



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Merryll Saylan Papers, 1975-2008, in the Archives of American Art

Sarah Mundy

2022/07/25

Archives of American Art
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Merryll Saylan papers
Date:	1975-2008
Identifier:	AAA.saylmerr
Creator:	Saylan, Merryll B., 1936-
Extent:	4.7 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	The papers of woodworker, turner, and educator Merryll Saylan measure 4.7 linear feet and date from 1975 to 2008. The collection documents Saylan's career through biographical materials; personal and professional correspondence including with artists Connie Mississippi, Betty Scarpino, Kay Sekimachi, and Susan Working; writings including notebooks with diary entries and sketches for projects; gallery files including inventory and sales records; files documenting a variety of Saylan's professional activities; and printed materials recording Saylan's career.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The collection was donated in 2008 by Merryll Saylan.

Related Materials

Also found in the Archives of American Art is an interview of Merryll Saylan conducted on May 20-June 5, 2006 by Glenn Adamson for the Archives of American Art's Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, England.

Processing Information

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

Preferred Citation

Merryll Saylan papers, 1975-2008. 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.

Conditions Governing Use

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Biographical / Historical

Merryll Saylan (1936-) is a woodworker, turner, and educator based in California. She helped to pioneer the popularization of the woodturning field and the application of color in wood art.

Saylan was born in the Bronx, New York City, in 1936 but settled in California after moving there in her youth. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree from UCLA in 1973 and a Master of Arts degree from California State University Northridge in 1979.

Saylan began turning wood in the 1970s, becoming one of few women in the field. Her use of modern lines and textures was inspired by the simplicity of Japanese design. Saylan was an active member of the Wood Turning Center, American Association of Woodturners, and Collectors of Wood Art. She was artist-in-resident at the Grizedale Sculpture Park, Cumbria, England, from 1990 to 1991, and visiting artist at the Anderson Ranch Arts Center. She was also a visiting artist and taught at the California College of the Arts, San Francisco.

Saylan's works are in the collections of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Detroit Institute of Arts, Renwick Gallery, and the Mint Museum of Craft and Design which houses one of her most well-known works, *Jelly Donut*.

Scope and Contents

The papers of woodworker, turner, and educator Merryll Saylan measure 4.7 linear feet and date from 1975 to 2008. The collection documents Saylan's career through biographical material including certificates, appointment books, curriculum vitae, and photocopies of diplomas and student records; correspondence with collectors, woodworking organizations and publications, family, friends, and artists Connie Mississippi, Betty Scarpino, Kay Sekimachi, and Susan Working; writings consisting of drafts, typescripts, and notes for articles and lectures, and including 18 notebooks containing diary entries and sketches for projects; gallery files that include inventory and sales records, printed materials, and correspondence documenting Saylan's activities with numerous galleries; files documenting a variety of Saylan's professional activities including memberships, teaching, workshops and private classes, auctions, financial records, grants and artist residencies, and drawings for projects; and printed materials such as clippings, exhibition announcements, press releases, and miscellaneous items.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as six series.

- Series 1: Biographical Material, 1980-2005 (0.2 linear feet; Box 1)
- Series 2: Correspondence, 1985-2008 (0.4 linear feet; Box 1)
- Series 3: Writings, 1987-2007 (0.5 linear feet; Boxes 1-2)
- Series 4: Gallery Files, 1984-2008 (0.4 linear feet; Box 2)
- Series 5: Professional Files, 1975-2008 (2.7 linear feet; Boxes 2-4, OVs 5-6, RD 7)

- Series 6: Printed Materials, 1980-2008 (0.5 linear feet; Box 4, RD 7)
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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:

- American studio craft movement
- Women artists
- Women educators

Types of Materials:

- Drawings
- Sound recordings

Names:

- Mississippi, Connie, 1941
- Scarpino, Betty
- Stocksdale, Kay Sekimachi
- Working, Susan

Occupations:

- Educators -- California
- Turners -- California
- Woodworkers -- California

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Materials, 1980-2005

0.2 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: The series includes certificates from the Bay Area Woodworkers Association, Women in Design International, and the Great American Arts Festival; curriculum vitae; photocopies of Saylan's diploma and student records; and appointment books for the years 2000 to 2005 which include "accomplishments" of works created by year.

