



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Robert McChesney Papers,
1913-2006, in the Archives of American Art

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Archives of American Art
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Robert McChesney papers
Identifier:	AAA.mcchrobe
Date:	1913-2006
Extent:	6 Linear feet
Creator:	McChesney, Robert Pearson, 1913-2008
Language:	Collection is in English.
Summary:	The papers of artist Robert Pearson McChesney measure 6 linear feet and date from 1913 to 2006. McChesney was an abstract expressionist painter and muralist based in Petaluma, California. The papers include biographical materials, correspondence, exhibition files, printed materials, scrapbooks, and photographic materials.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Robert McChesney loaned three scrapbooks to the Archives of American Art for microfilming in 1975. Mary Fuller McChesney, Robert McChesney's widow, donated the rest of the Robert McChesney papers in 2015.

Separated Materials

The Archives of Art also holds materials lent for microfilming (reel 878) including three scrapbooks. Two of the scrapbooks were later donated and integrated with the collection. The remaining scrapbook is only available on microfilm and is not described in the collection container inventory.

Related Materials

The Archives of American Art has an oral history interview with Robert McChesney conducted in 1964 by Lewis Ferbraché.

Available Formats

Material lent for microfilming is available on 35mm microfilm reel 878 at the Archives of American Art offices and through interlibrary loan.

Processing Information

This collection was processed by Rihoko Ueno in September 2015.

Preferred Citation

Robert McChesney papers, 1913-2006. 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

Robert Pearson McChesney (1913-2008) was a California Abstract Expressionist painter and muralist.

Robert McChesney was born on January 16, 1913 in Marshall, Missouri. His parents were Ruby Eversmann Pearson and Jack Wiley McChesney who ran a photography studio. McChesney attended Washington University School of Fine Arts in St. Louis, Missouri from 1933-1934 and Otis Arts Institute in Los Angeles, California from 1936-1937. In 1937, he married Frances, an artist figure model, and they later divorced.

McChesney worked in the mural division of the depression-era Federal Works Project Administration on the Golden Gate International Exposition (GGIE) in San Francisco from 1938 to 1940. At the GGIE, McChesney and other artists worked on a mural series designed by Herman Volz. During World War II, he served in the U. S. Merchant Marine in the South Pacific. He painted a great deal while he was in the South Pacific and when he returned to San Francisco those paintings became the basis for his first solo exhibition in 1944 at the Richmond and Richmond Gallery.

After the war, McChesney lived in a house in Point Richmond, California with several artists, including the sculptor Mary Fuller whom he married in 1949. Beginning in 1950, he taught at the California School of Fine Arts, California State University at Hayward, and the California Labor School. In 1952, he moved to Sonoma Mountain in Petaluma, California where he built in a house and studio.

Over the course of his artistic career, McChesney had over 40 solo exhibitions and his artwork is included in the collections of many museums such as the Whitney Museum of American Art, Art Institute of Chicago, and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

Robert McChesney died on May 10, 2008 in Sonoma County, California.

Scope and Contents

The papers of artist Robert Pearson McChesney measure 6 linear feet and date from 1913 to 2006. McChesney was an abstract expressionist painter and muralist based in Petaluma, California. The papers

include biographical materials, correspondence, exhibition files, printed materials, scrapbooks, and photographic materials.

Biographical materials consist of legal documents, estate papers, awards, genealogical information, a few notebooks and writings, and other assorted personal papers.

The bulk of the correspondence is with galleries and museums about shows and art sales. There is very limited personal correspondence with friends and family. There are a few holiday cards designed by Mary Fuller and Robert McChesney.

Exhibition files include announcements, catalogs, publicity, reviews, correspondence, exhibition lists, price lists, and other material.

Printed materials consist of clippings, reviews, announcements, catalogs, books, and periodicals.

There are 4 scrapbooks of printed material and photographs of Robert McChesney's shows and artwork.

Photographic materials include photographs, slides, and negatives of Robert McChesney and his artwork along with photographs of travels, friends, and family.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged as 6 series.

