



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Ruth Nickerson Papers, 1924-2099, bulk 1930s-1997, 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:	Ruth Nickerson papers
Date:	1924-2009 (bulk 1930s-1997)
Identifier:	AAA.nickruth
Creator:	Nickerson, Ruth, 1905-1997
Extent:	2.6 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	<p>The papers of sculptor and WPA artist Ruth Nickerson measure 3 linear feet and date from circa 1924-1997 and 2005, 2009. Included are personal resumes and professional summaries, as well as sculpture awards and honors; letters from artists and art administrators, correspondence with foundries and art organizations, the Treasury Department Section of Painting and Sculpture, and the Section of Fine Arts. Letters from Ruth Nickerson to her mother Kate Mary Nickerson and copies of outgoing letters from Nickerson to other are also included; writings, including typescripts of manuscripts and unpublished talks; files regarding Guggenheim Fellowships; Nickerson's cast stone formulas; photographs of works in progress; artwork consisting of watercolor studies for <i>American Oriental Rug Weaving</i> (sculpture panel) for the US Post Office, Leaksville, North Carolina, 1941, and handmade Christmas cards; and printed material including exhibition catalogs and newspaper clippings. Also included is an unpublished memoir <i>The Stone Carver in the House</i>, by Nickerson's daughter Elizabeth R. Knudsen, 2005.</p>

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Donated 2019 and 2021 by Elizabeth R. Knudsen, Ruth Nickerson's daughter.

Related Materials

Also found in the Archives of American Art are the Edmund Greacen papers, 1987-1972, bulk 1905-1949 and the Public Works of Art Project selected administrative and business records, 1933-1936.

Processing Information

The collection was processed, and a finding aid prepared by Sabine Lipten in 2022.

Preferred Citation

Ruth Nickerson papers, circa 1924-1997, 2005, 2009. 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.

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Biographical / Historical

Ruth Nickerson (1905-1997) was a Works Progress Administration (WPA) artist, direct stone sculptor, art educator and teacher in White Plains, New York. Nickerson was married to Edmund Greacen, Jr., son of painter Edmund Greacan. She studied art at the Detroit School of Applied Art, the National Academy school and at the Beaux Arts Institute of Design in New York. She also studied direct carving techniques with Ahron Ben-Shmuel.

Nickerson's major works include a large bust of Abraham Lincoln (1962) which she donated to the Queens Library in New York City, *The Dispatch Rider* (1937) and *American Oriental Rug Weaving* (1941) as part of the Federal Public Works of Art Project, a New Deal WPA initiative which employed artists to create work for display in non-federal public buildings. In addition to being selected for the Federal Arts Project, Nickerson was also chosen as a Guggenheim Fellow in 1946 and won numerous awards throughout her career including the Saltus Gold Medal. She also served as member and juror for many professional organizations such as the National Sculpture Society and the National Academy of Design. She taught courses at various institutions including the Grand Central School of Art and the National Academy of Design.

Scope and Contents

The papers of sculptor and WPA artist Ruth Nickerson measure 3 linear feet and date from circa 1924-1997 and 2005, 2009. Included are biographical material consisting of personal resumes and professional summaries, as well as sculpture awards and honors. Correspondence is with other artists, clients interested in commissioning art, foundries, professional and art organizations, the Treasury Department Section of Painting and Sculpture, and the Section of Fine Arts, and copies of outgoing letters from Nickerson to others. Also included are holiday cards and letters from Ruth Nickerson to her mother Kate Mary Nickerson. Also found are writings, including typescripts of manuscripts and unpublished talks, lists pertaining to exhibition planning, art foundations and sculpture inventories and extensive notes surrounding publicity for the 1995 National Sculpture Society show; Professional and Project files document a Guggenheim Fellowship and her participation in the Federal Art Project (FAP) of the Works Progress Administration (WPA); Other materials include cast stone formula notes; photographs of sculptures in progress and completed; and letters regarding professional organization memberships and committee roles, and as an arts educator. Artwork consists of watercolor studies for *American Oriental Rug Weaving* (sculpture panel) for the US Post Office, Leaksville, North Carolina, 1941, and miscellaneous sketches of people including one of painter Leon Kroll. Printed materials consist primarily of news clippings, exhibition invitations and publications, and a collection of other artist's exhibition catalogs, including two catalogs from The Grand Central School of Art. Also included is an unpublished memoir *The Stone Carver in the House*, by Nickerson's daughter Elizabeth R. Knudsen, 2005.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 7 series:

