



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Esther G. Rolick Papers, 1940-1985, in the Archives of American Art

Ricky Gomez

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.

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Esther G. Rolick papers
Date:	1940-1985
Identifier:	AAA.roliesth
Creator:	Rolick, Esther G., 1922-
Extent:	3.7 Linear feet
Language:	Some of the correspondence is in Spanish.
Summary:	The papers of painter and educator Esther Rolick measure 3.7 linear feet and date from 1940 to 1985. The papers document Rolick's career through correspondence with friends and colleagues; writings, including unpublished illustrated books for children; business records; printed material and scrapbooks of clippings and exhibition catalogs; artwork including a sketchbook; photographs of artwork, travels around the world, and personal photographs; and sound recordings of interviews with prominent African American artists.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The Esther G. Rolick papers were donated to the Archives of American Art by Esther Rolick in a series of installments between 1970 and 1985.

Available Formats

Portions of the collection are available on 35mm microfilm reels 827-828, and 950 at the Archives of American Art offices and through interlibrary loan. Researchers should note that the arrangement of material described in the container inventory does not reflect the arrangement of the collection on microfilm.

Some of the sound recordings in this collection were digitized for research access and are available at the Archives of American Art offices.

Processing Information

The collection received some level of processing and was microfilmed on reels 827-828 and 950 after receipt.

The collection was processed, and a finding aid prepared by Ricky Gomez in 2019.

Preferred Citation

Esther G. Rolick papers, 1940-1985. 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 References Services for more information.

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Biographical / Historical

New York realist painter and educator Esther G. Rolick (1922-2008) taught art for two decades at Mercy College, where she helped to develop programs including a class, "Black Music and Art," for which she interviewed prominent Harlem artists and musicians.

Rolick studied at the Art Students League and had her first solo exhibition of drawings at Jacques Seligmann & Co. in 1947. She subsequently participated in exhibitions around the country and internationally in Haiti. In the 1960s she began teaching at Mercy College and helped to develop several innovative programs there. Rolick also traveled extensively and painted in places such as Bogota, Colombia and Palermo, Italy.

Scope and Contents

The papers of painter and educator Esther Rolick measure 3.7 linear feet and date from 1940 to 1985. The papers document Rolick's career through correspondence with friends and colleagues; writings, including unpublished illustrated books for children; business records; printed material and scrapbooks of clippings and exhibition catalogs; artwork including a sketchbook; photographs of artwork, travels around the world, and personal photographs; and sound recordings of interviews with prominent African American artists.

Correspondence includes personal letters from friends and letters related to Rolick's exhibitions. Some of the letters are in Spanish. Writings include poems by Rolick and two unpublished books for children, primarily of illustrations.

Personal business records and professional activity files include financial materials related to Rolick's travels around the world, statements, promissory notes, certificates, and exhibition guestbooks.

Printed material consists mainly of exhibition announcements and catalogs, with some newspaper clippings. Additional printed material can be found in Series 6: Scrapbooks.

Photographs consist primarily of personal photographs, photographs of travels to Bogota, Colombia and Palermo, Italy, and photographs of artwork. Artwork includes oversized sketches by classmates and one small sketchbook of drawings.

Of note are untranscribed interviews conducted by Rolick for her class "Black Music and Art," at Mercy College, circa 1970-1971. Interviewees include Charles Alston, Romare Bearden, Jean Hutson, Jacob Lawrence, Norman Lewis, Hale Woodruff, and artists affiliated with the Cinque Gallery, Weusi Gallery, and SPIRAL artist's group.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged chronologically into eight series.

- Series 1: Correspondence, 1946-1985 (1.3 linear feet; Box 1-2)

- Series 2: Writings, 1947-1971 (0.1 linear feet; Box 2)
- Series 3: Personal Business Records and Professional Activity, 1968-1974 (0.2 linear feet; Box 2)
- Series 4: Printed Material, 1944-1980 (0.3 linear feet; Box 2)
- Series 5: Photographs, circa 1940-1985 (0.6 linear feet; Box 2-3, 5)
- Series 6: Scrapbooks, circa 1944-1972 (0.7 linear feet; Box 3, 5)
- Series 7: Artwork, circa 1944-1985 (0.1 linear feet; Box 3, 5, OV)
- Series 8: Interviews 1970-1971 (0.4 linear feet; Box 3-4)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

African American artists
Women art teachers
Women artists
Women painters

Types of Materials:

Interviews
Scrapbooks
Sound recordings

Names:

Alston, Charles Henry, 1907-1977
Bearden, Romare, 1911-1988
Cinque Gallery
Lawrence, Jacob, 1917-2000
Woodruff, Hale, 1900-1980

Occupations:

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

Container Listing

Series 1: Correspondence, 1946-1985

1.3 Linear feet (Box 1-2)

Scope and Contents: Correspondence includes personal letters from friends and letters related to various exhibitions Rolick took part in. Some of the letters are in Spanish.

