



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Esther Hoyt Sawyer Papers, 1916-1965, in the Archives of American Art

Jayna M. Josefson

Processing of this collection received support from
the Smithsonian American Women's History Initiative.

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Esther Hoyt Sawyer Papers
Date:	1916-1965
Identifier:	AAA.sawyesth
Creator:	Sawyer, Esther Hoyt
Extent:	1.2 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	The papers of painter and arts patron Esther Hoyt Sawyer measure 1.2 linear feet and date from 1916 to 1965. The bulk of the papers consist of over 500 letters to Sawyer from Edwin Dickinson, Carl Milles, and Nicholas Vasilieff. Also found are scattered letters from others including Olga Milles, Loja Saarinen, and museums regarding Sawyer's paintings by others. Other materials include personal photographs and printed materials.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Donated 1966 by Esther Hoyt Sawyer.

Available Formats

The collection is available on 35mm microfilm reel 901 at Archives of American Art offices and through interlibrary loan. Researchers should note that the arrangement of the material described in the container inventory does not reflect the arrangement of the collection on microfilm.

Processing Information

The papers were arranged upon receipt and microfilmed onto reel 901. The collection was processed, and a finding aid prepared by Jayna Josefson in 2023 with support from the Smithsonian American Women's History Initiative.

Preferred Citation

Esther Hoyt Sawyer papers, 1916-1965. 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.

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Biographical / Historical

Esther Hoyt Sawyer (1890-1971) was a painter and art patron in Buffalo, New York. She studied at the Albright Art Gallery School and the Art Students League. She collected art and purchased Edwin Dickinson's first sold painting and they maintained a long friendship. She was a founding member of the Patteran Society and was a member of the 45 Group.

Scope and Contents

The papers of painter and arts patron Esther Hoyt Sawyer measure 1.2 linear feet and date from 1916 to 1965. The bulk of the papers consist of over 500 letters to Sawyer from Edwin Dickinson, Carl Milles, and Nicholas Vasilieff. Also found are scattered letters from others including Olga Milles, Loja Saarinen, and museums regarding Sawyer's paintings by others. Other materials include personal photographs and printed materials.

Arrangement

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

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Women artists
Women painters

Names:

Dickinson, Edwin Walter, 1891-1978
Milles, Carl, 1875-1955
Vasilieff, Nicholas

Occupations:

Art patrons -- New York (State) -- Buffalo
Painters -- New York (State) -- New York

Container Listing

Series 1: Esther Hoyt Sawyer Papers, 1916-1965

1.2 Linear feet (Boxes 1-2)

Scope and Contents: Fifty years of letters from Edwin Dickinson to Esther Sawyer express familiarity, friendship, and the relationship between patron and artist. Some letters are illustrated with holiday greetings, doodles, and Dickinson's drawing of an ideal easel. Many letters are written to both Esther and her husband Ansley. Also found are scattered letters from others, most of which concern works by Dickinson owned and lent by Sawyer for exhibition. Photographs depict vacation homes and Dickinson's children, namely Helen. Two exhibition announcements were sent to Sawyer from Dickinson, one of which is for Menkes and the other for Dickinson.

Letters from Carl Milles discuss his work at Cranbrook Academy of Art and also includes scattered letters from other professionals at Cranbrook. Of note is a drawing for a memorial for Sawyer's father, husband, and son designed by Milles. Also found are scattered letters from Olga Milles; writings on Milles by Esther Sawyer; photographs of fountains sculpted by Milles; and exhibition catalogs. Related is a letter from Loja Saarinen to Sawyer expressing thanks for her condolences.

Correspondence from Nicholas Vasilieff and his wife Magda are often addressed to both Esther and Ansley Sawyer and discuss updates to their lives. Also found are exhibition announcements.

Box 1, Folder 1	Dickinson, Edwin, Letters, 1916
Box 1, Folder 2	Dickinson, Edwin, Letters, 1921-1929
Box 1, Folder 3-4	Dickinson, Edwin, Letters, 1930-1939
Box 1, Folder 5-6	Dickinson, Edwin, Letters, 1940-1949
Box 1, Folder 7-8	Dickinson, Edwin, Letters, 1950-1959
Box 1, Folder 9	Dickinson, Edwin, Letters, 1960-1965
Box 1, Folder 10	Dickinson, Edwin, Photographs, 1930-1939
Box 1, Folder 11	Dickinson, Edwin, Printed Material, 1940-1941
Box 1, Folder 12	Milles, Carl, Letters, 1930-1939
Box 1, Folder 13	Milles, Carl, Letters, 1940-1949
Box 1, Folder 14	Milles, Carl, Photographs, circa 1940s
Box 1, Folder 15	Milles, Carl, Printed Material, 1945-1958
Box 1, Folder 16	Milles, Carl, Writings, 1931

Box 1, Folder 17	Milles, Olga, Letters, 1956-1967
Box 1, Folder 18	Vasilieff, Nicholas and Magda, Letters, 1946-1949
Box 1, Folder 19-20	Vasilieff, Nicholas and Magda, Letters, 1950-1959
Box 1, Folder 21	Vasilieff, Nicholas and Magda, Letters, 1960-1965
Box 1, Folder 22	Vasilieff, Nicholas and Magda, Printed Material, 1953-1963
Box 1, Folder 23	Saarinen, Loja, Letter, 1956
Box 2, Folder 1-3	Empty Envelopes, 1920s-1950s

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