- Series 1: Biographical Materials, 1931-1995 (0.5 linear feet; Box 1, OV 9)
- Series 2: Correspondence, 1936-2006 (1 linear feet; Boxes 1-2)
- Series 3: Exhibition Files, 1970-2006 (0.9 linear feet; Boxes 2-3)
- Series 4: Printed Materials, 1945-2006 (0.9 linear feet; Boxes 3-4, OV 9)
- Series 5: Scrapbooks, 1940-2002 (0.9 linear feet; Boxes 6-8)
- Series 6: Photographic Materials, 1913-2002 (1.8 linear feet; Boxes 4-5, 7, OV 9)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Abstract expressionism

Types of Materials:

Awards
Christmas cards
Photographs
Scrapbooks

Names:

McChesney, Mary Fuller

Occupations:

Muralists -- California

Painters -- California

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Material, 1931-1995

0.5 Linear feet (Box 1, OV 9)

This series includes resumes, biographical statements, legal documents, estate papers, awards, genealogical information, a notebook tracking sales and consignments, an address book, and other assorted documents.

This series is arranged chronologically.

Box 1, Folder 1	Print Sales and Consignment Records Book, 1947-1993
Box 1, Folder 2	Divorce Papers, 1948
Box 1, Folder 3	Estate of Jack W. McChesney, 1948
Box 1, Folder 4	Estate of Jay Howe McChesney, 1952-1953
Box 1, Folder 5	Adult Educational Credential, 1952-1963
Box 1, Folder 6	Open Air Art School, 1956
Box 1, Folder 7	Biographical Statements, 1954-1996
Box 1, Folder 8	Artists Equity Association Honorable Mention, 1969 Oversized material housed in OV 9.
Box 1, Folder 9	San Francisco Art Commission Merit Award, 1970 Oversized material housed in OV 9.
Box 1, Folder 10	Address Book, 1971
Box 1, Folder 11	"Slides Out in Circulation" Notebook, circa 1971
Box 1, Folder 12	Legal Documents Related to Accident, 1977-1982
Box 1, Folder 13	McChesney and Pearson Family Genealogy, circa 1991
Box 1, Folder 14	Writings, circa 1993 Drafts of course descriptions and open letters to newspapers.
Box 1, Folder 15	Miscellaneous Personal Papers, 1931-1995

Box OV 9 Oversized Artists Equity Association Honorable Mention from Box 1, Folder 8,
1969

Box OV 9 Oversized San Francisco Art Commission Merit Award from Box 1, Folder 9,
1970

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Series 2: Correspondence, 1936-2006

1 Linear foot (Boxes 1-2)

The bulk of this series is professional correspondence with galleries and museums about exhibitions, sales, consignments, and loans of artwork. There is limited personal correspondence with friends and family aside from correspondence with various people about Robert McChesney's mother Ruby whom he cared for toward the end of her life. There are a few New Year's greeting cards designed by Mary Fuller and Robert McChesney.

Personal correspondence with and about family is grouped together at the beginning of the series. Professional correspondence, which constitutes the bulk of the series, is arranged alphabetically after the family correspondence.

Box 1, Folder 16	Robert McChesney Letter to "Grandmother and Bee", 1936
Box 1, Folder 17-18	Correspondence about Ruby McChesney, 1973-1977
Box 1, Folder 19	McChesney, Jack E., 1975-1985
Box 1, Folder 20	Greeting Cards Designed by Mary Fuller and Robert McChesney, 1988-2006
Box 1, Folder 21	20th Century West Gallery, 1965-1966
Box 1, Folder 22	871 Fine Arts, 1992-1996
Box 1, Folder 23	ADI Gallery, 1975-1976
Box 1, Folder 24	American Federation of Arts, 1947
Box 1, Folder 25	Arleigh Gallery, 1965-1969
Box 1, Folder 26	Art Institute of Chicago, 1947
Box 1, Folder 27	Bay Area Artists for Peace, 1966-1967
Box 1, Folder 28	Bolles Gallery, 1960-1974
Box 1, Folder 29	Bon Marche Gallery, 1963-1964
Box 1, Folder 30-31	Both-Up Gallery, 1972-1977
Box 1, Folder 32	Choice Incorporated, 1977-1978
Box 1, Folder 33	Feingarten Galleries, 1962-1963

