



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

Ralph and Bena Frank Mayer papers

Archives of American Art
750 9th Street, NW
Victor Building, Suite 2200
Washington, D.C. 20001
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions>
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/>

Table of Contents

Collection Overview	1
Administrative Information	1
Scope and Contents.....	1
Scope and Contents.....	2
Scope and Contents.....	2
Scope and Contents.....	2
Scope and Contents.....	2
Biographical / Historical.....	1
Names and Subjects	2
Container Listing	

Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Ralph and Bena Frank Mayer papers
Date:	[ca. 1920]-1964
Identifier:	AAA.mayeralp
Creator:	Mayer, Ralph, 1895-1979
Extent:	4.5 Linear feet ((partially microfilmed on 3 reels))
Language:	English .

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Material on reels D211-D213 was lent for microfilming in 1965 by Ralph Mayer. Portions were subsequently donated along with unmicrofilmed material, 1972-1979, by Ralph and Bena Frank Mayer.

Available Formats

35mm microfilm reel D211-D213 available at Archives of American Art offices and through interlibrary loan.

Restrictions

Use of original papers requires an appointment and is limited to the Archives' Washington, D.C., Research Center. Microfilmed materials must be consulted on microfilm. Contact Reference Services for more information.

Biographical / Historical

Ralph Mayer: conservator, restorer, painter. Died 1979. Bena Frank Mayer: painter. They lived in New York. Ralph Mayer was educated as a chemical engineer, and spent several years working in the manufacture of paints and varnishes. He also studied painting at the Art Students League. His work in conservation and artists' materials led him to found the Artists Technical Research Institute in 1959. Author of *The Artists Handbook of Materials and Techniques* (1940) and *The Painter's Craft* (1948), and numerous articles. Taught at Columbia University.

Scope and Contents

Correspondence, writings, photographs, art work, subject files, scrapbooks, and printed material.

Scope and Contents

REELS D211-D213: Ralph Mayer's correspondence is with artists, conservators, museum directors, publishers, art organizations, and others. Notebooks contain data on 19th century canvas makers and dealers of artists' materials. Also included are correspondence and a ledger regarding restoration and conservation of paintings, 1929-1963; files on Columbia University, the National Academy of Design, the Newark Museum, The New York State Department of Commerce, the Whitney Museum of Art, subway murals, and other subjects; and correspondence with the U.S. Department of Commerce regarding standards for paints and pigments. Photographs are of Ralph Mayer's paintings. Correspondents include: George Biddle, Isabel Bishop, Alexander Brook, Charles Burchfield, Richard A. Florsheim, Victor Hammer, Stefan Hirsch, Peter Hurd, Lilian MacKendrick, Kenneth H. Miller, Walter Pach, Abraham Rattner, John Sloan, and David Smith.

Scope and Contents

Bena Frank Mayer's papers consist of biographical material, clippings, correspondence, exhibition catalogs and announcements, and photographs of her paintings. Two scrapbooks contain printed material, letters, and photographs regarding the Mayers' careers.

Scope and Contents

UNMICROFILMED: Correspondence includes Ralph Mayer's, 1930-1964, mainly concerning the use of artists' materials, Bena Frank correspondence, 1910-1977, and letters concerning Mayer's book, *The Painter's Craft*, 1948. Among his correspondents are Josef Albers, Thomas Hart Benton, Isabel Bishop, Georgia O'Keeffe, Walter Pach, Paul Sample, John Sloan, and Frederic Taubes. Subject files are on the Artists' Laboratory, the Art Students League, Gustav Berger, Huntington Hartford, the MacDowell Colony, the National Academy of Design, Diego Rivera murals, subway murals, and other subjects. Writings consist of papers on commercial standards of paint, a typescript of *The Painter's Craft*, and lecture notes from classes Mayer taught at the Art Students League and Columbia University.

Scope and Contents

Art work consists of sketchbooks and sketches. Photographs are of the Mayers, their studios, family, friends, and paintings. Printed material includes exhibition catalogs and announcements, brochures, clippings, and posters. There are also six scrapbooks, ca. 1930-1940, containing clippings, photographs, letters received, and printed material.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Art -- Conservation and restoration
- Art -- Technique
- Artists' materials

Names:

Biddle, George, 1885-1973
Bishop, Isabel, 1902-1988
Brook, Alexander, 1898-1980
Burchfield, Charles Ephraim, 1893-1967
Florsheim, Richard A., 1916-1979
Hammer, Victor Karl, 1882-
Hirsch, Stefan, 1899-1964
Hurd, Peter, 1904-1984
MacKendrick, Lilian
Mayer, Bena Frank, 1898-1991
Miller, Kenneth Hayes, 1876-1952
Pach, Walter, 1883-1958
Rattner, Abraham
Sloan, John, 1871-1951
Smith, David, 1906-1965

Occupations:

Art restorers
Conservators
Painters -- New York (State) -- New York
Restorers