



# Smithsonian

*Archives of American Art*

## A Finding Aid to the Ethel Schwabacher Papers, 1939-1975, in the Archives of American Art

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Processing of this collection received federal support from the Collections  
Care Initiative Fund, administered by the Smithsonian American  
Women's History Initiative and the National Collections Program

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Ethel Schwabacher papers
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.schwethe
<b>Date:</b>	1939-1975
<b>Creator:</b>	Schwabacher, Ethel, 1903-1984
<b>Extent:</b>	2.3 Linear feet
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Summary:</b>	The papers of art historian and painter Ethel Schwabacher date from 1939 to 1975 and measure 2.3 linear feet. Found are biographical materials, including motion picture films, correspondence, research and writing files including sound recordings, printed material, and photographs. The papers document Schwabacher's research and writings on her former teacher Arshile Gorky and her colleague John Ford, and her own painting career.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Ethel Schwabacher lent her papers for microfilming in 1966 and subsequently donated all but a few items in 1974-1975. Additional material was donated in 1984 by Syracuse University, which had received it from Schwabacher.

### Separated Materials

After microfilming onto reels N69-64-N69-65, the papers were returned to Ethel Schwabacher. The majority of the material was later donated in 1974-1975.

### Available Formats

Portions of the collection are available on 35mm microfilm reels N69-64-N69-65, 3975, and 4986-4987 available at Archives of American Art offices and through interlibrary loan. Researchers should note that the arrangement of material described in the container inventory does not reflect the arrangement of the collection on microfilm.

### Processing Information

The collection received a preliminary level of arrangement after donation and was microfilmed onto reels N69-64-N69-65, 3975, and 4986-4987. The collection was processed, and a finding aid prepared by Janya Josefson in 2020.

### Preferred Citation

Ethel Schwabacher papers, 1939-1975. 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 born-digital records or audiovisual recordings in this collection must use access copies. Contact Reference Services for more information.

## Conditions Governing Use

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## Biographical / Historical

Ethel Schwabacher (1903-1984) was a painter and art historian from New York, New York.

Schwabacher studied at the National Academy of Design, the Art Students League, and in Europe before studying with Arshile Gorky in New York from 1934-1936. Schwabacher wrote *Arshile Gorky* (1957), with a preface by Lloyd Goodrich and introduction by Meyer Schapiro, and a biography, *John Ford, Conquistador*, about her painting colleague and friend.

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## Scope and Contents

The papers of art historian and painter Ethel Schwabacher date from 1939 to 1975 and measure 2.3 linear feet. Found are biographical materials, including motion picture films, correspondence, research and writing files including sound recordings, printed material, and photographs. The papers document Schwabacher's research and writings on her former teacher Arshile Gorky and her colleague John Ford, and her own painting career.

Biographical materials include two interview transcripts from the 1960s and three home movies. Largely professional in nature, Schwabacher's correspondence is with artists, art historians, and institutions including Giorgio Cavallon, Clement Greenberg, Barnett Newman, Richard Pousette-Dart, and Oscar Williams. Research and writing files form the bulk of the collection and consist of materials compiled and written by Schwabacher on various artists and general art subjects, including John Ford and Arshile Gorky, and an unpublished manuscript titled "1948." Material on John Ford also includes sound recordings.

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## Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 5 series.

- Series 1: Biographical Material, 1963-1967 (Box 1, FCs 3-5; 0.3 linear feet)
- Series 2: Correspondence, 1956-1975 (Box 1; 0.1 linear feet)
- Series 3: Research and Writing Files, 1939-1974 (Boxes 1-2; 1.5 linear feet)
- Series 4: Printed Material, 1947-1974 (Box 2; 0.3 linear feet)
- Series 5: Photographs, circa 1950-circa 1970 (Box 2; 0.1 linear feet)

## Names and Subject Terms

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

### Subjects:

Painting, Modern -- 20th century -- New York (State) -- New York  
Women art historians  
Women artists

### Types of Materials:

Drawings  
Interviews  
Motion pictures  
Sound recordings

### Names:

Ford, John Charles, 1929-  
Gorky, Arshile, 1904-1948

### Occupations:

Art historians -- New York (State) -- New York  
Painters -- New York (State) -- New York

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Biographical Material, 1963-1967

#### *0.3 Linear feet (Box 1, FC3-5)*

Scope and Contents: Found are two transcripts from interviews with Schwabacher, conducted by Dr. Osis and Colette Roberts, a resume, and three motion picture film home movies taken at Brookdale Farm.

