



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Francis Sumner Merritt Papers, circa 1930-1980, 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:	Francis Sumner Merritt papers
Identifier:	AAA.merrfran
Date:	circa 1930-1980
Creator:	Merritt, Francis Sumner, 1913-2000
Extent:	5.7 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	The papers of painter and arts administrator Francis Sumner Merritt measure 5.7 linear feet and date from circa 1930 to 1980. The bulk of the papers document his career as the founding director of Haystack Mountain School of Crafts. Included are biographical materials, personal correspondence, writings and notes, professional files on Haystack and other institutions, printed material, and photographs.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Francis Sumner Merritt donated his papers in two accessions in 1980 and 1994.

Related Materials

Also found in the Archives of American Art are the Haystack Mountain School of Crafts records, 1950-1969, and an oral history interview of Francis Sumner Merritt conducted 1979 May 25-June 25, by Robert F. Brown, for the Archives of American Art.

Available Formats

The collection is available on 35 mm microfilm reels 5099-5106 at the Archives of American Art offices and through interlibrary loan. Researchers should note that the arrangement of the material described in the container inventory does not reflect the arrangement of the collection on microfilm.

Processing Information

The collection was processed and a finding aid prepared by Jayna Josefson in 2019.

Preferred Citation

Francis Sumner Merritt Papers, circa 1930-1980. 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. Use of archival audiovisual recordings with no duplicate copies requires advance notice.

Biographical / Historical

Francis Sumner Merritt (1913-2000) was a painter, designer, and arts administrator. He was the first director of the Haystack Mountain School of Crafts in Deer Isle, Maine.

Merritt was born in 1913 in Danvers, Massachusetts. He studied art at multiple schools, including Yale University School of Fine Arts and was a printmaker and painter. In addition to his art, Merritt taught painting at Colby Junior College, the Cranbrook Summer Institute, and Bradford Junior College. Merritt began his arts administrative career as director of the Flint Institute of Art in Detroit, Michigan. He was brought on to be the first director at the Haystack Mountain School of Crafts in Maine. In this position, he encouraged the international study of craft.

Francis Merritt was married to Priscilla Merritt, with whom he had two sons. He died in Belfast, Maine in 2000.

Scope and Contents

The papers of painter and arts administrator Francis Sumner Merritt measure 5.7 linear feet and date from circa 1930 to 1980. The bulk of the papers document his career as the founding director of Haystack Mountain School of Crafts. Included are biographical materials, personal correspondence, writings and notes, professional files on Haystack and other institutions, printed material, and photographs.

Biographical materials contain scattered records relating to Merritt's personal life and career including a scrapbook and a print by Fiske Boyd. Professional files create the bulk of the papers and focus on Merritt's arts administration career at Haystack and other institutions including the Flint Institute of Art and Bradford Junior College. Among the Haystack Mountain School of Crafts material are planning materials, correspondence with many craft artists, financial records, student information, printed material, photographs for various sessions held at the school, and one sound recording concerning a trip to Nigeria.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 6 series.

- Series 1: Biographical Material, 1936-1977 (Box 1; 0.1 linear feet)
 - Series 2: Correspondence, circa 1930-1978 (Box 1; 0.6 linear feet)
 - Series 3: Writings and Notes, circa 1940s-1978 (Box 1; 0.3 linear feet)
 - Series 4: Professional Files, 1940s-1980 (Box 1-5, 8; 4.1 linear feet)
 - Series 5: Printed Material, 1939-1976 (Box 6-7; 0.4 linear feet)
 - Series 6: Photographs, 1949-1970s (Box 7; 0.2 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:

American studio craft movement

Types of Materials:

Drawings
Scrapbooks
Sound recordings

Names:

Boyd, Fiske, 1895-1975
Bradford Junior College
Flint Institute of Arts
Haystack Mountain School of Crafts

Occupations:

Arts administrators -- Maine -- Deer Isle
Painters -- Maine -- Deer Isle

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Material, 1936-1977

0.1 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: This series contains materials relating to Merritt's personal life and career. General materials include short biographical sketches, identification cards, and a high school commencement booklet. A scrapbook contains clippings and exhibition materials from Merritt's painting career and material relating to his induction to the International Institute of Arts and Letters. Artworks are by others and unsigned and include pencil, pen, and paint sketches. Also found are and a pencil sketch portrait of Merritt and a print by Fiske Boyd.

