



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

Peter Plagens 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

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| Repository: | Archives of American Art |
| Title: | Peter Plagens papers |
| Date: | 1941-1985 |
| Identifier: | AAA.plagpete |
| Creator: | Plagens, Peter |
| Extent: | 4.9 Linear feet |
| Language: | English . |

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The collection was donated in 1985 by Peter Plagens.

Restrictions

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

Biographical / Historical

Peter Plagens (1941-) is an art critic, painter, and writer living in New York City. Plagens studied painting at the University of Southern California and did graduate work at Syracuse University. In 1965, he returned to Southern California, where he worked as a curator and became a regular contributor to Artforum. His paintings were exhibited in such landmark exhibitions as the Los Angeles County Museum of Art's "24 Young Los Angeles Arts," in 1971, and the following year, the Whitney Biennial. He is best known for his first book, "Sunshine Muse: Modern Art on the West Coast, 1945-1970," published in 1974. In the mid 1970s, Plagens served as chair of the board of the fledgling Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art. In the late 1980s, Plagens moved to New York, where he continued to paint and where he contributed art criticism to Newsweek. He has taught at numerous universities, including California State University, Northridge, University of Southern California, and University of North Carolina.

Scope and Contents

The papers of art critic and painter Peter Plagens measure 4.9 linear feet and date from 1941-1985. Included are personal and professional correspondence; diaries; an interview of Plagens conducted by Mike Lloyd, 1977 (80 p.); photographs of Plagens, his family, studio, and art work; files on lectures, grants, fellowships, exhibitions, and a petition against the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; drafts of writings; files on Plagen's book, Sunshine Muse: Contemporary Art on the West Coast (1974); and 20 ink drawings and several drawings by Plagen's young son, Paul.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Art criticism
Art, Modern -- California

Types of Materials:

Drawings
Interviews

Occupations:

Art critics -- California
Art critics -- New York (State) -- New York