



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the James A. McGrath Papers, 1950-2011, in the Archives of American Art

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	James A. McGrath papers
Date:	1950-2011
Identifier:	AAA.mcgrjame
Creator:	McGrath, James A.
Extent:	5.4 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	The papers of arts educator James A. McGrath measure 5.4 linear feet and date from 1950-2011. Included are McGrath's papers concerning his artist's residencies and workshops for the United States Information Agency (USIA) in the Yemen Republic, Saudi Arabia, and the Republic of the Congo, 1990-1995. Also found are McGrath's papers concerning artist William Wiley. These papers date from Wiley's high school days and includes correspondence, writings, student files, printed materials, photographs, and artwork. Letters from Wiley to McGrath span several decades and provide details about his artwork, family, and travels.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The papers were donated by James A. McGrath in five accessions between 2010-2015. A drawing on tree bark was donated by William T. Wiley in 2016.

Separated Material

Six *Documenta* catalogs, originally donated to AAA with the James A. McGrath Papers Concerning William T. Wiley, were transferred to the Smithsonian Institution Libraries.

Related Material

The Archives of American Art also holds several collections related to William T. Wiley including an oral history interview conducted by Paul J. Karlstrom, October 8-November 20, 1997 and the William T. Wiley illustrated journals on microfilm reel 910. The University of Washington also holds papers of James A. McGrath.

Other Finding Aids

Finding aid available for all but additions.

Processing Information

The collection was processed by Eden Orelove in 2011. The finding aid was updated in 2016 by Erin Kinhart to include the additional personal papers of James A. McGrath.

Preferred Citation

James A. McGrath papers, 1950-2011. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions on Access

Use of original papers requires an appointment.

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Biographical Note

Arts educator James A. McGrath was a high school art teacher at Columbia High School in Richland, Washington where he taught William T. Wiley in the mid-1950s. They remained life-long friends. Later, McGrath worked at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe as Director of Arts, Professor of Painting, and Dean. In 1973 he became Director of Arts, Humanities and Culture in the Department of Defense and was stationed in Japan, Korea, Okinawa, Taiwan and the Philippines. He also worked for the United States Information Agency in Yemen, Saudi Arabia and the Republic of the Congo. He continues to be active as an arts education specialist.

William T. Wiley (1937-2021) was a contemporary artist painting and teaching primarily in the San Francisco area. His artwork is associated with the Bay area Funk Movement. Wiley studied at the California School of Fine Arts and completed his MFA in 1962. One year later he joined the faculty of the UC Davis art department along with artists Robert Arneson and Roy DeForest. Wiley's students included Bruce Nauman and Deborah Butterfield.

Wiley's first solo exhibition was held at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in 1960, and he had works in the Venice Biennial (1980) and Whitney Biennial (1983), as well as major exhibitions at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the M.H. de Young Memorial Museum in San Francisco. His artwork is in the collections of the Art Institute of Chicago, the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Corcoran Gallery of Art, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, among many others. Wiley was the recipient of the Guggenheim Fellowship Award in 2004 and, in 2009, the Smithsonian American Art Museum presented a retrospective exhibition of Wiley's career.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of arts educator James A. McGrath measure 5.4 linear feet and date from 1950-2011. Included are McGrath's papers concerning his artist's residencies and workshops for the United States Information Agency (USIA) in the Yemen Republic, Saudi Arabia, and the Republic of the Congo, 1990-1995. Also found are McGrath's papers concerning artist William Wiley. These papers date from Wiley's high school days and includes correspondence, writings, student files, printed materials, photographs, and artwork. Letters from Wiley to McGrath span several decades and provide details about his artwork, family, and travels.

James McGrath's papers regarding his artist's residencies and workshops are currently unprocessed.

Wiley's high school student files consist of exams and two Columbia High School yearbooks with contributions from Wiley. Correspondence includes mostly letters written from Wiley to McGrath, some of which are illustrated. There are also Christmas cards, postcards, prints and a wedding invitation and photograph of Wiley and his wife Mary. Wiley writes about his artwork, family, travels and his mother's death. There are also letters to McGrath from Wiley's first and second wives, Dorothy and Mary, his mother, and artists Robert Rauschenberg and Mark Tobey.