Box 1, Folder 1	General, circa 1950s-1977
Box 1, Folder 2	Day Planner, 1960
Box 1, Folder 3	Financial Records, 1941-1974
Box 1, Folder 4	Scrapbook, Dismantled, 1936-1960
Box 1, Folder 5	Artwork by Others, 1943-1976

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Series 2: Correspondence, circa 1930-1978

0.6 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Merritt's scattered personal correspondence concerns the exhibition of his work and also includes personal letters. Some letters from the 1960s and 1970s may relate to Haystack Mountain School of Crafts but the bulk of those letters are personal thank you notes and holiday cards from students and instructors.

Some correspondents include American Federation of Arts, Art Institute of Chicago, Fiske Boyd, Carnegie Institute of Art, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Stuart Art Gallery, Robert Wade, Isabel Whitney, and Dot Yaghjian among many others.

Arrangement: Researchers should note that the bulk of Merritt's correspondence is found in Series 4.1 and relates directly to Haystack Mountain School of Craft.

Box 1, Folder 6 General, circa 1930-circa 1970

Box 1, Folder 7 General, 1940-1949

Box 1, Folder 8 General, 1950-1959

Box 1, Folder 9 General, 1960-1969

Box 1, Folder 10-22 General, 1970-1978

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Series 3: Writings and Notes, circa 1940s-1978

0.3 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Writings by Francis Sumner Merritt are on the topic of art. Works by others include Jon Warren Lentz, P.B. Cuktu, ABU Zaria, and Sarah Haskell.

Box 1, Folder 23 Writings by Francis Sumner Merritt, circa 1960

Box 1, Folder 24 Lecture Notes, 1957-1978

Box 1, Folder 25-26 Notes, circa 1940-circa 1970

Box 1, Folder 27 Writings by Others, circa 1974

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Series 4: Professional Files, 1940s-1980

4.1 Linear feet (Box 1-5, 8)

Scope and Contents: Creating the bulk of this collection, Merritt's professional files are on the Haystack Mountain School of Crafts and other institutions and career activities.

4.1: Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, 1955-1979

Scope and Contents: Among the Haystack Mountain School of Crafts material are planning materials, correspondence, financial records, student information, printed material, and photographs for various sessions held at the school. A reel to reel audio tape includes a talk concerning a trip to Nigeria during the school's "Afro-American Session" in 1977. General correspondence is from students and instructors or other institutions. Formal letters of recommendation, requests for a letter of recommendation by Merritt, inquiries for information on upcoming sessions, and letters detailing items left at Haystack and a forwarding address are frequently found. Artworks include unsigned doodles and painted mockups for posters.

Correspondents include Fiske and Claire Boyd, Dale Chihuly, Diane Itter, Peter Jacobi, Jack Lenor Larsen, Maine Coast Artists, and Kenneth Quick. Many letters from artists are friendly and familiar and are signed with first names only.

Arrangement: Correspondence is arranged in chronological order. Researchers should note that letters from Haystack artists and administrators may be found within series 2, however those letters are of a personal nature such as thank you notes and holiday cards.