Box 1, Folder 34	Galaxy Series Paintings, 1998-2002
Box 1, Folder 35	Garo Dorian Mural, 1976-1978
Box 1, Folder 36	Gump's, Inc., 1952-1957
Box 1, Folder 37	Hansen Gallery, 1968
Box 1, Folder 38	Hayward State Gallery, 1976-1977
Box 2, Folder 1	Heller Gallery, 1983-1984
Box 2, Folder 2	Hobbs Gallery, 1960-1975
Box 2, Folder 3	International Fine Arts Gallery, 1977
Box 2, Folder 4	John Natsoulas Gallery, 2001-2002
Box 2, Folder 5	Kayak Press, 1969-1970
Box 2, Folder 6	Milagro De Taos Gallery, 1974-1990
Box 2, Folder 7	Muskegon Museum of Art, 1979
Box 2, Folder 8	Myrtle Todes Gallery, 1958-1961
Box 2, Folder 9	Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art, 1993
Box 2, Folder 10	Nordness Gallery, 1964-1965
Box 2, Folder 11	Norris, Miles, 1995
Box 2, Folder 12	Orders for Mural Paint, 1976-1977
Box 2, Folder 13	Pat Wall Gallery, 1947
Box 2, Folder 14	Petriat, Paul, 1965-1969
Box 2, Folder 15	Plaques for S. S. Mastonia, 1956-1983
Box 2, Folder 16	Point Reyes Gallery, 1976
Box 2, Folder 17	Richards, Steve, 1989-2000

Box 2, Folder 18	San Diego Department of Social Services, 1979
Box 2, Folder 19	San Francisco Art Commission, 1950-1997
Box 2, Folder 20	San Francisco Museum of Art, 1946-1948
Box 2, Folder 21	San Francisco Theological Seminary, 1965-1969
Box 2, Folder 22	Santa Rosa Junior College, 1956-1957
Box 2, Folder 23	Sonoma Museum of Visual Art, 1999
Box 2, Folder 24	Steve Turner Gallery, 1989-1997
Box 2, Folder 25	Studio C Gallery, 1965
Box 2, Folder 26	Syracuse University Manuscript Collections, 1964-1968
Box 2, Folder 27	Taos Gallery of Modern Art, 1973-1975
Box 2, Folder 28	Triangle Gallery, 1965-1972
Box 2, Folder 29	University of California, Davis, 1969-1970
Box 2, Folder 30	University of St. Thomas, 1977
Box 2, Folder 31	Vietnam Protest Tower, 1965
Box 2, Folder 32	Williams & McCormick, 1988-1990
Box 2, Folder 33	Miscellaneous Correspondence, 1974-1995

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Series 3: Exhibition Files, 1970-2006

0.9 Linear feet (Boxes 2-3)

This series contains material on Robert McChesney's group and solo exhibitions. There are exhibition announcements, catalogs, publicity, reviews, correspondence, exhibition checklists, price lists of artwork, invitation mailing lists, drafts of artist statements, and other material. Original folder titles were retained.

This series is arranged chronologically.