- Series 1: Biographical Material, circa 1925-1995 (0.1 Linear feet: Box 1)
 - Series 2: Correspondence, circa 1929-1996 (0.4 Linear feet: Box 1)
 - Series 3: Writings, circa 1925-1996 (0.2 Linear feet: Box 1)
 - Series 4: Professional Files, circa 1931-1996 (0.6 Linear feet: Box 1-2)
 - Series 5: Project Files, circa 1927-1996, 2009 (0.7 Linear feet: Box 2)
 - Series 6: Printed Materials, circa 1924-1998, 2005 (0.4 Linear feet: Box 3-4)
 - Series 7: Artwork, circa 1930-1971 (0.1 Linear feet: Box 4)
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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:

Women artists
Women sculptors

Names:

John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation
Public Works of Art Project

Occupations:

Educators -- New York (State)
Sculptors -- New York (State)

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Material, circa 1925-1995

0.1 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Biographical material include personal resumes and professional summaries, as well as sculpture awards and honors and competition documents from Beaux Arts Institute of Design.

Box 1, Folder 1	Beaux Arts Institute of Design Sculpture Competitions, 1931-1932
Box 1, Folder 2	Biographical Summaries and Resumes, circa 1934-1935, 1970s-1980s
Box 1, Folder 3	Sculpture Awards and Honors, circa 1925-1995

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Series 2: Correspondence, circa 1929-1996

0.4 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Correspondence is arranged alphabetically and spans the entirety of Ruth Nickerson's career. It includes correspondence with other artists, clients interested in commissioning art, foundries, professional and art organizations, the Treasury Department Section of Painting and Sculpture, and the Section of Fine Arts, and copies of outgoing letters from Nickerson to others. Also included are holiday cards and letters from Ruth Nickerson to her mother Kate Mary Nickerson.

Box 1, Folder 4	A, circa 1932-1990
Box 1, Folder 5	Brooklyn Public Library, circa 1936-1983
Box 1, Folder 6	B, circa 1929-1985
Box 1, Folder 7	C, circa 1933-1989
Box 1, Folder 8	Homer Day, circa 1933
Box 1, Folder 9	Alice Dickerman, circa 1964-1977
Box 1, Folder 10	D, circa 1934-1977
Box 1, Folder 11	E, circa 1943-1976
Box 1, Folder 12	F, circa 1936-1995
Box 1, Folder 13	Letter to Edmund Greacen Jr. from Keith Shaw Williams, 1935
Box 1, Folder 14	The Gorham Company, 1933
Box 1, Folder 15	G, circa 1934-1993
Box 1, Folder 16	H, circa 1934-1989
Box 1, Folder 17	I, 1977,1995
Box 1, Folder 18	J, circa 1962-1982
Box 1, Folder 19	K, circa 1934-1967
Box 1, Folder 20	L, circa 1934-1970
Box 1, Folder 21	M, circa 1932-1996
Box 1, Folder 22	Jay McKiee Regarding Some Shape of Beauty Sculpture, 1995-1996