Box 1, Folder 28	Address Lists, 1967-1974
Box 2, Folder 1-10	"Afro-American Session", 1969-1977
Box 2, Folder 11	"Afro-American Session," Nigeria Talk, circa 1970s includes one sound tape reel
Box 2, Folder 12-15	"American Indian Session", 1976
Box 2, Folder 16	Arcosanti, 1974-1977
Box 2, Folder 17	Artwork, Doodles and Posters, 1969-1974
Box 2, Folder 18-24	Correspondence, 1950s-1971
Box 3, Folder 1-17	Correspondence, 1971-1975
Box 4, Folder 1-13	Correspondence, 1975-1978
Box 4, Folder 14	Crotch Island, 1973-1977
Box 4, Folder 15	"Dutch Session", 1960-1974
Box 4, Folder 16	Grant and Scholarship Information, 1967-1977

Box 4, Folder 17-18	Haystack-Hinkley School of Crafts, 1955-1977
Box 4, Folder 19	Lectures, Notes, and Writings, 1968-1974
Box 4, Folder 20	Photographs, 1960s-1970s
Box 5, Folder 1	Press Releases, 1962-1976
Box 5, Folder 2-8	Printed Material, 1960s-1979
Box 5, Folder 9	Proposal, circa 1970
Box 5, Folder 10	Reports, 1964-1974
Box 5, Folder 11	Resumes, 1970s
Box 5, Folder 12	Student Records, 1960s
Box 5, Folder 13	Trout Lake, 1973
Oversize 8, Folder 1	Oversized Artwork, Posters, 1960s-1970s

4.2: General, 1940s-1980

Scope and Contents: Found are records relating to Merritt's career in arts administration and other professional activities. Files may include correspondence, writings, financial material, printed material, and photographs.

Box 5, Folder 14	American Crafts Council, late 1970s
Box 5, Folder 15	Barn Studio of Art, 1974
Box 5, Folder 16	Birmingham Bloomfield Art Association, 1974-1977
Box 5, Folder 17-22	Bradford Junior College, 1950-1970
Box 5, Folder 23	Colby College, 1966-1976
Box 5, Folder 24	Cranbrook Kingswood School, 1947-1948
Box 5, Folder 25-27	Exhibitions, 1940s-1960s
Box 5, Folder 28-30	Flint Institute of Art, 1948-1977
Box 5, Folder 31	Hinkley School, 1968-1977
Box 5, Folder 32	Interagency Crafts Committee, 1969-1972

Box 5, Folder 33 Jury Participation, 1949-1980

Box 5, Folder 34 Maine Arts, 1969-1975

Box 5, Folder 35 Royal Society of Arts, 1969-1977

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Series 5: Printed Material, 1939-1976

0.4 Linear feet (Box 6-7)

Scope and Contents: Printed materials consist of bulletins for various institutions, clippings concerning Merritt's painting and administrative career, and exhibition material.

Box 6, Folder 1-3	Bulletins and Periodicals , 1930s-1970s
Box 6, Folder 4	Clippings, 1960s-1970s
Box 6, Folder 5-9	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1939-1973
Box 7, Folder 1	Exhibition Invitations, 1941-1976
Box 7, Folder 2	Press Releases, 1959-1972

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Series 6: Photographs, 1949-1970s

0.2 Linear feet (Box 7)

Separated Materials: Photographs include portraits and snapshots of Merritt; Claire and Fiske Boyd, Kenneth Quick, and Hiroshi Yoshida.

Arrangement: Researchers should note that additional photographs may be found in Series 4.1.

Box 7, Folder 3	Photographs of Francis Sumner Merritt, circa 1970s
Box 7, Folder 4	Photographs of Fiske Boyd and Clarie Boyd, 1949
Box 7, Folder 5	Photographs of Kenneth Quick, circa 1970s
Box 7, Folder 6	Photographs of Hiroshi Yoshida, circa 1960s
Box 7, Folder 7	Works of Art, by Others, circa 1950s-1970s
Box 7, Folder 8	Works of Art, by Edvard Munch, 1970s
Box 7, Folder 9	Unidentified, 1969-1970
Box 7, Folder 10	Slides, 1970s

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