



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the H. Bella Schaeffer papers,
circa 1930-1974, in the Archives of American Art

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Archives of American Art
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Table of Contents

Collection Overview	1
Administrative Information	1
Biographical / Historical.....	2
Arrangement.....	2
Scope and Contents.....	2
Names and Subjects	3
Container Listing	4
Series 1: Biographical Material, circa 1945-1973.....	4
Series 2: Correspondence, circa 1930-1974.....	5
Series 3: Writings, circa 1940-1967.....	7
Series 4: Printed Material, circa 1940-1972.....	8
Series 5: Artwork, circa 1950-1970.....	9
Series 6: Photographic Material, circa 1933-1970.....	10
Series 7: Artists Equity Association Records, circa 1945-1967.....	11

Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	H. Bella Schaeffer papers
Date:	circa 1930-1974
Identifier:	AAA.schahenr
Creator:	Schaeffer, H. Bella (Henri Bella)
Extent:	2.8 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	The papers of post-impressionist painter Henri Bella Schaeffer measure 2.8 linear feet and date circa 1930 to 1974. Her papers document her career through biographical material, correspondence, writings, printed material, artwork, and photographic material. A large portion of the collection documents her time working for the Artists Equity Association as the N.Y. Chapter and National Secretary, in the forms of correspondence, minutes, notes, mailing lists, reports and printed material.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The Henri Bella Schaeffer papers were donated by the artist in several accessions between 1966 and 1974.

Processing Information

The collection was processed, and a finding aid prepared by Emma Eubank in 2023.

Preferred Citation

H. Bella Schaeffer papers, circa 1930-1974. 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

Henri Bella Schaeffer (1908-unknown) was a post-impressionist painter who worked primarily in New York City. She was born in France and studied art at both the Academie L'Hote at Grand Chaumier in Paris and the Alliance Francaise in the 1930s. After marrying Italian painter Themis De Vitis, the couple moved to New York City in the late 1930s, where she studied with muralist William A. Mackay and went to Columbia University for her bachelor's degree. Schaeffer exhibited her rhythmic and bright impressionist paintings across the United States and France from the 1940s well into the 1960s, including at the Artists Gallery, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Butler Institute of American Art, and the Salon des Tuileries in Paris.

Schaeffer joined the Artists Equity Association in the 1950s. The AEA aimed to support artists' economic interests across the nation. Its regional chapters connected artists with work, supported them financially, and lobbied for protective legislation. From 1952 to 1957, Schaeffer served as Chairman of the Artists Equity Association New York Chapter Welfare Committee, providing struggling artists with food, bill aid, insurance, and rehousing. She continued advancing in the AEA, eventually holding a position on the National Board in 1954 and serving as the Director-at-Large in 1956.

Scope and Contents

The papers of post-impressionist painter Henri Bella Schaeffer measure 2.8 linear feet and date circa 1930 to 1974. Her papers document her career through biographical material, correspondence, writings, printed material, artwork, and photographic material. A large portion of the collection documents her time working for the Artists Equity Association as the N.Y. Chapter and National Secretary, in the forms of correspondence, minutes, notes, mailing lists, reports and printed material.

The biographical material series includes her CVs, professional memberships, honors and awards, and documentation of her fellow artist Helen West Heller. Also included is documentation related to the career of her husband, Themis De Vitis. The correspondence series contains both personal and professional letters with recipients including, Helen West Heller, Carl Sprinchorn (a close friend and fellow artist), and the Dorothy Yepez Galleries. The writings series contains Schaeffer's notes, longer prose, and manuscripts of writing prepared for publication. The printed material series contains clippings, exhibition advertising, and art journals. The artwork series contains drawings by Themis De Vitis, Carl Sprinchorn, and an unattributed artist. The photographic material series contains photographs of artwork by Lilly Stein as well as portraits of Schaeffer, De Vitis and friends. The Artists Equity Association records include documents from the national and regional chapters as well as the Welfare Committee, featuring by-laws, correspondence, and minutes of executive board meetings.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged as 7 series:

