



# Smithsonian

*Archives of American Art*

## A Finding Aid to the Merry Renk Papers, 1952-2000, in the Archives of American Art

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Merry Renk papers
<b>Date:</b>	1952-2000
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.renmerr
<b>Creator:</b>	Renk, Merry, 1921-2012
<b>Extent:</b>	0.9 Linear feet
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Summary:</b>	The papers of San Francisco metal-worker, jeweler, and painter Merry Renk measure 0.9 linear feet and date from 1952 to 2000. The collection comprises business records that include sales invoices, inventories, exhibition price lists, correspondence, and other material related to Renk's business activities. Also found are printed materials, a few sketches of utensils, writings, and a video recording of the documentary "Merry Renk: Jeweler" by Alan Leveton.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

The Merry Renk papers were donated in 2003 and 2004 by Merry Renk as a part of the Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America.

### Related Materials

Also in the Archives of American Art is an interview of Merry Renk conducted on January 18-19, 2001 by Arline M. Fisch for the Archives of American Art's Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America in Renk's home and studio in San Francisco, California.

### Processing Information

The collection was processed, and a finding aid prepared by Sarah Mundy in 2022.

### Preferred Citation

Merry Renk papers, 1952-2000. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

### Restrictions

This collection is open for research. Access to original papers requires an appointment and is limited to the Archives' Washington, D.C. Research Center. Researchers interested in accessing audiovisual recordings in this collection must use access copies. Contact Reference Services for more information.

## Conditions Governing Use

The donor has retained all intellectual property rights, including copyright, that she may own in the following material: Unpublished typescript, "Memories for My Children's Children's Children's Children's Children's Children."

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## Biographical / Historical

Merry Renk (1921-2012) was a jeweler, painter, and metal-worker in San Francisco, California.

Renk was born in Trenton, New Jersey as Mary Ruth Gibbs. She studied painting at the Trenton School of Industrial Arts before moving to Chicago in 1946 to study at Illinois Institute of Technology. In Chicago, Renk founded the 750 Studio, an art gallery, with Olive Oliver and Mary Jo Slick. After taking some time to travel, she settled in San Francisco in 1948 where she became a prominent member of the arts and crafts community. Renk was instrumental in the founding of the San Francisco Metal Arts Guild and served as president in 1954. She also became an honorary fellow at the American Craft Council.

Renk is primarily known for her jewelry work but after suffering an eye injury in a car accident she began focusing on creating large scale sculptures using jewelry techniques sometime in the 1960s to 1970s.

Renk married Stanley Edwin Renk in 1941. After his death in World War II, she married fellow artist Earle Watt Curtis in 1958.

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## Scope and Contents

The papers of San Francisco jeweler, painter, and metal-worker Merry Renk measure 0.9 linear feet and date from 1952 to 2000. The collection comprises business records that include sales invoices, inventories, exhibition price lists, and correspondence. Correspondents include Greta Daniel, Mrs. Vanderbilt Webb, Conrad Brown, Rose Slivka, Paul Soldner, Paul J. Smith, Alice W. Nichols, Roger Armstrong, and Francis S. Merritt. Also found is other material related to Renk's business activities; printed materials including clippings, exhibition announcements and catalogs; a few sketches of utensils; writings including an unpublished typescript with illustrations and a draft of Renk's biographical statement; and a video recording containing the documentary "Merry Renk: Jeweler" by Alan Leveton.

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## Arrangement

Due to the small size of this collection, the papers are arranged as one series.

- Series 1: Merry Renk Papers, 1952-2000 (1.1 linear feet; Boxes 1-2, OV 3)
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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 jewelers

Types of Materials:

Drawings  
Video recordings

Names:

Merritt, Francis Sumner, 1913-2000  
Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America  
Slivka, Rose  
Smith, Paul J., 1931-  
Soldner, Paul

Occupations:

Jewelers -- California -- San Francisco  
Metal-workers -- California -- San Francisco  
Painters -- California -- San Francisco

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Merry Renk Papers, 1952-2000

#### 0.9 Linear feet (Boxes 1-2, OV 3)

Scope and Contents: Series comprises business records that include sales invoices, inventories, exhibition price lists, and correspondence with Greta Daniel, Mrs. Vanderbilt Webb, Conrad Brown, Rose Slivka, Paul Soldner, Paul J. Smith, Alice W. Nichols, Roger Armstrong, and Francis S. Merritt. Also found is other material related to Renk's business activities; printed materials including clippings, exhibition announcements and catalogs, and miscellaneous items; a few sketches of utensils; writings including an unpublished typescript with illustrations titled "Memories for My Children's Children's Children's Children's Children's Children" and a draft of Renk's biographical statement; and a video recording containing the documentary "Merry Renk: Jeweler" by Alan Leveton.

Box 1, Folder 1	Business Records, 1953-1969
Box 1, Folder 2	Clippings, 1954-1995 Notes: Included are clippings from the magazines <i>Craft Horizons</i> , <i>American Craft</i> , <i>Ceramic Age</i> , and other craft publications.
Box 1, Folder 3	Documentary, "Merry Renk: Jeweler", circa 1980s 1 Videocassettes (VHS)
Box 1, Folder 4-6	Exhibition Catalogs and Announcements, 1952-1998
Box 2, Folder 1-5	Exhibition Catalogs and Announcements, 1952-1998
Box 2, Folder 6	Miscellaneous Printed Materials, 1971-2000 Notes: Folder contains a program for The Arts Commission of San Francisco award ceremony, a press release by the Smithsonian Institution, and a travel schedule for the exhibition <i>Messengers of Modernism: American Studio Jewelry, 1940-1960</i> .
Oversize 3	Miscellaneous Printed Materials, 1949 Notes: Folder contains the book <i>Pay Dirt!: San Francisco, The Romance of a Great City</i> .
Box 2, Folder 7	<a href="#">Sketches of Utensils, circa 1960-circa 1980</a>
Box 2, Folder 8	Writings, Draft of Biographical Statement, circa 1995
Box 2, Folder 9	Writings, Unpublished Typescript - "Memories for My Children's Children's Children's Children's Children's Children", 2000

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