Box 1, Folder 1	Appointment Books, 2000-2003
Box 1, Folder 2	Appointment Books, 2004-2005
Box 1, Folder 3	Certificate of Appreciation, Bay Area Woodworkers Association, 2003
Box 1, Folder 4	Certificate of Honor, Women in Design International, circa 1990s
Box 1, Folder 5	Certificate of Service, Great American Arts Festival, 1980
Box 1, Folder 6	Curriculum Vitae, circa 2000s
Box 1, Folder 7	Photocopies of Diplomas and Student Records, circa 2005

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Series 2: Correspondence, 1985-2008

0.4 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Correspondence is with artists Connie Mississippi, Betty Scarpino, Kay Sekimachi, and Susan Working; woodworking organizations and publications; collectors, curators, and gallerists; family; and friends regarding the death of Saylan's husband, Ed.

Box 1, Folder 8	Adamson, Glenn, 2004-2006
Box 1, Folder 9	British Woodturners, 1990-2005
Box 1, Folder 10	Darlow, Mike, 2002-2003
Box 1, Folder 11	Family, 2004-2016
Box 1, Folder 12	Fine Woodworking Magazine, 1989-1991
Box 1, Folder 13	Holzapfel, Michelle, 1994-1998
Box 1, Folder 14	Holz und Elfenbein Magazine, 1987
Box 1, Folder 15	Kaiser, Bruce, 1998-2006
Box 1, Folder 16	Lauria, Jo, 2006
Box 1, Folder 17	Marsh, Bert, 1997-2008
Box 1, Folder 18	Maruyama, Wendy, 2004-2007
Box 1, Folder 19	Merrill, Forrest, 2005-2008
Box 1, Folder 20	Mississippi, Connie, circa 1997-2007
Box 1, Folder 21	O'Donnell, Michael, 1990-1993
Box 1, Folder 22	P., Gord, 1998
Box 1, Folder 23	Rapp, Joanne, 2004-2006
Box 1, Folder 24	Reed Illustrations Books, Publisher, 1994-1995
Box 1, Folder 25	Russell, Jamie, 2003
Box 1, Folder 26	Scarpino, Betty, 1995-2008
Box 1, Folder 27	Scriba, Ulrike, 1990-1994
Box 1, Folder 28	Sekimachi, Kay, 1999-2004

Box 1, Folder 29	Sfirri, Mark, 2002-2006
Box 1, Folder 30	Smith, Haley, 1998
Box 1, Folder 31	Stirt, Alan, 1994
Box 1, Folder 32	Students, 2003-2005
Box 1, Folder 33	Sympathy Letters to Saylan After Ed Saylan's Death, 2004-2006
Box 1, Folder 34	Threads Magazine, 1985
Box 1, Folder 35	Varva, Ron, 2000-2001
Box 1, Folder 36	Women Artists News, 1994
Box 1, Folder 37	Woodturning Magazine, 1994-2000
Box 1, Folder 38	Working, Susan, 2002-2008
Box 1, Folder 39	General, 1987-2007

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Series 3: Writings, 1987-2007

0.5 Linear feet (Boxes 1-2)

Scope and Contents: The files in the series contain drafts, typescripts, notes, and related project material for Saylan's writing projects including articles and essays, lecture notes and typescripts for presentations in conjunction with the exhibition *Wood Turning in North America Since 1930*, and 18 notebooks consisting primarily of diary entries but also including sketches of furniture and project notes. Also found in the series are typescripts by John Perreault and Reg Sherwin.