Box 1, Folder 23	The New York Times, circa 1955-1965
Box 1, Folder 24	Letters to Kate Mary Nickerson, circa 1933
Box 1, Folder 25	N, circa
Box 1, Folder 26	O, 1933
Box 1, Folder 27	P, circa 1932-1996
Box 1, Folder 28	R, circa 1931-1982
Box 1, Folder 29	Lu Stubbs, 1991-1995
Box 1, Folder 30	S, circa 1934-1995
Box 1, Folder 31	St. Mary's In The Field, 1976
Box 1, Folder 32	Ruth Talcott, circa 1963-1979
Box 1, Folder 33	T, circa 1932-1993
Box 1, Folder 34	V, 1964-1970
Box 1, Folder 35	Adolf Alexander Weinman, circa 1944-1951
Box 1, Folder 36	Robert Weinman, circa 1963-1988
Box 1, Folder 37	W, circa 1939-1996
Box 1, Folder 38	Y, circa 1980-1989
Box 1, Folder 39	Z, 1935, circa 1971
Box 1, Folder 40	Miscellaneous, Last Name Unsigned, circa 1944-1987

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Series 3: Writings, circa 1925-1996

0.2 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Within the writings series are annotated articles and essays on Nickerson, as well as typescripts of manuscripts and unpublished talks, lists pertaining to exhibition planning, art foundations and sculpture inventories and extensive notes surrounding publicity for the 1995 National Sculpture Society show.

Box 1, Folder 41 Articles and Essays on Ruth Nickerson, circa 1943-1981, 1996

Box 1, Folder 42 Exhibition Planning Lists, circa 1950s-1960s

Box 1, Folder 43 Inventory Lists, circa 1975-1989

Box 1, Folder 44 Lecture and Demonstration Notes, circa 1951-1978

Box 1, Folder 45 Philanthropic Foundation Lists, circa 1925-1996

Box 1, Folder 46 Publicity Effort Notes for National Sculpture Society Show, circa 1993-1995

Box 1, Folder 47 Statements on Sculpture, circa 1969-1986

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Series 4: Professional Files, circa 1931-1996

0.6 Linear feet (Box 1-2)

Scope and Contents: Professional files document Nickerson's memberships in professional organizations, roles serving on exhibition juries and committees, and time spent teaching at numerous institutions including the National Academy of Design and the Grand Central School of Art, which was founded by her father in law Edmund Greacen. Files include receipts for project related expenses, financial records, correspondence, cast stone formulas, photographs and membership cards. Of note is a file on Nickerson's time as a Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellow and blueprints for her studio expansion.

Box 1, Folder 48	Academic Artist Association Exhibition Jury, 1970
Box 1, Folder 49	Application Materials for Art Programs, circa 1960s
Box 1, Folder 50	Cast Stone Formulas, circa 1967-1971
Box 1, Folder 51	Douglas Berman Sculpture Agent, circa 1987-1990
Box 1, Folder 52	John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship, circa 1931-1950, 1964, 1990
Box 1, Folder 53	Montclair Art Museum, circa 1939-1969
Box 1, Folder 54	National Academy of Design membership, circa 1946-1990
Box 1, Folder 55	National Sculpture Society Membership, circa 1944-1990
Box 2, Folder 1	National Sculpture Society Membership, circa 1944-1990
Box 2, Folder 2	National Association of Women Painters and Sculptors Membership, circa 1935-1964
Box 2, Folder 3	Receipts and Expenses, circa 1933-1990
Box 2, Folder 4	Teaching, circa 1936-1986
Box 2, Folder 5	Miscellaneous Art Association Members, circa 1945-1986
Box 2, Folder 6	Miscellaneous Art Exhibition Juries and Committees, circa 1950-1996
Box 2, Folder 7	Miscellaneous Financial Records, circa 1934-1987

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Series 5: Project Files, circa 1927-1996, 2009

0.7 Linear feet (Box 2)

Scope and Contents: Project files contain correspondence, photographic material, applications, planning documents, news clippings and exhibition catalogs detailing exhibitions as well as individual sculptures Nickerson worked on. This includes extensive documentation of the sculptural creation of a bust of Abraham Lincoln which she donated to the Queen's Library in New York City in 1993.

Also found are files documenting her work participating in the Federal Art Project (FAP) of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), a New Deal initiative aimed at giving meaningful employment to artists.