Printed materials include exhibition catalogs and announcements, news and magazine clippings, and the books *Distraction*, *Lyrical* and *Almost Old/New Poems*, all illustrated by Wiley.

Artwork by Wiley includes block prints, sketches and drawings, poems, paintings, prints and posters. Photographs are of Wiley's high school yearbook staff, art work and exhibitions, and a dinner honoring Wiley. There is a signed high school photograph of Wiley and a booklet of photographs of an exhibition of McGrath's art. There are also slides of artwork by Wiley, Bob Hudson and Bill Allan.

Arrangement

The papers are arranged as 2 series.

Missing Title:

- Series 1: James A. McGrath Papers Concerning William T. Wiley (Box 1-3, OVs 4-6; 2.0 linear feet)
- Series 2: Unprocessed James A. McGrath Papers, circa 1990-1995 (Boxes 7-9, OVs 10-12)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Illustrators -- California -- San Francisco
Performance artists -- California -- San Francisco

Types of Materials:

Christmas cards
Drawings
Illustrated letters
Paintings
Photographs
Poems
Postcards
Prints
Sketches

Names:

Rauschenberg, Robert, 1925-2008
Tobey, Mark
Wiley, William T., 1937-2021

Occupations:

Painters -- California -- San Francisco
Sculptors -- California -- San Francisco

Container Listing

Series 1: James A. McGrath Papers Concerning William T. Wiley, 1950-2011

2 Linear feet (Boxes 1-3, OVs 4-5)

Scope and Contents: James A. McGrath papers concerning artist William T. Wiley date from Wiley's high school days and include correspondence, writings, student files, printed materials, photographs, and artwork.

Arrangement: This series is arranged as 5 subseries.

Missing Title:

- 1.1: High School Files, 1953-1956 (Box 1; 5 folders)
- 1.2: Correspondence, 1958-2011 (Box 1; 0.4 linear feet)
- 1.3: Printed Material, 1953-2010 (Boxes 1-3 and OV 5; 1.0 linear foot)
- 1.4: Artwork, 1954-1991 (Boxes 2-3 and OVs 4-6; 0.7 linear feet)
- 1.5: Photographic Material, 1950-2010 (Box 2; 7 folders)

1.1: High School Files, 1953-1956

Scope and Contents: Found here are files related to Wiley's student work from Columbia High School in Richland, Washington. Included are exams, two yearbooks, an original page from a yearbook designed by Wiley, a story letter and a letter of recommendation written for Wiley by McGrath.

Box 1, Folder 1	Student Exams, 1953-1954
Box 1, Folder 2	Story Letter, 1955 April 9
Box 1, Folder 3	Yearbook, 1955
Box 1, Folder 4	Letter of Recommendation for Wiley, 1956
Box 1, Folder 5	Yearbook, 1956

1.2: Correspondence, 1958-2011

Scope and Contents: Correspondence is mostly comprised of letters written from Wiley to McGrath. Included are Christmas cards, illustrated letters from Wiley and his mother to McGrath, postcards, prints and a wedding invitation and photograph of Wiley and his wife Mary. Wiley writes about his artwork, family, travels and his mother's death. There are also letters to McGrath from Wiley's first and second wives, Dorothy and Mary, and artists Robert Rauschenberg and Mark Tobey.