Box 2, Folder 34	Assorted Painting Lists and Return Receipts, 1970-2006
Box 2, Folder 35	Sonoma State College Show (1970), 1970
Box 2, Folder 36	Both-Up Gallery Show (1974), 1974
Box 2, Folder 37	Capricorn Asunder Gallery Show (1974), 1974
Box 2, Folder 38	Center Gallery, <i>The Trading Company</i> Show (1975), 1975
Box 2, Folder 39	California State Gallery Show (1977), 1977
Box 2, Folder 40	Lincoln Gallery Show (1978), 1978
Box 2, Folder 41-42	Marin Civic Art Center Art Galleries Show (1980), 1979-1980
Box 2, Folder 43	Gallery Space Art Show (1984), 1984
Box 2, Folder 44	F. J. Michaels Gallery Show (1985), 1984-1985
Box 2, Folder 45	Adlen Arts, Inc. Show (1986), 1985-1986
Box 2, Folder 46	California Museum of Art Santa Rosa Show (1988), 1988-1995
Box 2, Folder 47	Edward S. Curtis Gallery Show (1989), 1989
Box 2, Folder 48	Carlson Gallery Show (1990), 1990-1997
Box 2, Folder 49	<i>Paper Trails: San Francisco Abstract Expressionism</i> Traveling Exhibition (1993), 1993-1994
Box 2, Folder 50-51	Nevada Museum of Art Show (1995), 1993-1995
Box 3, Folder 1	Fresno Art Museum Show (1996), 1995-1999

Box 3, Folder 2	Laguna Art Museum Show (1996), 1991-1996
Box 3, Folder 3	Mendenhall Gallery Show (1996), 1996
Box 3, Folder 4	Stoa Gallery Show (1996), 1996
Box 3, Folder 5	Annex Galleries Show (1998), 1991-2002
Box 3, Folder 6	Worcester Art Museum Prints Show (1998), 1993-1998
Box 3, Folder 7	Phebe Conley Gallery Show (1999), 1999
Box 3, Folder 8	Santa Rosa City Vision Gallery Show (2000), 2000
Box 3, Folder 9	Thomas McCormick Gallery Show (2002), 2002
Box 3, Folder 10	Cummer Museum of Art Show (2003), 2003
Box 3, Folder 11	Quicksilver Mine Co. Show (2005), 2004-2005
Box 3, Folder 12	San Jose Museum of Art Show (2005-2006), 2005-2006
Box 3, Folder 13	Fresno Art Museum Show (2006), 2006

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Series 4: Printed Material, 1945-2006

0.9 Linear feet (Boxes 3-4, OV 9)

This series includes articles about Robert McChesney and reviews of his artwork, exhibition announcements, catalogs, books, periodicals, news clippings, and other material.

The material in this series is grouped together by document type. Prior to the collection's arrival at the archives, Robert McChesney arranged most of the clippings and reviews about himself and his artwork in loose alphabetical order by title of the publication. This original order was maintained and there are some gaps in the alphabet, such as "G-H" and "T-V" because there were no clippings filed under those letters.

Box 3, Folder 14	Articles About Robert McChesney, A, 1963-1996
Box 3, Folder 15	Articles About Robert McChesney, B-C, 1959-1979
Box 3, Folder 16	Articles About Robert McChesney, C-F, 1974-1989
Box 3, Folder 17	Articles About Robert McChesney, I-L, 1967-1993
Box 3, Folder 18	Articles About Robert McChesney, M-P, 1962-1995
Box 3, Folder 19	Articles About Robert McChesney, R-S, 1959-2001
Box 3, Folder 20	Articles About Robert McChesney, W, 1978-1985
Box 3, Folder 21	Robert McChesney Exhibition Reviews, 1949-1996
Box 3, Folder 22	Robert McChesney Exhibition Announcements, 1945-1994
Box 3, Folder 23	Group Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1963-1984
Box 3, Folder 24	"Stop the X-to Fence" Poster, 1975 Oversized material housed in OV 9.
Box 3, Folder 25	Assorted Periodicals, 1954-2006
Box 3, Folder 26-27	Other Artists' Exhibition Catalogs, 1956-2006
Box 3, Folder 28	<i>The Communist Manifesto in Pictures</i> , 1948
Box 3, Folder 29	<i>Skylight</i> Newsletter, 1945-1946
Box 3, Folder 30	<i>A Changing Season</i> , 1973
Box 4, Folder 1	<i>Remains To Be Seen</i> , 1983

Box 4, Folder 2 News Clippings, circa 1963-2000

Box OV 9 Oversized "Stop the X-to Fence" Poster from Box 3, Folder 24, 1975

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Series 5: Scrapbooks, 1940-2002

0.9 Linear feet (Boxes 6-8)

This series consists of 4 scrapbooks of reviews, catalogs, announcements, and photographs related to Robert McChesney's shows and artwork.