- Series 1: Biographical Material, circa 1945-1973 (0.1 Linear feet: Box 1)
- Series 2: Correspondence, circa 1930-1974 (0.6 Linear feet: Box 1)
- Series 3: Writings, circa 1940-1967 (0.1 Linear feet: Box 1)
- Series 4: Printed Material, circa 1940-1972 (0.1 Linear feet: Box 1)
- Series 5: Artwork, circa 1950-1970 (0.1 Linear feet: Box 1)
- Series 6: Photographic Material, circa 1933-1970 (0.1 Linear feet: Box 2)
- Series 7: Artists Equity Association Records, circa 1945-1967 (1.7 Linear feet: Boxes 2-4)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Post-impressionism (Art)
Women artists

Names:

Artists Equity Association
De Vitis, Themis, 1905-1973
Heller, Helen West, d. 1955

Occupations:

Arts administrators -- New York (State) -- New York
Painters -- New York (State) -- New York

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Material, circa 1945-1973

0.1 Linear feet

Scope and Contents: The biographical material series includes Schaeffer's CVs, professional memberships, honors and awards, and documentation of fellow artist Helen West Heller. The series features her addition to the American Biographical Institute. Also included in the series is documentation related to the career of her husband, Themis De Vitis.

Box 1, Folder 1	American Biographical Institute Recommendation, circa 1973
Box 1, Folder 2	Who's Who of American Women Biography, circa 1965
Box 1, Folder 3	CVs, circa 1958-1966
Box 1, Folder 4	Memberships, circa 1950-1972
Box 1, Folder 5	Furlough Documentation, circa 1945
	Themis De Vitis
Box 1, Folder 6	CV, circa 1956
Box 1, Folder 7	Notes, circa 1952-1973
Box 1, Folder 8	Publicity, circa 1952-1964
	Helen West Heller
Box 1, Folder 9	General, circa 1951-1954
Box 1, Folder 10	In Memoriam Donation and Exhibition of Artwork, circa 1956-1966

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 2: Correspondence, circa 1930-1974

0.6 Linear feet

Scope and Contents: The correspondence series contains both personal and professional letters with recipients like Helen West Heller, Carl Sprinchorn (a close friend and fellow artist), and the Dorothy Yezpez Galleries.

Box 1, Folder 11	A, circa 1950-1967
Box 1, Folder 12	Allied Publications, Inc., circa 1962-1963
Box 1, Folder 13	Archives of American Art, circa 1965-1967
Box 1, Folder 14	B, circa 1945-1974
Box 1, Folder 15	C, circa 1955-1971
Box 1, Folder 16	D, circa 1951-1973
Box 1, Folder 17	E, circa 1950-1969
Box 1, Folder 18	F, circa 1948-1965
Box 1, Folder 19	G, circa 1957-1963
Box 1, Folder 20	H, circa 1936-1967
Box 1, Folder 21	Helen West Heller, circa 1939-1955
Box 1, Folder 22	I, circa 1957-1963
Box 1, Folder 23	J, circa 1965-1973
Box 1, Folder 24	K, circa 1956-1968
Box 1, Folder 25	L, circa 1953-1964
Box 1, Folder 26	M, circa 1951-1972
Box 1, Folder 27	N, circa 1954-1968
Box 1, Folder 28	Katherine Nash (Stamp Drive), circa 1962-1963
Box 1, Folder 29	P, circa 1956-1958
Box 1, Folder 30	Q, circa 1953-1965
Box 1, Folder 31	R, circa 1936-1965

Box 1, Folder 32	S, circa 1948-1968
Box 1, Folder 33	Carl Sprinchorn, circa 1960-1970
Box 1, Folder 34	T, circa 1947-1954
Box 1, Folder 35	V, n.d.
Box 1, Folder 36	Themis De Vitis, circa 1942-1974
Box 1, Folder 37	W, circa 1942-1965
Box 1, Folder 38	Dorothy Yopez (Dorothy Yopez Galleries), circa 1963-1974
Box 1, Folder 39	Z, n.d.
Box 1, Folder 40	Unidentified / First Name Only, circa 1930-1972
Box 1, Folder 41	Postcards, circa 1949-1959
Box 1, Folder 42	Postcards, circa 1960-1969
Box 1, Folder 43	Postcards, circa 1970-1974

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 3: Writings, circa 1940-1967

0.1 Linear feet

Scope and Contents: The writings series contains Schaeffer's notes, lists of artists and the location of their works, longer personal prose, manuscripts about art as a concept and city schools, and a published piece in *Poets of America*.