Box 1, Folder 6	Illustrated Letter, 1958-1959
Box 1, Folder 7	Letters from Mark Tobey and Robert Rauschenburg to McGrath, 1958-1961
Box 1, Folder 8	Letters, 1967-1969

Box 1, Folder 9	Christmas Story, circa 1970s
Box 1, Folder 10	Exhibition Catalog and Letter, 1972
Box 1, Folder 11	Postcard and Letter, 1978-1979
Box 1, Folder 12	Letter and Prints, 1981 November 5
Box 1, Folder 13	Christmas Card Print "Cute Rules", 1982
Box 1, Folder 14	Letters and Photographs, 1986
Box 1, Folder 15	Letters, Photocopied Photographs and Poems by Michael Hannon and Mary Wiley, 1991-1992
Box 1, Folder 16	Illustrated Letter from Dorothy Wiley to James McGrath, 1994
Box 1, Folder 17	Christmas Card, 1994
Box 1, Folder 18	Letters and Photocopied Print, 1995
Box 1, Folder 19	Illustrated Letter and Prints, 2001-2004
Box 1, Folder 20	Letter, Notes, Wedding Invitation and Photograph, 2005-2006
Box 1, Folder 21	Christmas Print, 2007
Box 1, Folder 22	Postcards, Photographs and Letters, 2009
Box 1, Folder 23	Assorted Correspondence, 2010
Box 1, Folder 24	Letter, Exhibition Announcement and Print, 2011
Box 1, Folder 25	Letters and Postcards, undated

1.3: Printed Material, 1953-2010

Scope and Contents: Printed materials include exhibition catalogs and announcements, newspaper and magazine clippings, and the books *Distraction*, *Lyrical* and *Almost Old/New Poems*, which are illustrated by Wiley.

Box 1, Folder 26-29	Flair Magazines, February 1950-January 1951
Box 1, Folder 30	Flair Annual, Signed by the Editor and McGrath's Students, 1953 (Oversized item housed in box 3, folder 1)
Box 1, Folder 31	Flair Annual, 1953

(Oversized item housed in box 3, folder 2)

Box 1, Folder 32	Newspaper Clipping, 1954 March 5
Box 1, Folder 33	Inscribed Book, 1955
Box 1, Folder 34	The Diary of Anne Frank Play Poster, 1957 February 16 (Oversized item housed in OV 4)
Box 1, Folder 35	Exhibition Booklet and Tickets, 1957
Box 1, Folder 36	Artforum Magazine, December 1970 (Oversized item housed in box 3, folder 3)
Box 1, Folder 37	Catalog Published by the Berkley University Art Museum, 1971
Box 1, Folder 38	Arts Canada Magazine, June/July 1971
Box 1, Folder 39	Arts Canada Magazine, Spring 1974
Box 1, Folder 40	Allan Frumkin Gallery Newsletter, Fall 1976
Box 1, Folder 41	Exhibition Catalog, 1981
Box 1, Folder 42	Newsweek Article, 1981 January 12
Box 1, Folder 43	Exhibition Catalogs and Gallery Announcements, 1983-1987
Box 1, Folder 44	"An Evening in Honor of Jim McGrath" Event Announcement, 1986 February 20
Box 1, Folder 45	"Profile of a Mentor" by C.M. Hobson, 1986 June 13
Box 1, Folder 46-50	Exhibition Catalogs and Announcements, 1988-1998
Box 1, Folder 51	"Art in the Woods" Exhibition Article, 1996
Box 2, Folder 1	Exhibition Announcements, 2004-2007
Box 2, Folder 2	Distraction, Book Illustrated by Wiley, 2007
Box 2, Folder 3	Overview Newsletter, Spring 2007
Box 2, Folder 4	Lyrca, Book Illustrated by Wiley and Exhibition Announcement, 2008
Box 2, Folder 5	Smithsonian American Art Museum Calendar Newsletter, Fall 2009
Box 2, Folder 6	Exhibition Announcements, 2009-2010

Box 2, Folder 7	Almost Old/New Poems, Book Illustrated by Wiley, 2010
Box 2, Folder 8	San Fransisco Chronicle Feature Story on Wiley, 2010
Box 3, Folder 1	Oversized Flair Annual, Signed by the Editor and McGrath's Students, 1953 (from box 1, folder 30)
Box 3, Folder 2	Oversized Flair Annual, 1953 (from box 1, folder 31)
Box 3, Folder 3	Oversized Artforum Magazine, December 1970 (from box 1, folder 36)
Oversize 4	Oversized Diary of Anne Frank Play Poster

1.4: Artwork, 1954-1991

Scope and Contents: Wiley's artwork include block prints, drawings, poems, paintings, prints and posters. They range from informal sketches on a paper towel and pieces of wood to intricate prints and paintings, including "Harpoon for the Dreamer."