This series is arranged chronologically.

Box 6	Oversized "1940s-1950s" Scrapbook, 1940-1959
Box 7	Oversized "1970s" Scrapbook, 1970-1979
Box 8	Oversized "1980s-1990s" Scrapbook, 1980-1999
Box 8	Oversized "1999" Scrapbook, 1999-2002

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Series 6: Photographic Material, 1913-2002

1.8 Linear feet (Boxes 4-5, 7, OV 9)

This series mostly consists of photographs, slides, and negatives of Robert McChesney and his artwork. There are also photographs of travels, friends, and family, some of which have annotations with identifying information on the verso and others which are completely unlabeled.

The material in this series is grouped together by subject, then arranged chronologically within each grouping.

Box 4, Folder 3-6	Photographs of Robert McChesney, 1913-circa 1995 Oversized material housed in Box 7.
Box 4, Folder 7	Treasure Island Federal Building Mural, circa 1940
Box 4, Folder 8	"New Guinea - O. K" Series, 1943-1945
Box 4, Folder 9	"Post War" Series, 1946
Box 4, Folder 10	Driftwood Sculpture, 1949
Box 4, Folder 11	"Composition" Series, 1949-1950
Box 4, Folder 12	C.S.F.A. Silk Screen, 1951
Box 4, Folder 13	"Mexico A" Series, 1952
Box 4, Folder 14	"Mexico B" Series, 1952
Box 4, Folder 15	"Mountain" Series, 1953-1956
Box 4, Folder 16	"S. S." Series, 1955
Box 4, Folder 17	"Arena" Series, 1958-1962
Box 4, Folder 18	"Arena 78", 1962
Box 4, Folder 19	"Hair Suite" Series, 1963
Box 4, Folder 20	"Bone" Series, 1964-1965
Box 4, Folder 21	"La Noche" Series, 1965
Box 4, Folder 22	"Estrella" Series, 1967-1971

Box 4, Folder 23	"Desert" Series, 1969
Box 4, Folder 24	"Yermo Rojo" Series, 1972-1973
Box 4, Folder 25	"Barranca" Series, 1974-1979
Box 4, Folder 26	San Francisco Social Service Building Mural, 1978
Box 4, Folder 27	"Estallido" Series, 1979-1984
Box 4, Folder 28	"Lahontan" Series, 1984-1989
Box 4, Folder 29	"Canyon Country" Series, 1989
Box 4, Folder 30-31	Assorted Paintings, circa 1935-circa 1995 Oversized material housed in Box 7 and OV 9.
Box 4, Folder 32	Paintings Album, 1964-1999
Box 4, Folder 35	Miscellaneous Artwork, 1934-1954
Box 4, Folder 33-34	Disbound Binder with Slides of Paintings, 1978-2002
Box 5, Folder 1	Gallery Exhibitions, 1947-1970
Box 5, Folder 2	Capricorn Ascending Opening, 1974
Box 5, Folder 3-5	Annotated Photographs of People, circa 1920-circa 1990
Box 5, Folder 6-9	Photographs of Unidentified People, circa 1920-circa 1990
Box 5, Folder 10	"Round the World" Trip, 1949
Box 5, Folder 11	Mexico Trip, circa 1952
Box 5, Folder 12	Taos, New Mexico Trip, 1971
Box 5, Folder 13	Pyramid Lake, Nevada, 1972
Box 5, Folder 14	Guerrero Negro, Mexico Trip, 1974
Box 5, Folder 15-16	Photographs of Places, circa 1930-circa 1970

Box 5, Folder 17	Negatives and Transparencies, circa 1980-1996
Box 7	Oversized Robert McChesney Photographs from Box 4, Folders 4-5, circa 1955-circa 1995
Box 7	Oversized Photograph of Painting from Box 4, Folder 30, circa 1945-circa 1995
Box OV 9	Oversized Photographs of Painting from Box 4, Folder 30, circa 1945-circa 1995

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