Box 1, Folder 40	Articles and Essays, Bay Area Artists, 1992
Box 1, Folder 41	Articles and Essays on Bob Stocksdale, 1992-1998
Box 1, Folder 42	Articles and Essays, Experience Riding on a Train, 1992
Box 1, Folder 43	Articles and Essays, Seminar in Ireland, 1990
Box 1, Folder 44	Articles and Essays, Woodturning Magazine, 1991-2000
Box 1, Folder 45	Articles and Essays, Various, 1987-2004
Box 1, Folder 46	Lectures and Talks, Fine Arts Club of Arkansas, 2006-2007
Box 1, Folder 47	Lectures and Talks, "Influences" at Women in Woodworking Symposium, Renwick Gallery, 2002 Notes: Saylan was keynote speaker at the symposium that was held in conjunction with the exhibition <i>Wood Turning in North America Since 1930</i>
Box 1, Folder 48	Lectures and Talks, "A Slightly Different History" at Minneapolis Institute of Art, 2003 Notes: The lecture was in conjunction with the exhibition <i>Wood Turning in North America Since 1930</i> .
Box 1, Folder 49	Lectures and Talks, Tradeswomen of San Francisco, circa 1990s
Box 1, Folder 50	Notes for Article on Saylan by Susan Hagen in Woodwork Magazine, 2002
Box 1, Folder 51	Notes on Marketing Shows, circa 1990s
Box 1, Folder 52	Notes, Miscellaneous, circa 2000
Box 1, Folder 53-58	Notebooks, circa 1995-circa 2000 Notes: 9 notebooks
Box 2, Folder 1-6	Notebooks, 2000-2007 Notes: 9 notebooks
Box 2, Folder 7	Writings By Others, 1990-1996

Notes: Includes typescripts written by John Perreault and Reg Sherwin.

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Series 4: Gallery Files, 1984-2008

0.4 Linear feet (Box 2)

Scope and Contents: Gallery files consist of inventory and sales records, printed materials, and correspondence that document Saylan's activities with numerous galleries.

Box 2, Folder 8	A-B, 1996-2008
Box 2, Folder 9	American Art Company, 1999-2005
Box 2, Folder 10	C, 1998-2007
Box 2, Folder 11	Center for Craftsmanship, 2007
Box 2, Folder 12	Cervini Haas Gallery, 2008
Box 2, Folder 13	D, 1998-2006
Box 2, Folder 14	Del Mano, 2002-2005
Box 2, Folder 15	E-H, 1985-2007
Box 2, Folder 16	Gallery Materia, 1997-2006
Box 2, Folder 17	Hodges Taylor Gallery, 2003-2007
Box 2, Folder 18	I-L, 2000-2007
Box 2, Folder 19	M, 1997-2001
Box 2, Folder 20	Museum of Craft and Folk Art, 2005-2007
Box 2, Folder 21	Museum of Arts and Design, 2005
Box 2, Folder 22	Oakland Museum, 1997-1999
Box 2, Folder 23	Patina Gallery, 2000-2006
Box 2, Folder 24	Prichard Art Gallery, University of Idaho, 2005-2006
Box 2, Folder 25	R-U, 1984-2005

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Series 5: Professional Files, 1975-2008

2.7 Linear feet (Boxes 2-4, OVs 5-6, RD 7)

Scope and Contents: The series documents a variety of Saylan's professional activities including exhibitions; membership activities with Baulines Craft Guild, Collectors of Wood Art, and the Wood Turning Center; teaching files containing bibliographies, course outlines, and class materials; workshops and private classes; and drawings of still lifes and woodworking projects. Other files consist of address lists, artist statements, auction materials, price lists, studio machinery records, questionnaires regarding Saylan's woodworking career, and files for craft shows, grants and artist residencies, and open studio events. Also found are financial files consisting of receipts for supplies, ledgers, sales receipts, and price lists. One sound recording of a talk at the World Conference can be found in the Wood Turning Center files.

Box 2, Folder 26	500 Wood Bowls by Lark Books, 2003-2004
Box 2, Folder 27-28	Address Lists, circa 1990s
Box 2, Folder 29-30	Anderson Ranch Arts Center, 1997-2005
Box 2, Folder 31	Appalachian Center for Crafts, 2003
Box 2, Folder 32	Art in Embassies Program in Fiji, 2003-2004
Box 2, Folder 33	Artist Statements, 1992-2002
Box 2, Folder 34	Artpark, Artists-in-Residence Proposal, 1985
Box 2, Folder 35	Association of Woodturners of Great Britain, 1990-1992
Box 2, Folder 36	Auctions, 1997-2004
Box 3, Folder 1	Book Proposal, Source Book for Woodturners, 1992
Box 3, Folder 2	Business Card Design, 1984
Box 3, Folder 3	California College of Arts and Crafts, 1984-2002
Box 3, Folder 4	Collaboration Project with Doug Finkel, circa 2000
Box 3, Folder 5	Craft Shows, 1980-2003
Box 3, Folder 6	Craft Shows, Smithsonian, 2000-2003
Oversize 5	Drawings, Sketches for Projects, circa 1990s-circa 2005
Oversize 6	Drawings, Sketches for Projects, circa 1990s-circa 2005
Roll 7	Drawings, Sketches for Projects, circa 1990s-circa 2005

