



# Smithsonian

*Archives of American Art*

## A Finding Aid to the Katherine Schmidt Papers, circa 1921-1971, 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.

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<https://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions>  
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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Katherine Schmidt papers
<b>Date:</b>	circa 1921-1971
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.schmkath
<b>Creator:</b>	Schmidt, Katherine, 1898-1978
<b>Extent:</b>	0.2 Linear feet
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Summary:</b>	The papers of painter and arts advocate Katherine Schmidt measure 0.2 linear feet and date from circa 1921 to 1971. Scattered correspondence, speeches, proposals, meeting minutes, and notes focus primarily on Schmidt's advocacy for federal and state government support of the arts. Printed materials includes exhibition catalogs, clippings, press releases documenting Schmidt's painting career and arts advocacy work. Photographs include portrait photos of Schmidt and photographs of Schmidt's drawings. There are two photographs taken by her first husband Yasuo Kuniyoshi of Schmidt with friends at a party.

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## Administrative Information

### Provenance

Katherine Schmidt lent material to the Archives of American Art for microfilming in 1971. The papers were donated in 1982 by Irvine J. Shubert, Schmidt's widower.

### Separated Material

Also found at the Archives of American Art are materials lent for microfilming (reel 89) including correspondence concerning exhibitions, a scrapbook containing clippings, exhibition catalogs and announcements. Lent materials were returned to the lender and are not described in the collection container inventory.

### Related Material

Also found at the Archives of American Art is an Oral History Interview with Katherine Schmidt, December 8-15, 1969, by Paul Karlstrom which includes a transcript available via the Archives of American Art's website.

### Alternative Forms Available

The papers of **Katherine Schmidt** in the Archives of American Art were digitized in 2007, and total 401 images.

Material lent for microfilming is available on 35mm microfilm reel 89 at the Archives of American Art offices and through interlibrary loan.

## Processing Information

The the papers were processed to a preliminary level upon accession in 1982 and were microfilmed on reels 3940-3950. The papers were reprocessed by Erin Corley and digitized in 2007 as part of the Terra Foundation for American Art Digitization Project.

## Preferred Citation

Katherine Schmidt papers, circa 1922-1971. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

## Restrictions on Access

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

## Terms of Use

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## Biographical Note

Katherine Schmidt (1898-1978) was born in Xenia, Ohio. She moved with her family to New York City, and around the age of 13 began attending Saturday classes at the Art Students League. She continued her art classes after high school and was taught by F. Luis Mora, Kenneth Miller, and John Sloan. While attending the Art Students League, Schmidt made many friends who would later become prominent members of the New York art community, including Peggy Bacon, Alexander Brook, Reginald Marsh, and Lloyd Goodrich. In 1919 she married fellow art student, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, in Ogunquit, Maine. They lived in Maine during the summers, but settled in Brooklyn, New York. Schmidt began working for Juliana Force at the Whitney Studio Club in 1923, where she also periodically exhibited her artwork. She taught sketching classes for the club and also did various other jobs for Force and Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney until around 1930. Her work during this period consisted of drawings and paintings of landscapes, still lifes, and the homeless and unemployed.

In 1925 Schmidt and Kuniyoshi took their first trip to Europe, spending a year in Paris and Italy and visiting the studios of their American expatriate friends. After another brief trip to Europe in 1928, she and Kuniyoshi bought a house in Woodstock, New York, where they would spend several summers as part of a very active artists' community. In the late 1920s she exhibited and was represented by the Daniel Gallery in New York. In the early 1930s, she became affiliated with Downtown Gallery where she became good friends with owner Edith Halpert. She and Kuniyoshi divorced in 1932 and a year later she married lawyer Irvine Shubert. In the 1930s Schmidt became dissatisfied with her artwork and had her last show at the Downtown Gallery in 1939, taking a hiatus from exhibiting for over twenty years.

During the 1930s and 1940s Schmidt became very active in promoting federal and state government support of the arts. She worked with Juliana Force and others on a New York State art bill in the early 1930s, and in 1941 testified for federal appropriations for the arts in Washington D. C. as part of the Citizens Committee for Government Arts Projects. She was also active in the Artists Equity Association.

Schmidt spent many years experimenting with different painting techniques and subjects, and in the late 1950s found a new motif that she pursued for the rest of her life: still lifes of discarded paper and dead leaves. Schmidt died in Sarasota, Florida in 1978 at the age of 79.

## Scope and Content Note

The papers of painter and arts advocate Katherine Schmidt measure 0.2 linear feet and date from circa 1921 to 1971. Scattered correspondence, speeches, proposals, meeting minutes, and notes focus primarily on Schmidt's advocacy for federal and state government support of the arts. Printed materials includes exhibition catalogs, clippings, press releases documenting Schmidt's painting career and arts advocacy work. Photographs include portrait photos of Schmidt and photographs of Schmidt's drawings. There are two photographs taken by her first husband Yasuo Kuniyoshi of Schmidt with friends at a party. The papers contain little documentation of Kuniyoshi or their marriage.

