



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Jules Olitski Papers, 1950-2012, in the Archives of American Art

Christopher DeMairo

The processing of this collection received Federal support from the Smithsonian Collections Care and Preservation Fund, administered by the National Collections Program and the Smithsonian Collections Advisory Committee.

2021 March 8

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Jules Olitski papers
Date:	1950-2012
Identifier:	AAA.olitjule
Creator:	Olitski, Jules, 1922-2007
Extent:	3.2 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	The papers of artist and educator Jules Olitski measure 3.2 linear feet and date from 1950-2012. The collection sheds light on Olitski's career through writing files that consist of drafts, edits, and some correspondence; printed material such as newspaper clippings and articles, exhibition material, and published writings; portrait photographs of the artist; and sound and video recordings from interviews and lectures.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The collection was donated in 2012 and 2013 by the Olitski Family Estate via Lauren Olitski Poster, director of the estate and Olitski's daughter.

Processing Information

The collection was processed and a finding aid prepared by Christopher DeMairo in 2021.

Preferred Citation

Jules Olitski papers, 1950-2012. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

The collection is open for research. Use of original papers requires an appointment and is limited to the Archives' Washington, D.C., Research Center.

Researchers interested in accessing born-digital records or audiovisual recordings in this collection must use access copies. Contact Reference Services for more information.

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Biographical / Historical

Jules Olitski (1922-2007) was a painter, sculptor, and educator in New York, New York, who established himself as one of the leaders of the abstract expressionist movement in the United States during the 1950s-1960s.

Olitski was born in the Ukraine, and moved to New York in 1923 after his father, a commissar, was executed. By 1935, Olitski had developed an interest in art and was awarded a scholarship at the Pratt Institute where he began taking classes in 1939. Soon after he attended the National Academy of Design until 1942 when he enlisted in the United States Army.

In 1949 Olitski studied sculpture with Ossip Zadkine in the Zadkine School of Sculpture in France, and the next year attended the Academia de la Grande Chaumiere in Paris. He then moved back to the United States for his higher education, earning a master's degree from New York University. Olitski became an associate professor of art at the State University of New York, New Paltz in 1954. He held several more teaching positions throughout the 1950s and 1960s in New York and Vermont.

From the 1970s-2000s Olitski received honorary degrees from Keen State College, Hartford Art School, and Southern New Hampshire University, and held solo shows at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., Knoedler Contemporary Art in New York, La Musee de Valence in France, and the Drabinsky Friedland Gallery in Toronto. He also participated in several major group exhibitions around the world including *American Drawings, 1964* (1964) at the Solomon Guggenheim Museum, *New York Painting and Sculpture: 1940-1970* (1970) at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and *The Green Mountain Boys - Caro, Feeley, Noland and Olitski at Bennington in the 1960's* (1998), and exhibited elsewhere in Vermont and New York, and many other locations.

Scope and Contents

The papers of artist and educator Jules Olitski measure 3.2 linear feet and date from 1950-2012. The collection sheds light on Olitski's career through writing files that consist of drafts, edits, and some correspondence; printed material such as newspaper clippings and articles, exhibition material, and published writings; portrait photographs of the artist; and sound and video recordings from interviews and lectures.

The majority of the collection consists of printed material that provides comprehensive coverage of Olitski's career including announcements, catalogs, and newspaper clippings from Olitski's exhibitions at galleries and museums. Sound and video recordings are of interviews with Olitski related to exhibitions of his work and of lectures given by Olitski at Brown University, the University of Miami, and the National Museum of American History, and other locations. The bulk of these recordings date from the 1990s.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged as four series.

- Series 1: Writing Files, 1965-1976 (Box 1; 10 folders)
- Series 2: Printed Material, 1950-2012 (Box 1-3; 2.3 linear feet)
- Series 3: Photographs, 1967-2006 (Box 3; 7 folders)
- Series 4: Recorded Interviews and Lectures, 1977-2003 (Box 3-4; .7 linear feet)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Abstract expressionism

Types of Materials:

Interviews
Sound recordings
Video recordings

Occupations:

Educators -- New York (State) -- New York
Painters -- New York (State) -- New York

Container Listing

Series 1: Writing Files, 1965-1976

10 Folders (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Included are drafts of several articles and exhibition catalog essays written about Olitski throughout his career. Some of the folders may contain edits and comments made by Olitski and the authors, printed material, and scant correspondence.

Arrangement: Files are arranged chronologically, with undated material at the end of the series.

