



# Smithsonian

*Archives of American Art*

A Finding Aid to the Austin Merrill Mecklem  
and Marianne Greer Appel papers, 1910-2006,  
bulk 1928-1977 in the Archives of American Art

Harriet E. Shapiro

September 27, 2011

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

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Austin Merrill Mecklem and Marianne Greer Appel papers
<b>Date:</b>	1910-2009
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.meckaust
<b>Creator:</b>	Mecklem, Austin Merrill, 1894-1951
<b>Extent:</b>	5 Linear feet 0.035 Gigabytes
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Summary:</b>	The Austin Merrill Mecklem and Marianne Greer Appel papers measure 5.0 linear feet and 0.035 GB and date from 1910-2006, with the bulk of the materials dating from 1928-1977. Correspondence, writings, drawings, printed and digital material, miscellaneous items and photographs document Mecklem as an artist, muralist and art instructor and Appel as an artist, puppet designer and author and illustrator of children's books. A significant part of Appel's papers consists of drafts of two illustrated children's books. There is an unprocessed addition of 3.6 linear feet donated in 2019 relating to Marianne Greer Appel including biographical material, correspondence, writings, rare published and printed material, photographs, and preliminary works of art.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

The papers were donated in 2010 by Sarah Greer Mecklem and Merrill Mecklem Piera, Austin Mecklem's and Marianne Appel's daughters, and in 2019 by Sarah Greer Mecklem.

### Processing Information

The collection was processed by Harriet E. Shapiro in 2011. Born-digital materials were processed by Kirsi Ritosalmi-Kisner in 2019 with funding provided by Smithsonian Collection Care and Preservation Fund.

### Preferred Citation

Austin Merrill Mecklem and Marianne Greer Appel papers, 1910-2006, bulk 1928-1977. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

### Restrictions on Access

Use of original papers requires an appointment.

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## Biographical Note

Artists Austin Merrill Mecklem "Meck" (1894-1951) and Marianne Greer Appel (1913-1988) married in 1937 and lived and worked in Woodstock, New York as part of the Woodstock artists' colony, Maverick. Mecklem died in 1951 at age 56. In 1953, Appel and her two daughters moved to New York City where she pursued a career as a puppet designer and author and illustrator of children's books. She worked for puppeteer, Bill Baird, and later, Jim Henson, creator of the Muppets. Appel married Carl Harms, actor and puppeteer, in 1960.

Both Mecklem and Appel were associated with the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Mecklem received notable commissions from the WPA, including the painting of murals for the Recorder of Deeds Building in Washington, D. C., the Wrangell, Alaska Custom House and Post Office, and the Post Office in Portland, Connecticut. Mecklem also taught art at the Museum School in Portland, Oregon, the Art Students League in New York, the Albright Art School in Buffalo, New York, and the Woodstock School of Painting. Mecklem's work has been exhibited in a number of one-man shows and at major museums such as the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C., and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Austin Mecklem was born in Califax, Washington and studied at Washington State University, the San Francisco School of Fine Arts, the Art Students League in New York and in Paris and Holland. His first marriage to Hannah Small, also of the Woodstock artist's colony, ended in divorce. In 1906 Appel began her studies at the Woodstock School, where she met Mecklem. Appel's work has been exhibited at museums such as the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Art Institute of Chicago.

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## Scope and Content Note

The Austin Merrill Mecklem and Marianne Greer Appel papers measure 5.0 linear feet and 0.035 GB and date from 1910-2006, with the bulk of materials dating from 1928-1977. Correspondence, writings, drawings, printed and digital material, miscellaneous items and photographs document Mecklem as an artist, muralist and art instructor and Appel as an artist, puppet designer and author and illustrator of children's books. A significant portion of Appel's papers consist of drafts of two illustrated children's books.

Austin Mecklem's papers include biographical materials, personal and professional correspondence and letters, and printed material from the WPA. Printed material includes newspaper clippings, exhibition catalogs, announcements and press releases, and an article from Fortune Magazine concerning the Coulee Dam, a subject of interest to Mecklem. Digital material consists of "Catalogue Raisonee as of February 2009".