Arrangement: Series is arranged chronologically.

Box 1, Folder 1-11	Correspondence, undated
Box 1, Folder 12	Correspondence, 1946-1959
Box 1, Folder 13-15	Correspondence, 1960-1965
Box 1, Folder 16-17	Correspondence, 1966
Box 1, Folder 18-19	Correspondence, 1967
Box 1, Folder 20	Correspondence, 1968
Box 1, Folder 21	Correspondence, 1969
Box 1, Folder 22-23	Correspondence, 1970
Box 1, Folder 24-29	Correspondence, 1971
Box 1, Folder 30-34	Correspondence, 1972
Box 1, Folder 35-37	Correspondence, 1973
Box 2, Folder 1-3	Correspondence, 1974
Box 2, Folder 4-5	Correspondence, 1975
Box 2, Folder 6-8	Correspondence, 1976
Box 2, Folder 9-10	Correspondence, 1977
Box 2, Folder 11-12	Correspondence, 1978
Box 2, Folder 13	Correspondence, 1979-1983
Box 2, Folder 14	Correspondence, 1984

Box 2, Folder 15

Correspondence, 1985

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Series 2: Writings, 1947-1971

0.1 Linear feet (Box 2)

Scope and Contents: Writings consist of poems written by Rolick and two unpublished books for children, primarily of illustrations.

Arrangement: Series is arranged chronologically.

Box 2, Folder 16 [Unpublished Children's Books, undated](#)

Box 2, Folder 17-18 Poems, 1947-1971

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Series 3: Personal Business Records and Professional Activity, 1968-1974

0.2 Linear feet (Box 2)

Scope and Contents: Series consists of financial materials related to Rolick's travels around the world, and includes statements, promissory notes, certificates, and exhibition guestbooks.

Arrangement: Series is arranged chronologically.

Box 2, Folder 19	Exhibition Guestbooks, 1960, undated
Box 2, Folder 20	Statements, undated
Box 2, Folder 21	Promissory Notes, 1968-1970
Box 2, Folder 22	Travel Documents and Receipts, 1970-1971
Box 2, Folder 23	Certificates of Insurance, 1972
Box 2, Folder 24	Packing and Shipping Receipts, 1972-1974

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Series 4: Printed Material, 1944-1980

0.3 Linear feet (Box 2)

Scope and Contents: Printed material consists mainly of exhibition announcements and catalogs, with some newspaper clippings. Also found are materials related to Rolick's travels, such as travel brochures and tour booklets.

Arrangement: Records are arranged by type.

Box 2, Folder 25	Press Releases, undated
Box 2, Folder 26	Bulletins of the Society for the Libraries of NYU, undated
Box 2, Folder 27-33	Exhibition Catalogs, 1944-1977
Box 2, Folder 34	Annual Reports, 1953-1975
Box 2, Folder 35-36	Exhibition Invitations and Announcements, 1957-1980
Box 2, Folder 37	Haiti Dance, circa 1958 Notes: A book on the different styles of dance performed in Haiti.
Box 2, Folder 38	News Clippings, 1959-1979
Box 2, Folder 39	Miscellaneous Brochures, 1962-1977
Box 2, Folder 40-43	London Tour Booklets, circa 1970
Box 2, Folder 44-45	Edinburgh Tour Booklets, 1970
Box 2, Folder 46-49	Theatre Playbills, 1960-1971
Box 2, Folder 50	Yaddo Newsletters, 1976-1977
Box 2, Folder 51	Colony Newsletters, 1976-1977
Box 2, Folder 52	Miscellaneous, 1959-1973

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Series 5: Photographs, 1940-1985

0.6 Linear feet (Boxes 2-3, 5)

Scope and Contents: Photographs are mainly personal and include photos of Rolick with friends, and on her travels to Bogota, Colombia and Palermo, Italy. Also found are photographs of artwork.