Box 1, Folder 1	Resume, 1967
Box 1, Folder 2	Interview Transcript, of Ethel Schwabacher by Dr. Osis at Physical Research Center, 1963 May-June
Box 1, Folder 3	Interview Transcript, of Ethel Schwabacher by Collette Roberts, 1965
Item FC 3	Home Movie of Brookdale Farm, circa 1960 1 Motion picture film (16mm)
Item FC 4	Home Movie of Brookdale Farm, circa 1960 1 Motion picture film (16mm)
Item FC 5	Home Movie of Brookdale Farm, circa 1960 1 Motion picture film (16mm)

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## Series 2: Correspondence, 1956-1975

### 0.1 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Letters are from colleagues and various institutions concerning Schwabacher's painting career and her research. Notable correspondents include Ethel Baziotes, Giorgio Cavallon, Clement Greenberg, Barnett Newman, Richard Pousette-Dart, and Anna Walinska. A note from Oscar Williams is on a picture postcard of himself with Dylan Thomas (1958)

Box 1, Folder 4	Baziotes, Ethel, 1971-1974
Box 1, Folder 5	General, 1956-1959
Box 1, Folder 6	General, 1960-1969
Box 1, Folder 7	General, 1970-1975

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## Series 3: Research and Writing Files, 1939-1974

### 1.5 Linear feet (Box 1-2)

**Scope and Contents:** Research and writing files consist of artist files, compiled research materials, and writings. Artist files are on John Ford, Arshile Gorky, Jose Guerrero, Helen Keen, and Jeanne Reynal. The file on Ford includes twenty-two letters from Ford (two are illustrated) and four sound recordings of Schwabacher's verbal notes and Ford's comments. Material on Gorky includes a study for his illustrations for Andre Breton's *Protecting Young Cherry Trees From Hares* (1946), and a photograph of Gorky. There are also letters written to Schwabacher by art historian Lloyd Goodrich on Gorky.

Writings by Schwabacher consist largely of dismantled notebooks, both identified and unidentified. Some of the notebooks include research and drafts for Schwabacher's writings "Paradise of the Real" and "Conflict of Freedoms" and for "1948." Within notebooks for "1948" are letters from Richard Pousette-Dart, and lists and photographs of works by Willem De Kooning, Hans Hofmann, Franz Kline, Robert Motherwell, Barnett Newman, Jackson Pollock, Ad Reinhardt, Mark Rothko, Anne Ryan, Clyfford Still, Bradley Walker Tomlin, and Jack Tworkov. Other writings by Schwabacher, 1966, include typescripts for "Conflict of Freedoms" and "The Portrait as Image."

Box 1, Folder 8-11	Ford, John, 1971-1974 4 Cassette tapes
Box 1, Folder 12-18	Gorky, Arshile, 1948-1972
Box 1, Folder 19	Guerrero, Jose, circa 1960
Box 1, Folder 20	Keen, Helen, 1972
Box 1, Folder 21	Reynal, Jeanne, 1947-1962
Box 1, Folder 22-28	"1948", 1939-1961
Box 2, Folder 1-3	"Conflict of Freedoms", 1964-1966
Box 2, Folder 4	"E. S. Biography", 1960
Box 2, Folder 5	"Paradise of the Real", 1972-1974
Box 2, Folder 6	"The Portrait as Image", 1972
Box 2, Folder 7-12	Notebooks, 1953-1971

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## Series 4: Printed Material, 1947-1974

### *0.3 Linear feet (Box 2)*

Scope and Contents: Printed material consists of clippings, exhibition announcements and catalogs for Schwabacher and others, and two reproductions of art works.

Box 2, Folder 13-14 Clippings, 1957-1974

Box 2, Folder 15-19 Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1947-1974

Box 2, Folder 20 Reproductions of Works of Art, circa 1960

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## Series 5: Photographs, circa 1950-circa 1970

### *0.1 Linear feet (Box 2)*

Scope and Contents: Photographs are undated and are of art work by Schwabacher.

Box 2, Folder 20-21 Photographs of Works of Art, circa 1950-circa 1970

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