



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

Charles Nagel papers

Archives of American Art
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Washington, D.C. 20001
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions>
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Charles Nagel papers
Identifier:	AAA.nagechar
Date:	ca. 1927-1992
Creator:	Nagel, Charles, 1899-1992
Extent:	3.9 Linear feet
Language:	English .

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Donated 1992 and 1994 by Lucie O. Nagel, widow of Charles Nagel. According to Mrs. Nagel, the material relating to Victor Proetz was given to Nagel by Proetz, who was a close friend and associate, and by the Proetz estate following his death in 1966.

Other Finding Aids

Chronology and Series Listing available at all Archives of American Art offices.

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.

Biographical / Historical

Museum director; architect. Nagel was born in St. Louis, Mo. He attended Yale University, earning a B.A. in 1923, a B.A. in architecture in 1926 and M.F.A. in architecture in 1928. Upon graduation, he was employed at the firms of Jamieson & Spearl, and Hall & Proetz, St. Louis, and with Coolidge, Shepley, Bulfinch, Abbott in Boston.

Biographical / Historical

He taught art history at Yale, and served as curator of Decorative Arts at Yale's Gallery of Fine Arts, 1930-1936, returning to architecture with the firm Nagel & Dunn, St. Louis, from 1936-1942. His positions as museum director include the City Art Museum in St. Louis, 1942-1946 (acting) and 1955-1964; the Brooklyn Museum, 1946-1955; and the National Portrait Gallery, 1964-1969.

Scope and Contents

The bulk of the papers consist of Nagel's files on his various positions and projects (ca. 3.3 ft), containing a variety of materials, including correspondence, writings, notes, art works, clippings, photographs and printed material. Also included are files pertaining to Nagel's father, lawyer and statesman Charles Nagel, and to his mother, Anne; and papers of and relating to Nagel's friend and associate, architect Victor Proetz (0.6 ft).

Scope and Contents

Nagel's files on positions and projects are arranged chronologically, and relate to: design projects while a student at Yale University, ca. 1926-1928; his struggle with career choices (mostly typescripts of letters to his father), ca. 1927-1931; his appointment to the Yale University Gallery of Fine Arts; commissions during his partnership in Nagel & Dunn (includes photographs of Fred Dunn, St. Mark's Episcopal Church, and other designs); organizing the exhibit "Italy at Work: Her Renaissance in Design Today, 1950-1951," his publication *American Furniture, 1650-1850*, and other activities while director of the Brooklyn Museum, 1946-1955; his position as juror and secretary for the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial Competition and working with other jurors Fiske Kimball and William Wurster, and design winner, Eero Saarinen; the Independence National Historical Park Project, Philadelphia, Pa.; positions at the City Art Museum, St. Louis, Mo.; establishment of the National Portrait Gallery (includes photographs of staff, the building, exhibitions, and opening celebrations, 1964-1969, notably Chief Justice Earl Warren, Smithsonian Secretary S. Dillon Ripley, and artist Peter Hurd); his emigration to Cuernavaca, Morelos, Mex.; and alterations and additions to St. Michael and All Angels Church in Cuernavaca, 1983. Included in several files are photographs of Nagel, his residences, and colleagues, and architectural drawings.

Scope and Contents

Files on his father contain honorary degrees and awards, photographs and printed material relating to the naming of a post office in his honor, St. Louis, Mo., and other events honoring him.

Scope and Contents

The papers of Victor Proetz, ca. 1928-1966 (ca. 0.6 ft), include obituaries; correspondence; a Last Will and Testament; a list of Proetz's commissions, 1934-1943; writings by Proetz and others; Proetz's "The Astonishment of Words," 1971, posthumously published; a scrapbook; exhibition announcements and catalogs; printed material; and photographs of Proetz and his designs for interiors and furniture.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Church architecture
- Gateway Arch (Saint Louis, Mo.)

Types of Materials:

- Drawings

Names:

Brooklyn Museum
City Art Museum of St. Louis
Hurd, Peter, 1904-1984
Kimball, Fiske, 1888-1955
Nagel & Dunn (Firm : St. Louis, Mo.)
Nagel, Anne, 1866-1951
Nagel, Charles, 1849-1940
Nagel, Charles, 1899-1992
National Portrait Gallery (Smithsonian Institution)
Proetz, Victor, 1897-1966
Proetz, Victor, 1897-1966 -- Papers, ca. 1928-1966
Ripley, S. Dillon (Sidney Dillon), 1913-2001
Saarinen, Eero, 1910-1961
St. Mark's Episcopal Church (St. Louis, Mo.)
Warren, Earl, 1891-1974
Wurster, William Wilson
Yale University. Gallery of Fine Arts

Occupations:

Architects -- Connecticut
Architects -- Massachusetts -- Boston
Architects -- Missouri -- St. Louis
Architects -- New York (State) -- New York
Interior decorators -- Missouri -- St. Louis
Interior decorators -- New York (State) -- New York
Interior decorators -- Washington (D.C.)
Museum curators -- Connecticut -- New Haven
Museum directors -- Missouri -- St. Louis
Museum directors -- New York (State) -- Brooklyn
Museum directors -- Washington (D.C.)

Functions:

Architectural firms -- United States
Art museums -- United States