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## Arrangement

The collection is arranged into 4 series:

Missing Title:

- Series 1: Correspondence, 1939-1951, 1961 (Box 1; 3 folders)
  - Series 2: Business Records and Writings, 1940-1950 (Box 1; 7 folders)
  - Series 3: Printed Material, 1925-1971 (Box 1; 4 folders)
  - Series 4: Photographs, circa 1921-1930 (Box 1; 3 folders)
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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:

Art and state  
Painting, Modern -- 20th century -- New York (State) -- New York  
Women artists  
Women painters

Types of Materials:

Photographs

Occupations:

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

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Correspondence, 1939-1951, 1961

*(Box 1; 3 folders)*

Scope and Contents: Three folders of correspondence primarily document Katherine Schmidt's advocacy for federal and state government support of the arts. Included are letters from An American Group, Inc. and J. Frederick Dewhurst from the Twentieth Century Fund concerning a national survey of the cultural and economic status of the arts in the United States, and from Holger Cahill concerning a 1941 arts conference in Washington, D.C. Also found is correspondence regarding Schmidt and husband Irvine Shubert's participation in the creation of a post-war arts commission for New York state. There are letters from Edith Halpert of the Downtown Gallery and from the Whitney Museum of American Art. Correspondence from 1961 includes congratulations on her new exhibition of artwork. Items are arranged chronologically.

Box 1, Folder 1      [Correspondence, 1939-1941](#)

Box 1, Folder 2      [Correspondence, 1944-1950](#)

Box 1, Folder 3      [Correspondence, 1951, 1961](#)

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## Series 2: Business Records and Writings, 1940-1950

(Box 1; 7 folders)

**Scope and Contents:** This series houses scattered documentation of activities in which Katherine Schmidt and her colleagues were involved for advocating government support of the arts. Included are several speeches by Schmidt concerning recent trends in the arts, a presentation by Elizabeth McCausland on art patronage, and proposals, reports, and essays written by others analyzing government support of the arts. Also found are meeting minutes taken by Schmidt as secretary of the Committee for New York State Art Legislation, and minutes she collected from other art committee meetings. This series also contains other notes by Schmidt, including a list of exhibits from 1923 to 1933.

Box 1, Folder 4	<a href="#">Speeches by Katherine Schmidt, 1940-1941</a>
Box 1, Folder 5	<a href="#">J. Frederic Dewhurst, Proposal for the Survey of Art in the United States, 1940</a>
Box 1, Folder 6	<a href="#">Elizabeth McCausland, "Art Patronage in the United States," 1945</a>
Box 1, Folder 7	<a href="#">Various Authors, Proposals for an Art &amp; Defense Program, 1941</a>
Box 1, Folder 8	<a href="#">Various Authors, Writings and Reports on Government Sponsorship of Art Programs, 1945-circa 1950</a>
Box 1, Folder 9	<a href="#">Minutes of Meetings, 1945-1950</a>
Box 1, Folder 10	<a href="#">Notes by Katherine Schmidt, circa 1940-1950</a>

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## Series 3: Printed Material, 1925-1971

*(Box 1; 4 folders)*

Scope and Contents: This series contains exhibition catalogs and news clippings about Schmidt's artistic career, as well as printed materials about advocacy for government support of the arts, particularly for the Citizens Committee for Government Arts Projects. Items are arranged chronologically within each folder.

Box 1, Folder 11      [Exhibition Catalogs, 1931, 1939, 1961, 1971](#)

Box 1, Folder 12      [News Clippings, 1925-1971](#)

Box 1, Folder 13      [Press Releases, 1941](#)

Box 1, Folder 14      Miscellaneous Printed Material, 1940-1950  
(Not scanned)

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## Series 4: Photographs, circa 1921-1930

*(Box 1; 3 folders)*

Scope and Contents: Photographs include three portraits of Katherine Schmidt and two photographs taken by Yasuo Kuniyoshi at a party that depict Betty Spencer, Alexander Brook, Isabella Howland, Peggy Bacon, Niles Spencer, Dorothy Varian, and Katherine Schmidt. Also found are three photographs of drawings by Schmidt.

Box 1, Folder 15	<a href="#">Portraits of Katherine Schmidt, circa 1922-1930</a>
Box 1, Folder 16	<a href="#">Photographs of a Party (by Yasuo Kuniyoshi), circa 1923</a>
Box 1, Folder 17	Photographs of Drawings, circa 1930 (Not scanned)

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