



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Kay Sage Papers, 1925 - circa 1985 (bulk 1950-1965), in the Archives of American Art

Erin Corley

Funding for the processing and digitization of this collection
was provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art.

December 11, 2006

Archives of American Art
750 9th Street, NW
Victor Building, Suite 2200
Washington, D.C. 20001
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions>
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Kay Sage papers
Date:	1925 - circa 1985 (bulk 1950-1965)
Identifier:	AAA.sagekay
Creator:	Sage, Kay
Extent:	0.4 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	The scattered papers of surrealist painter Kay Sage measure 0.4 linear feet and date from 1925 to circa 1985, with the bulk of the material dating from 1950 to 1965. Information about Sage's life as an abstract and surrealist artist and her relationship with her husband, artist Yves Tanguy are found in this small collection of biographical materials, correspondence, printed material, and photographs.

Administrative Information

Provenance

John S. Monagan, attorney for Kay Sage's estate loaned a portion of this collection for microfilming in 1980 and subsequently donated the same material in 1989, as well as additional materials in 1994.

Separated Material

A game, "Fiddlesticks" given to Sage from Joseph Cornell and donated to the Archives of American Art as part of this collection was removed and transferred to the Joseph Cornell Study Center at the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

Related Material

Also available at the Archives of American Art are the Flora Whitney Miller papers regarding Kay Sage, as well as *China Eggs*, Kay Sage's unpublished memoirs covering the period circa 1910 to 1935, available on microfilm reel 685.

Alternative Forms Available

The papers of **Kay Sage** in the Archives of American Art were digitized in 2007, and total 443 images.

Processing Information

Material loaned in 1980 for microfilming on reel 2013 and subsequently donated in 1989 was merged with the later 1994 accretion during archival processing in 2006 as part of the Terra Foundation for American Art Digitization Grant. The collection was digitized in 2007.

Preferred Citation

Kay Sage papers, 1925-circa 1985. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions on Access

This collection has been digitized and is available online via AAA's website.

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Biographical Note

Kay Sage was born Katherine Linn Sage in Albany, New York in 1898 to Ann and Henry Manning Sage, a state senator. After her parents divorced she lived in Europe with her mother from 1900 to 1914, spending most of that time in Italy. She returned to the United States for schooling from 1914 to 1919 and then returned to Italy where she worked for a short time at the Scuola Libera delle Belle Arti in Rome. In 1925 she married Prince Ranieri di San Faustino, but they divorced in 1935. Around this time Sage began to paint in an abstract style, and quickly developed an interest in surrealism. She had her first solo exhibition in Italy in 1936 and the next year moved to Paris where she met surrealist painter Yves Tanguy. Tanguy introduced her to other surrealist painters in Paris and she soon began exhibiting with them. During World War II, Sage returned to the United States. In 1940 she and Tanguy were married, and that same year she had her first American exhibition at the Pierre Matisse Gallery in New York City. In 1941 she and Tanguy settled in Woodbury, Connecticut and named their home "Town Farm". Sage and Tanguy continued to exhibit their work with great success, ultimately leading to a joint exhibition at the Wadsworth Atheneum in 1954.

After Yves Tanguy's death in 1955 Sage experienced extreme grief and depression for the rest of her life. She did, however, continue to exhibit at the Catherine Viviano Gallery in New York City, which also managed the sale of her paintings. This partnership culminated in a retrospective exhibition of her work in 1960. Sage started to lose her sight in the late 1950s and stopped painting and began making collages. She also wrote three volumes of poetry which were published in 1957 and 1962. The last few years of her life were spent working on a catalogue of her husband's work for which she wrote the foreword. In January 1963 Kay Sage committed suicide at the age of 64.

Scope and Content Note

The scattered papers of surrealist painter Kay Sage measure 0.4 linear feet and date from 1925 to circa 1985, with the bulk of the material dating from 1950 to 1965. Information about Sage's life as an abstract and surrealist artist and her relationship with her husband, artist Yves Tanguy are found in this small collection of biographical materials, correspondence, printed material, and photographs.