Box 2, Folder 9	Drawing on Paper Towel, circa 1954-1955
Box 2, Folder 10	Drawing on Piece of Wood, circa 1954-1955
Box 2, Folder 11	Poem and Drawing on Board, 1955 May 10 (Oversized item housed in box 3, folder 4)
Box 2, Folder 12	Art Students' Signed Artwork Dedicated to McGrath, 1955 (Oversized item housed in OV 6)
Box 2, Folder 13	Block Prints, 1955
Box 2, Folder 14	Illustrated Letter/Poster, 1955 (Oversized item housed in box 3, folder 6)
Box 2, Folder 15	Three Drawings and Poems, 1955-1957
Box 2, Folder 16	Poster with a Painting and Hand-Copied Poetry, 1977 (Oversized item housed in OV 5)
Box 2, Folder 17	"For Your Guessed" Slippers, circa mid-1980s
Box 2, Folder 18	"Harpoon for the Dreamer," Print Illustrated by Wiley, 1986 (Oversized item housed in OV 5)
Box 2, Folder 19	Letter, Poems and Print, 1990-1991

(Oversized item housed in box 3, folder 5)

Box 3, Folder 4	Oversized Poem and Drawing on Board, 1955 May 10 (from box 2, folder 11)
Box 3, Folder 5	Oversized Letter, Poems and Print, 1990-1991 (from box 2, folder 19)
Box 3, Folder 6	Oversized Illustrated Letter/Poster, 1955 (from box 2, folder 14)
Oversize 5	Oversized Poster with a Painting and Hand-Copied Poetry, 1977 (from box 2, folder 16)
Oversize 5	Oversized "Harpoon for the Dreamer," Print Illustrated by Wiley, 1986 (from box 2, folder 18)
Oversize 6	Oversized Art Students' Signed Artwork Dedicated to McGrath, 1955 (from box 2, folder 12)

1.5: Photographic Materials, ca. 1950s-2010

Scope and Contents: Photographs depict Wiley's high school yearbook staff, exhibited works, a dinner honoring Wiley and slides of Wiley's, Bob Hudson's and Bill Allan's artworks. Additionally, a signed high school photograph of Wiley and a booklet of photographs of McGrath's exhibition are included.

Box 2, Folder 20	Slides, circa 1950s
Box 2, Folder 21	Photograph of High School Yearbook Staff, 1955
Box 2, Folder 22	High School Signed Photograph of Wiley, 1955 December 24
Box 2, Folder 23	Exhibition Photographs, 1975
Box 2, Folder 24	Booklet of Photographs of McGrath's Exhibition, 2002
Box 2, Folder 25	Photograph of Wiley and McGrath, 2009 September
Box 2, Folder 26	Photographs from a Dinner Honoring Wiley and Letter from Photographer Betty Taira, 2009-2010

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Series 2: Unprocessed James McGrath Papers, circa 1990-1995

3.4 Linear feet (Boxes 7-9, OVs 10-12, Artifact)

Scope and Contents: Unprocessed material found here includes nine photograph albums, teaching material, and printed material regarding McGrath's artist's residencies and workshops for the United States Information Agency (USIA) in the Yemen Republic, Saudi Arabia, and the Republic of the Congo, 1990-1995.

Box 7	Unprocessed Addition, circa 1990-1995
Box 8	Unprocessed Addition, circa 1990-1995
Box 9	Unprocessed Addition, circa 1990-1995
Oversize 10	Oversize Unprocessed Addition, circa 1990-1995
Oversize 11	Oversize Unprocessed Addition, circa 1990-1995
Oversize 12	Oversize Unprocessed Addition, circa 1990-1995
Box Artifact	Drawing on Tree Bark by William Wiley

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