Of particular note are Mecklem's lecture and teaching notes on the "Fundamentals of Art" prepared for his class at the Albright Art School. Also, there are photographs of Mecklem's paintings and murals, including his design for a mural for the Recorder of Deeds Building in Washington, D. C. Original artwork by Mecklem includes the blueprint for the Portland, Connecticut Post Office mural, drawings on tissue paper, a watercolor landscape, and a cartoon entitled "Life at the High."

Appel's papers consist of drafts of children's books, "The Story of Juliet" (1945) and "Perlydew" (after 1953), correspondence, writings, sketches and clippings from the period after Mecklem's death. Correspondence includes personal letters and letters from the Federal Works Agency Public Buildings Administration regarding the Agency's purchase of Appel's artwork. Also found are sketch books and an original watercolor signed by Appel.

Also found are photographs of friends and family as well as photographs of Appel's paintings and puppets she designed. Some photographs of puppets carry notes by Jim Henson, creator of the Muppets. Appel's book drafts include manuscripts, both typed and hand-written, with layouts and illustrations in tempera or gouache.

This collection contains scattered notes by the donors which identify or explain materials.

There is an unprocessed addition of 3.6 linear feet donated in 2019 relating to Marianne Greer Appel including biographical material, correspondence, writings, rare published and printed material, photographs, and preliminary works of art.

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## Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 4 Series. Materials are generally arranged by record type and chronologically thereafter.

Missing Title:

- Series 1: Austin Merrill Mecklem papers, 1910-2006 (Boxes 1-2; OV3; 0.9 linear feet, ER01; 0.035 GB)
- Series 2: Marianne Greer Appel papers, 1928-2006 (Boxes 1-2; 0.4 linear feet)
- Series 3: Family Photographs, 1928-1950 (Box 1; 0.1 linear feet)
- Series 4: Unprocessed Addition, circa 1928-2006 (Boxes 4-7; OV 8-10); 3.6 linear feet)

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## Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Artists' studios -- Photographs  
Authors -- New York (State) -- New York  
Illustrated books, Children's  
Muralists -- New York (State) -- New York  
Puppeteers -- New York (State) -- New York

Types of Materials:

Drawings  
Manuscripts  
Photographs  
Sketchbooks  
Sketches  
Watercolors

Names:

Albright Art School (Buffalo, N.Y.) -- Faculty  
Appel, Marianne, 1913-1988  
Federal Works Agency  
Henson, Jim  
Mecklem, Austin Merrill, 1894-1951  
United States. Works Progress Administration

Occupations:

Art teachers -- New York (State) -- New York

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Austin Merrill Mecklem papers, 1910-2009

0.9 Linear feet (Boxes 1-2; OV3)

0.035 Gigabytes (ER01)

Scope and Contents: Biographical materials include Mecklem's high school diploma and graduation program, a United States Passport in his name, membership cards and an automobile registration. Among Mecklem's teaching notes is an essay entitled "A Tentative Introduction to Aesthetics" by Fritz Mart, Ph.D. There also are Work Progress Administration (WPA) bulletins covering the period from April, 1935 to July, 1936 and September, 1936 to February, 1937, WPA assignment cards, and materials explaining the WPA Federal Art Project and its gallery operation. The letters and correspondence primarily concern Mecklem's professional memberships and his efforts to secure employment and exposure for his art. Digital material consists of "Catalogue Raisonee as of Feb. 2009".

Additional Mecklem drawings can be found in a shared sketchbook found in the Appel papers, Series 2.