Box 1, Folder 44	Lists of Artists and Artworks, circa 1940-1967
Box 1, Folder 45	Manuscripts about Art and City Schools, and Published Poem, circa 1949
Box 1, Folder 46	Notes, circa 1949-1960
Box 1, Folder 47	Prose and Longer Notes, circa 1952

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 4: Printed Material, circa 1940-1972

0.1 Linear feet

Scope and Contents: The printed material series contains clippings of exhibit reviews, exhibition and program advertising, postage stamps, and copies of Art U.S.A. and Arts in Society.

Box 1, Folder 48	Artists' Gallery Exhibition Advertising, circa 1951
Box 1, Folder 49	Clippings, circa 1949-1965
Box 1, Folder 50-52	Exhibition Advertising and Information, circa 1940-1972
Box 1, Folder 53	Journals and Magazines, circa 1953-1959
Box 1, Folder 54	Postage Stamps, circa 1961-1970

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 5: Artwork, circa 1950-1970

0.1 Linear feet

Scope and Contents: The artwork series contains a pencil sketch by Themis De Vitis, titled crayon and pencil drawings by Carl Sprinchorn, and an unattributed charcoal sketch.

Box 1, Folder 55 Charcoal Sketch by Schaeffer, n.d.

Box 1, Folder 56 Pencil Sketch by Themis De Vitis, n.d.

Box 1, Folder 57 Titled Crayon and Pencil Drawings by Carl Sprinchorn, circa 1963

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 6: Photographic Material, circa 1933-1970

0.1 Linear feet

Scope and Contents: The photographic material series contains photographs of artwork by Lilly Stein and portraits of Schaeffer, De Vitis and friends.

Box 2, Folder 1 Photographs of Artwork by Lilly Steiner, circa 1933-1968

Box 2, Folder 2 Portraits of Schaeffer, De Vitis and Friends, n.d.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 7: Artists Equity Association Records, circa 1945-1967

1.7 Linear feet

Scope and Contents: The Artists Equity Association Records series is divided by national and chapter association. Both the national and New York chapter folders contain constitutions and by-laws, correspondence, election materials, executive board minutes, printed material, notes, mailing lists, and welfare committee documentation. Schaeffer authored some but not all of these documents. The series also contains volumes of the AEA's annual publication *Improvisations*.

National Chapter	
Box 2, Folder 3	Constitution and By-Laws, circa 1949-1964
Box 2, Folder 4-7	Correspondence, circa 1948-1965
Box 2, Folder 8	Election Materials, circa 1952-1964
Box 2, Folder 9	Equity Fund and Welfare Committee, circa 1952-1959
Box 2, Folder 10-12	Minutes, circa 1945-1961
Box 2, Folder 13-15	Notes and Mailing Lists, circa 1955-1967
Box 2, Folder 16-17	Reports and Proposals, circa 1948-1964
Box 2, Folder 18-22	Printed Material, circa 1947-1964
New York Chapter	
Box 2, Folder 23	Constitution and By-Laws, circa 1952
Box 2, Folder 24-26	Correspondence, circa 1951-1966
Box 2, Folder 27	Election Materials, circa 1958-1963
Box 3, Folder 1	Minutes, circa 1953-1958
Box 3, Folder 2	Notes and Mailing Lists, circa 1960
Box 3, Folder 3-4	Printed Material, circa 1951-1964
Box 3, Folder 5	Reports, circa 1952-1965
Box 3, Folder 6-9	Welfare Committee, circa 1951-1961
Box 3, Folder 10-11	Other Chapters, General, circa 1960-1964

Improvisations

Box 4, Folder 1	Improvisations Volumes 1-2, circa 1950-1951
Box 4, Folder 2	Improvisations Volume 3, circa 1952
Box 4, Folder 3	Improvisations Volume 4, circa 1953
Box 4, Folder 4	Improvisations Volume 5, circa 1954
Box 4, Folder 5	Improvisations Volumes 7-8, circa 1956-1957
Box 4, Folder 6	Improvisations Volume 9, circa 1958

[Return to Table of Contents](#)