Kate Lang Papers,
1921-1996, in the Archives of American Art

Jetta Samulski

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Archives of American Art
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Kate Lang papers
Identifier:	AAA.langkate
Date:	1921-1996
Extent:	1.1 linear feet
Creator:	Lang, Kate, 1910-1996
Language:	English
Summary:	The papers of self-taught artist Kate Lang consist of a biographical sketch; letters, cards, and instructions from a patron for paintings; notes and other writings; lists of sales and other financial records; newspaper articles about Lang; exhibition announcements; printed source material for paintings; and photographs and snapshots of Lang as a young girl as well as color photographs and snapshots of her artwork. The collection measures 1.1 linear feet and dates from 1921 to 1996.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The papers were donated in 2001 and 2009 by Richard Lang, the son of Kate Lang.

Processing Information

The papers were processed in July 2004 by Jetta Samulski. The finding aid was updated to include the 2009 addition in July 2015 by Kimberley Henze.

Preferred Citation

Kate Lang papers, 1921-1996. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions on Access

The collection is open for research. Use requires an appointment and is limited to the Washington, D.C. research facility.

Ownership and Literary Rights

The Kate Lang papers are owned by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Literary rights as possessed by the donor have been dedicated to public use for research, study, and scholarship. The collection is subject to all copyright laws.

Biographical Note

Kate Lang, born Kathryn Louise Barbour in 1910 in Mobile, Alabama, started painting at age 80. A self-taught artist, she sold her paintings at local flea markets (Washington, D.C.'s Eastern Market on Saturdays and Georgetown Market on Sundays) until her death in 1996. Lang excelled at celebrity and pet portraits painted in the style of contemporary folk art. She held exhibitions at Connection Gallery in Washington, D.C. and George Washington University's Dimrock Gallery in 1992 and at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in 1995.

Scope and Content Note

The Kate Lang papers measure 1.1 linear feet and date from 1921 to 1996. The collection documents the artistic career and creative process of Arlington, Virginia-based self-taught painter Kate Lang. The collection contains a brief biographical account, scattered professional and personal correspondence, writings and notes with sketches by Kate Lang, financial records, clippings, exhibition announcements, and numerous photographs and snapshots of Kate Lang, her artwork, friends and family. The collection compliments the Archives' material on self-taught artists and provides some useful evidence of an alternative market for painting.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as six series:

- Series 1: Biographical Material, 1992 (Box 1; 1 folder)
- Series 2: Letters, 1992-1996, undated (Box 1; 3 folders)
- Series 3: Writings, 1992-1994, undated (Box 1; 6 folders)
- Series 4: Financial Records, 1990-1996, undated (Box 1; 2 folders)
- Series 5: Printed Material, 1991-1996, undated (Box 1, OV 2; 5 folders)
- Series 6: Photographs, 1921-circa 1990s (Box 1, OV 2; 0.6 linear feet)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Flea markets -- Washington (D.C.)
Painting, American -- Economic aspects
Self-taught artists -- Washington (D.C.)
Women painters -- Washington (D.C.)

Types of Materials:

Photographs

Geographic Names:

Washington (D.C.) -- Social life and customs

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Material, 1992

1 folder (Box 1)

This series contains a brief biographical sketch about the life of Kate Lang which appears in the publication *Women in Art*.

Box 1, Folder 1 Kate Lang Biographical Sketch, 1992

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Series 2: Correspondence, 1970-1996, undated

3 folders (Box 1)

Most of the letters to Kate Lang concern art-related matters such as requests for artwork and sales of artwork. There are cards and letters of appreciation from customers as well from the Northern Virginia AIDS ministry and the IONA Senior Services Network in Washington, D.C. for Lang's artwork donations. Also found here is a letter written by Lang to her ex-husband, Jim, regarding mostly financial matters. Correspondence is arranged chronologically.

Box 1, Folder 2-3 Letters and Cards to Kate Lang, 1992-1996, undated

Box 1, Folder 4 Letter to Lang's Ex-Husband, Jim, 1970

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Series 3: Writings, 1992-1994, undated

6 folders (Box 1)

Writings include notes, sketches, and a layout for a booklet of cartoons Kate Lang hoped to publish. Notes and sketches illustrate dimensions, colors, and inscriptions for artwork requested by a collector as well as sketches and plans for original artwork. This series also includes Lang's work schedules and deadlines she made for herself as well as a writing on the history of her training in art.

Box 1, Folder 5	Sketches and Notes for Cartoon Booklet, undated
Box 1, Folder 6	Sketches and Notes for Cartoons and Artwork, undated
Box 1, Folder 7	Notes for Al Marzorini's Painting Requests with Instructions, 1992, undated
Box 1, Folder 8	Notes and Sketches for Artwork, and Work Schedules, 1993, undated
Box 1, Folder 9	Work Schedules and Lists of Artwork to be Done, 1994, undated
Box 1, Folder 10	Writing About Art Training, undated

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Series 4: Financial Records, 1990-1996, undated

2 folders (Box 1)

Financial Records include lists and prices of artwork sold, cost of materials used, expenses incurred for flea market trips, living expenses, a reconciliation book for sales made at flea markets, and a 1993 financial statement.

Box 1, Folder 11 Flea Market Costs and Sales; 1993 Financial Statement; Reconciliation Book, 1990-1996, undated

Box 1, Folder 12 Material Costs, Lists of Artwork and Flea Market Items Sold, 1992-1995

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Series 5: Printed Material, 1991-1996, undated

5 folders (Box 1, OV 2)

This series contains newspaper clippings about Kate Lang and her art, her career at the flea markets, and flea markets in general. These clippings are arranged chronologically. There are two folders of newspaper and magazine clippings which Lang used as inspiration and source material for her artwork. These clippings are arranged by subject. There are newsletters, exhibition announcements and catalogs, as well as business cards for Lang's business contacts and for Kate Lang herself.

Box 1, Folder 13	Newspaper Clippings and Business Cards, 1930, undated
Box 1, Folder 14-15	Newspaper and Magazine Clippings Used as Source Material, 1991-1994, undated
Box 1, Folder 16	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1991-1995
Box OV 2	Oversized Newspaper and Magazine Clippings about Kate Lang, 1992-1996

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Series 6: Photographs, 1921-circa 1990s, undated

0.6 linear feet (Box 1, OV 2)

This series contains original photographs and copies of Kate Lang as a young woman in the 1920s and as an adult in the late 1960s and early 1970s. There is a large photograph of Babe Ruth that Lang likely used as source material. Also found here are dozens of snapshots of artwork, the artist at the flea market, her studio, and an exhibition opening in addition to photographs of Lang with family and friends and several pictures of a memorial party.

Box 1, Folder 17-18	Kate Lang, 1921-1971
Box 1, Folder 19	Kate Lang with Paintings, Friends, and Family, circa 1980s-1990s
Box 1, Folder 20	Kate Lang Exhibitions, 1990s
Box 1, Folder 21	Pastels and Exercises, 1924-1927
Box 1, Folder 22-26	Works of Art, circa 1990s
Box OV 2	Oversized Photograph of Babe Ruth, undated

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