Box 1, Folder 1	Biographical Material, 1929-1939 Notes: oversized material housed in Box 2
Box 1, Folder 2-3	Professional Correspondence, 1928-1950 2 Folders
Box 1, Folder 4	Letters from Friends, 1930-1950
Box 1, Folder 5	Letters from the Work Progress Administration, 1930-1943 Notes: oversized material housed in OV3
Box 1, Folder 6	Teaching Notes - Albright School of Art, undated
Box 1, Folder 7	Lecture Notes, after 1924
Box 1, Folder 8-9	Exhibition Catalogs and Labels, 1937-1994 2 Folders
Box 1, Folder 10	Exhibition Announcements, 1928-2006
Box 1, Folder 11	Work Progress Administration Bulletins, 1934-1937
Box 1, Folder 12	Clippings, 1928-1999 Notes: oversized material housed in Box 2
Box 1, Folder 13	Drawings, circa 1911-circa 1940 Notes: oversized material housed in Box 2
Box 1, Folder 14-15	Photographs - Artwork, 1920's-1950, 1932-1950

	2 Folders Includes born-digital records, see ER01
Folder ER01	Mecklem Catalogue Raisonné as of February 2009, Digital Photographs, 2009 0.035 Gigabytes (290 computer files)
Box 2	High School Biographical Material: High School Diploma and Graduation Program, 1910 Notes: from Box 1, folder 1
Box 2	Grand Coulee Dam Article, circa 1940 Notes: from Box 1, folder 12
Box 2	Drawings, circa 1911-circa 1940 Notes: from Box 1, folder 13
Oversize 3	Blueprint for Portland, Connecticut Mural, 1940 Notes: from Box 1, folder 5

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## Series 2: Marianne Greer Appel papers, 1928-2006

### 0.4 Linear feet (Boxes 1-2)

**Scope and Contents:** Letters include communications from the Federal Works Agency Public Buildings Administration concerning the Carville, Louisiana Marine Hospital Water Color Competition and reference letters in support of Appel's application for a Guggenheim Fellowship, including one by Ernest Gruening, then Governor of Alaska. Gruening became acquainted with Appel's work when she and Mecklem worked in Alaska for the Works Progress Administration. More personal are the hand-written letters from friends, including notes of condolence on the passing of Mecklem. Writings by Appel express her interest in nature and thoughts about life. There are illustrated drafts of her children's book "The Story of Juliet," about life lessons of a seal. Also found are three sketchbooks including one she shared with Mecklem.

The photographs are of puppets, paintings by Appel, and what are probably family snapshots. The donors' notes suggest that writings that accompany certain puppet photos are notes from Jim Henson, creator of the Muppets.

Box 1, Folder 16	Letters including Works Progress Administration, 1933-1952
Box 1, Folder 17	Writings, Notebooks and Notes, 1954-1977 Notes: oversized material housed in Box 2
Box 1, Folder 18	"The Story of Juliet," Typed Manuscript, 1945
Box 1, Folder 19	"The Story of Juliet," Handwritten, with Illustrations, circa 1945
Box 1, Folder 20	"The Story of Juliet," Handwritten, with Illustrations, 1945 Notes: oversized material housed in Box 2
Box 1, Folder 21	"The Story of Juliet," Handwritten, with Illustrations, circa 1945 2 Folders Notes: Oversized material housed in Box 2
Box 1, Folder 22	Printed Material, 1954-2003
Box 1, Folder 23	Sketchbooks, undated 3 Volumes
Box 1, Folder 24	Photographs of Artwork and Puppets, 1935-1988
Box 2	"The Story of Juliet," Handwrittten, with Illustrations, 1945
Box 2	"The Story of Juliet," Handwritten, with Illustrations, circa 1945 2 Folders
Box 2	"Polydew," after 1953
Box 2	Garden Plan and Notes, undated

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## Series 3: Photographs, 1928-1950

### *0.1 Linear feet (Box 1)*

Scope and Contents: This series contains photographs of both Mecklem and Appel and their family and friends. Among the photographs found are their wedding picture, a snapshot of the couple and their two small daughters, numerous pictures of Mecklem at various ages and a snapshot of the couple's Woodstock house and family members skiing. There also is a photograph of Mecklem with his brothers in front of an abstract painting probably by him.

Box 1, Folder 25      Family Photographs, 1928-1950

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## Series 4: Unprocessed Addition, circa 1928-2006

Box 7	Unprocessed Papers
Box 4	Unprocessed Papers
Box 5	Unprocessed Papers
Box 6	Unprocessed Papers
Oversize 8	Unprocessed Papers
Oversize 9	Unprocessed papers
Oversize 10	Unprocessed Papers

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