Sadly, the papers contain Sage's suicide note and her own personal arrangements for her funeral and estate. Correspondence concerns business and personal matters and is with galleries, museums, and family and friends. Correspondents include Dorothea Tanning, Pierre and Patricia Matisse, John S. Monagan, Hans and Fridel Richter, and Yves's sister, Emilie Tanguy, as well as the Catherine Viviano Gallery and the Museum of Modern Art. The papers do not contain documentation of Sage's early career while she was living in Europe, and very little about her husband Yves Tanquy. There are photographs of Kay and Yves and their home "Town Farm" in Connecticut.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into four series:

Missing Title:

- Series 1: Biographical Material and Business Records, 1925-1963, circa 1985 (Box 1; 9 folders)
- Series 2: Correspondence, 1945-1963 (Box 1; 5 folders)
- Series 3: Printed Material, circa 1930-1974 (Box 1; 4 folders)
- Series 4: Photographs, circa 1950-1965 (Box 1; 4 folders)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Painters -- Connecticut -- Woodbury
Surrealism
Women artists
Women painters

Types of Materials:

Photographs

Names:

Catherine Viviano Gallery
Monagan, John S.
Tanguy, Yves, 1900-1955

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Material and Business Records, 1925-1963, circa 1985

(Box 1; 9 folders)

Scope and Contents: This series includes Sage's visa, birth certificate, passports, resume, an award, and an essay about Sage written by longtime friend and attorney John S. Monagan. Also found is material concerning Sage's death, including her suicide note, letters she wrote expressing her funeral requests, lists of people to notify, obituaries, and correspondence between John S. Monagan and others, including Pierre Matisse, the Executor of her will. This series also contains scattered business and financial documents concerning income tax and various lists written by Sage for expenses, invitations, cards, paintings, and price lists for her artwork.

Box 1, Folder 1	Biographical Documents and Award, 1925-1959
Box 1, Folder 3	Material Regarding Kay Sage's Death, 1960-1963
Box 1, Folder 4	John S. Monagan Essay on Kay Sage, circa 1985
Box 1, Folder 2	Passports, 1928, 1938, 1952
Box 1, Folder 5	Notes & Lists by Kay Sage, 1956-1962
Box 1, Folder 6	Notebook of Expenses and Christmas Card Lists, 1949-1962
Box 1, Folder 7	Lists of Paintings, 1954-1960
Box 1, Folder 8	Financial Material, 1940, 1959-1961
Box 1, Folder 9	Cat Fancier's Association Registration Form, 1956

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Series 2: Correspondence, 1945-1963

(Box 1; 5 folders)

Scope and Contents: This series contains scattered correspondence documenting Sage's career and relationships with friends and family. Correspondence with the Catherine Viviano Gallery in New York discusses exhibitions and sales of Sage's work. Correspondence with her attorney John S. Monagan and with the Museum of Modern Art concerns Sage's loans of artwork for exhibitions and later donations of artwork. Other general correspondence includes letters and postcards with family and friends such as Dorothea Tanning, Pierre and Patricia Matisse, Hans and Fridel Richter, and Yves's sister, Emilie Tanguy, as well as correspondence with various museums and galleries concerning exhibitions and/or donations of Sage's work.

Arrangement: Correspondence is arranged chronologically within each folder.

Box 1, Folder 10 [Correspondence with Catherine Viviano Gallery, 1956-1961](#)

Box 1, Folder 11 [Correspondence with John S. Monagan, 1955-1958](#)

Box 1, Folder 12 [Correspondence with Museum of Modern Art, 1955-1962](#)

Box 1, Folder 13 [General Correspondence, 1945-1958](#)

Box 1, Folder 14 [General Correspondence, 1959-1963](#)

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Series 3: Printed Material, circa 1930-1974

(Box 1; 4 folders)

Scope and Contents: This series contains exhibition catalogs and announcements for exhibitions of work by Kay Sage and Yves Tanguy, a few news clippings which mention Kay Sage, unsent postcards that she collected, and a press release with photocopies of artwork for the 1965 exhibition of the Kay Sage Tanguy Bequest at the Museum of Modern Art.

Box 1, Folder 15 [Exhibition Catalogs and Announcements, 1956-1965](#)

Box 1, Folder 16 [News Clippings, 1963-1974](#)

Box 1, Folder 17 [Postcards \(unsent\), circa 1930-1951](#)

Box 1, Folder 18 [Press Release, "Kay Sage Tanguy Bequest Shown at Museum of Modern Art," 1965](#)
(Partially scanned)

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Series 4: Photographs, circa 1950-1965

(Box 1; 4 folders)

Scope and Contents: This series includes one photograph of Yves and Kay Sage Tanguy and two photographs of their home "Town Farm" in Middlebury, Connecticut. Also found are photographs from the 1965 exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art of artwork bequested to the museum by Kay Sage and photographs of artwork that was in Kay Sage's home.

Box 1, Folder 19	Photographs of Yves and Kay Sage Tanguy, circa 1950
Box 1, Folder 20	Photographs of Tanguy Home, "Town Farm", circa 1950
Box 1, Folder 21	Exhibition Photographs, "Recent Acquisitions: The Kay Sage Tanguy Bequest", 1965
Box 1, Folder 22	Photographs of Artwork at Tanguy House, 1962

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