Box 2, Folder 53	Esther Rolick and Friends, 1967-1974
Box 2, Folder 54	Personal, 1940-1945
Box 3, Folder 1-4	Personal, 1945-1985
Box 5, Folder 2	Personal, 1946
Box 3, Folder 5	By Mako Oilze, 1954
Box 3, Folder 6-9	Colombia, 1965
Box 3, Folder 10-12	Palermo, Italy, undated
Box 3, Folder 13-18	Artwork, 1945-1977
Box 3, Folder 19	Artwork by Others, undated

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Series 6: Scrapbooks, 1944-1972

0.7 Linear feet (Boxes 3, 5)

Scope and Contents: Scrapbooks primarily contain clippings related to exhibitions that Rolick took part in.

Box 3, Folder 20	Scrapbook 1, 1944-1966
Box 3, Folder 21	Scrapbook 2, circa 1971-1972
Box 3, Folder 22	Scrapbook 3, circa 1954
Box 5, Folder 2	Scrapbook 4, 1944-1948
Box 5, Folder 3	Scrapbook 5, undated

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Series 7: Artwork, 1944-1985

0.1 Linear feet (Box 3, 5, OV 6-8)

Scope and Contents: Artwork consists mainly of oversized sketches and drawings by classmates and one small sketchbook of drawings. There is also a folder of illustrated holiday cards.

Box 3, Folder 23	Holiday Cards, 1961-1969
Box 5, Folder 2	Sketch, undated
Oversize 6	Sketches and Drawings, undated
Oversize 7	Sketches and Drawings, undated
Oversize 8	Sketches and Drawings, undated, undated

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Series 8: Interviews, 1970-1971

0.4 Linear feet (Box 3-4)

Scope and Contents: This series houses sound recordings of interviews Rolick conducted with prominent African American artists. None of the interviews are transcribed, except for the interview with Hale Woodruff which is found only in transcription form, with no sound recording.

Box 3, Folder 24	Hale Woodruff Transcript, 1970 November 10 Notes: There is only a transcript for this interview.
Box 4, Item 1-2	Al Hollingsworth and Norman Lewis Interviews, 1970 2 Sound cassettes Notes: An original and duplicate copy of interviews. Side A is Al Hollingsworth Interview, 11/17/70. Side B is Norman Lewis Interview, 12/15/70.
Box 4, Item 3-7	John Rhoden, Charles Alston, Joseph Black, and Romare Bearden Interviews, 1970-1971 5 Sound cassettes Notes: Cassette 1, Side A is the Charles Alston Interview, 11/19/70. Cassette 1, Side B is part one of the John Rhoden Interview, 12/15/70. Cassette 2, Side A is part two of the John Rhoden Interview, 12/15/70. Cassette 2, Side B is part one of the Joseph Black interview, 12/17/70. Cassette 3, Side A is part two of the Joseph Black interview, 12/17/70. Cassette 3, Side B is the Romare Bearden Interview, 01/8/71. Cassette 4 is a duplicate of Cassette 1. Cassette 5 is a duplicate of Cassette 3.
Box 4, Item 8-9	Allen and Dorothy Fannin and Edward Spriggs Interviews, 1971 2 Sound cassettes Notes: Cassette 1 Side A is the Allen and Dorothy Fannin Interview, 01/06/71. Cassette 1 Side B is the Edward Spriggs Interview, 01/07/71. Cassette 2 is a duplicate.
Box 4, Item 10-11	Roy DeCarava and Benny Andrews Interviews, 1971 2 Sound cassettes Notes: Cassette 1, Side A is the Roy DeCarava Interview, 01/14/71. Cassette 1, Side B is the Benny Andrews Interview 01/15/71. Cassette 2 is a duplicate.
Box 4, Item 12	Weusi Gallery and Cinque Gallery Interviews, 1971

1 Sound cassette

Notes: Side A is the Weusi Gallery Interview, 01/20/70.

Side B is the Cinque Gallery Interview, 01/30/70.

The cassette was rehoused, but the original container has been kept because of the information written on it.

Box 4, Item 13-14

Robert Blackburn and Jacob Lawrence Interviews, 1971

2 Sound cassettes

Notes: Cassette 1 Side A is the Robert Blackburn Interview, 01/22/71.

Cassette 1 Side B is the Jacob Lawrence Interview, 01/26/71.

Cassette 2 is a duplicate.

Box 4, Item 15

Jean Hutson Interview, 1971 January 27

1 Sound cassette

Notes: An interview with Jean Hutson, curator of the Schomburg Collection of Negro Literature and History.

Interview is only on Side A of the cassette.

Box 4, Item 16

Valerie Capers Interview, 1971 January 28

1 Sound cassette

Notes: Interview is only on Side A of the cassette.

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