Box 1, Folder 1	"Jules Olitski New Paintings," By Michael Fried, 1965
Box 1, Folder 2	"Jules Olitski: Paintings, 1963-1967 Essay Draft for Catalog, Michael Fried, 1967
Box 1, Folder 3	Catalog Draft for Pittsburgh Institute of Contemporary Art, By Rosalind Krauss, 1968
Box 1, Folder 4	"Visit to Jules Olitski's Studio," Unknown, 1969
Box 1, Folder 5	"The Sculpture of Jules Olitski," Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin, By Kenworth Moffett, 1969
Box 1, Folder 6	"On Order in the Paintings of Jules Olitski," By Ken Carpenter; Notes by Olitski, 1972
Box 1, Folder 7	"Conversations with Jules Olitski," By Frederich Bach, 1974, 1975
Box 1, Folder 8	"Olitski, Cubism, and Transparency," E. A. Carmean Jr., 1975
Box 1, Folder 9	"The Life of Drawing of Jules Olitski," Cora Kelley Ward (Unpublished), 1976
Box 1, Folder 10	Untitled Manuscript, C.W. Post Show Review, undated

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Series 2: Printed Material, 1950-2012

2.3 Linear feet (Box 1-3)

Scope and Contents: Articles and clippings include writings and reviews regarding Olitski, his shows, his artwork, the abstract expressionist art scene that Olitski was active in, and more by critics John Canaday, Irving Sandler, Hilton Kramer, and others. Also found here are advertisements for Olitski's shows and excerpts about Olitski from books. Exhibition material includes announcements, invitations, catalogs, and some posters from group and solo shows. Published writings by Olitski consist of writings on art, his own career, and poetry. The series also includes ephemeral materials related to Olitski's lectures and other events, bulletins and newsletters, and reproductions of Olitski's art.

Box 1, Folder 11-22	Articles and Clippings, 1950-2001
Box 2, Folder 1-2	Articles and Clippings, 2001-2011
Box 2, Folder 3	Articles and Clippings, Foreign, 1951-2003
Box 2, Folder 4-9	Exhibition Announcements, Invitations, Brochures, Solo Shows, 1967-2012
Box 2, Folder 10-15	Exhibition Catalogs, Solo Shows, 1959-2012
Box 3, Folder 1	Exhibition Announcements, Invitations, Brochures, Group Shows, 1974-2010
Box 3, Folder 2	Exhibition Catalogs, Group Shows, 1965-2002
Box 3, Folder 3	Lectures and Events, 1988-2007
Box 3, Folder 4	Organization and Museum, Bulletins and Newsletters, 1965-2000s
Box 3, Folder 5-7	Published Writings by Olitski, 1955-2002
Box 3, Folder 8	Reproductions, Abrams Publishing, "Abrams Appointment Diary 1989", 1988

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Series 3: Photographs, 1967-2006

7 Folders (Box 3)

Scope and Contents: The series consists of portrait snapshots taken of Olitski throughout his career and photographs of the artist at an awards dinner.

Box 3, Folder 9	Olitski Portraits Taken By Lawrence J. Hyman, 1967
Box 3, Folder 10	Olitski Portraits Taken By Helen Miljakovich, 1977
Box 3, Folder 11	Olitski Portraits in Islamorada, Florida Taken By Jim Roberts, 1985
Box 3, Folder 12	Olitski Portraits Taken By Richard Mandelkorn, 1991
Box 3, Folder 13	Olitski Portraits in Bear Island Studio, Meredith, NH Taken By Helen Miljakovich, 1993
Box 3, Folder 14	Olitski Portraits Taken By Erik LaPrade, 1994
Box 3, Folder 15	Olitski at American Academy Arts and Letters Dinner, 2006 April 6

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Series 4: Recorded Interviews and Lectures, 1977-2003

0.7 Linear feet (Box 3-4)

Scope and Contents: Found here are sound and video recordings from various interviews, lectures, and talks given by Olitski at universities, museums, and on radio. Of particular note is a video recording from Olitski's dedication of his work, "Elyon," at the Beth Tzedec Congregation Synagogue in 1990.

Arrangement: Series is arranged chronologically.

Box 3, Folder 16-17	Interview with Kenworth Moffett, Boston Museum of Fine Arts, 1977 2 Videocassettes (U-matic)
Box 3, Folder 18	Olitski Talk at University of Miami, 1986 1 Videocassettes (VHS)
Box 3, Folder 19	Beth Tzedec Holocaust Memorial Dedication, 1990 April 22 1 Videocassettes (VHS)
Box 3, Folder 20	Olitski Talk at Brown University, 1991 December 6 1 Sound cassette
Box 3, Folder 21	Olitski Talk at Yale University, 1993 May 6 1 Videocassettes (VHS)
Box 4, Folder 1	Olitski Talk at University of Miami, 1994 February 25 1 Sound cassette
Box 4, Folder 2	"Colors of Invention," Olitski and Mark Golden, 1997 November 16 3 Sound cassettes
Box 4, Folder 3	Interview with John Walters, National Public Radio, 2003 September 30 1 Sound cassette

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