Box 2, Folder 8	Adelle M. Fine Art Office Park Commission, 1981
Box 2, Folder 9	Axiom One Sculpture, 1967-1973, 1996
Box 2, Folder 10	Begg Memorial Fountain Competition, 1933
Box 2, Folder 11	Distinguished Mid-Atlantic Artists: Four Decades of Growth (May-Jun.1980), University of Delaware, 1980
Box 2, Folder 12	Federal Public Works of Art Project Applications, circa 1939-1969
Box 2, Folder 12	Federal Public Works of Art Project Sculptures, circa 1934-1941, 1979-1989, 2009
Box 2, Folder 14	Detail of Justice Sculpture, circa 1946-1949, 1989
Abraham Lincoln Bust Project	
Box 2, Folder 15	Correspondence, circa 1961-1972, 1980, 1992
Box 2, Folder 16	Donation to Queens Library, NY, circa 1992-1993
Box 2, Folder 17	Donation Reception Photographs and Materials, Queens Library, NY, circa
Box 2, Folder 18	Progress Photographs and Other Sculpture Snapshots , circa 1961-1962
Box 2, Folder 19	White Plains NY Project, circa 1961-1966
Box 2, Folder 20	Miscellaneous Lincoln Bust Materials, circa 1961-1972
Box 2, Folder 21	Lot's Wife Sculpture to Scarsdale Church, 1995-1996
Box 2, Folder 22	Lyme Academy of Fine Arts 20th Anniversary National Sculpture Exhibition (Dec.1995-Feb.1996), 1995-1996

Box 2, Folder 23	Manhattanville College Sculpture Show (Mar.-Apr.1963), circa 1963-1982
Box 2, Folder 24-25	National Sculpture Society Gallery Exhibit Materials, circa 1995
Box 2, Folder 26	Photographs of Sculptures and Models, circa 1927-1932
Box 2, Folder 27	Two Sculptors, Two Media (Dec.1996-Jan.1997), Queens Library Gallery, circa 1996
Box 2, Folder 28	Sculpture by Ruth Nickerson (Apr.1934), International Art Center of Roerich Museum, 1934
Box 2, Folder 29	Washington Square Outdoor Art Exhibition (Apr.-May.1933), 1933-1934

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Series 6: Printed Materials, circa 1924-1998, 2005

0.4 Linear feet (Box 3)

Scope and Contents: Printed materials consist primarily of news clippings, exhibition invitations and publications, and a collection of other artist's exhibition catalogs, including two catalogs from The Grand Central School of Art which was founded by her father in law Edmund Greacen. Additionally, there is a copy of an unpublished memoir *The Stone Carver in the House*, by Nickerson's daughter Elizabeth R. Knudsen, 2005.

Box 3, Folder 1	Exhibition Catalogs for Other Sculptors, circa 1934-1962
Box 3, Folder 2	Exhibition Catalogs for Other Sculptors, circa 1968-1984
Box 3, Folder 3	Exhibition Ephemera, Other Artists, circa 1936-1994
Box 3, Folder 4	Exhibition Ephemera, Ruth Nickerson, circa 1942-1996
Box 3, Folder 5	News Clippings and Articles on Other Artists, circa 1964-1984, 1993-1994
Box 3, Folder 6-7	News Clippings and Articles on Ruth Nickerson, circa 1924-1986
Box 4, Folder 1	News Clippings and Articles on Ruth Nickerson, circa 1924-1986
Box 4, Folder 2	The Stone Carver in the House By elizabeth R. Knudsen (Unpublished Memoir), 2005
Box 4, Folder 3	Miscellaneous Printed Materials, circa 1964-1977

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Series 7: Artwork, circa 1930-1971

0.1 Linear feet (Box 3)

Scope and Contents: Artwork consisting of watercolor studies for "American Oriental Rug Weaving" (sculpture panel) for the US Post Office, Leaksville, North Carolina, 1941, and miscellaneous sketches of people including one of painter Leon Kroll.

Box 4, Folder 4	Color Sketches American Oriental Rug Weaving, circa 1930s
Box 4, Folder 5	Miscellaneous Sketches, circa 1947-1971

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