Box 3, Folder 7	Drawings, Still Life Studies, 1996
Box 3, Folder 8	Echo Lake, 2004-2007
Box 3, Folder 9	Emma Lake, Saskatchewan, 2000-2004
Box 3, Folder 10	Exhibition, California Design 2004, 2004
Box 3, Folder 11	Exhibition, Pandora's Box (1999) at Joanne Rapp Gallery, 1999-2006
Box 3, Folder 12-25	Financial Records, 1981-2007
Box 3, Folder 26	George School, 1998
Box 3, Folder 27	Grants, 1981-2005
Box 3, Folder 28	Grizedale Society, Artists-in-Residence, 1989-1991
Box 3, Folder 29	Guild Publishing / Michael Hosaluk, 2000-2001
Box 3, Folder 30	Highlands Center for the Arts, Workshop Application, 2005
Box 3, Folder 31	Irish Woodturners Guild, Photographs, circa 1995
Box 3, Folder 32	John C. Campbell Folk School, 2005
Box 3, Folder 33	Letters of Recommendation for Saylan, 2000
Box 3, Folder 34-35	Membership, American Association of Woodturners, 1991-2007
Box 3, Folder 36	Membership, American Craft Council, 1983-2001
Box 4, Folder 1	Membership, Baulines Craft Guild / California Contemporary Craft Association, 1999-2008
Box 4, Folder 2	Membership, Collectors of Wood Art, 1998-2008
Box 4, Folder 3	Membership, Furniture Society, 1996-2006
Box 4, Folder 4-9	Membership, Wood Turning Center, 1994-2008 Notes: Includes 1 sound cassette.
Box 4, Folder 10	Memberships, Various, 1991-1995
Box 4, Folder 11	North Country Studio Workshops, 2007-2008
Box 4, Folder 12	Open Studios, 1975-circa 2003

Box 4, Folder 13	Peralta Colleges, Confirmation of Admission, 2002
Box 4, Folder 14	Photography Copyright Permissions, 2001
Box 4, Folder 15	Postcards, circa 1990s
Box 4, Folder 16	Postcard Design, 1997-2000
Box 4, Folder 17-18	Price Lists, 1980-2006
Box 4, Folder 19	Puget Sound Woodworking Center, 2001
Box 4, Folder 20	Questionnaires Regarding Woodworking Career, circa 2000
Box 4, Folder 21	Studio Machinery Records, 1978-2007
Box 4, Folder 22-26	Teaching Records, circa 1985-2000
Box 4, Folder 27	Teaspoon Project, 2006-2007
Box 4, Folder 28	Various Publication Projects, 1989-2002
Box 4, Folder 29	Virginia Commonwealth University, 2006-2007
Box 4, Folder 30	Workshops and Private Classes, circa 1985-2006

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Series 6: Printed Materials, 1980-2008

0.5 Linear feet (Box 4, RD 7)

Scope and Contents: Series includes clippings of reviews and articles about Saylan, press releases, exhibition announcements, and miscellaneous printed materials. Clippings include documentation of Saylan's teaching in the United Kingdom.

Arrangement: Clipping from publications and exhibition announcements are accompanied by typed lists of the contents within the folders in order of the physical arrangement of the materials. Clippings from publications are arranged alphabetically by publication name.

Box 4, Folder 31-32	Clippings, Articles About Saylan, 1980-2005
Box 4, Folder 33	Clippings, Publications, 1983-2005 Notes: Included is a typed list of publications.
Box 4, Folder 34	Clippings, Reviews, 1991-1994
Box 4, Folder 35	Clippings, General, 1983-2006
Box 4, Folder 36-38	Exhibition Announcements, 1976-2008, 1976-2008 Notes: Includes a typed list of announcements in descending chronological order.
Box 4, Folder 39	Miscellaneous Printed Materials, 1982-2007
Roll 7	Poster, circa 2000
Box 4, Folder 40	Press Releases, 1985-circa 1996

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