



Smithsonian  
*Archives of American Art*

A Finding Aid to the Charles Searles Papers,  
1953-2010, in the Archives of American Art

Sarah Mundy

2014 February 28

Archives of American Art  
750 9th Street, NW  
Victor Building, Suite 2200  
Washington, D.C. 20001  
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions>  
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/>

# Table of Contents

Collection Overview .....	1
Administrative Information .....	1
Scope and Contents.....	2
Arrangement.....	2
Biographical / Historical.....	2
Names and Subjects .....	3
Container Listing .....	4
Series 1: Biographical Material, 1963-2004.....	4
Series 2: Correspondence, 1956-2004.....	5
Series 3: Personal Business Records, 1968-2007.....	6
Series 4: Printed Material, 1953-2010.....	8
Series 5: Artwork, circa 1980-2000.....	9
Series 6: Photographs, 1964-2000.....	10
Series 7: Scrapbook, 1970-2005.....	11

## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Charles Searles papers
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.searchar
<b>Date:</b>	1953-2010
<b>Extent:</b>	3.9 Linear feet
<b>Creator:</b>	Searles, Charles Robert, 1937-2004
<b>Language:</b>	The collection is in English.
<b>Summary:</b>	The papers of African American sculptor and painter Charles Searles measure 3.9 linear feet and date from 1953 to 2010. The collection documents his career through scattered biographical material, correspondence, personal business records, printed material, artwork, photographs, and a scrapbook.

---

## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Donated in 2012 by Kathleen Spicer Searles, Charles Searles' widow.

### Related Materials

Also at the Archives of American Art is an interview with Charles Searles conducted on June 13, 1991, by Cynthia Veloric, for the Archives of American Art Philadelphia Project.

### Processing Information

The collection was processed to a minimal level and a finding aid prepared by Sarah Mundy in 2014. The collection has been minimally rearranged and retains the existing/original folder titles when possible. All materials have been rehoused in archival folders and boxes for long-term stability, but often staples and other fasteners have not been removed. Materials within folders have not been rearranged.

### Preferred Citation

Charles Searles papers, 1953-2010. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

### Restrictions

Use of original papers requires an appointment.

## Terms of Use

The Archives of American Art makes its archival collections available for non-commercial, educational and personal use unless restricted by copyright and/or donor restrictions, including but not limited to access and publication restrictions. AAA makes no representations concerning such rights and restrictions and it is the user's responsibility to determine whether rights or restrictions exist and to obtain any necessary permission to access, use, reproduce and publish the collections. Please refer to the [Smithsonian's Terms of Use](#) for additional information.

---

## Biographical / Historical

Charles Robert Searles (1937-2004) was an African American sculptor, painter and muralist in Philadelphia, Pa. and New York, N.Y. Searles attended the University of Pennsylvania and graduated from the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in 1972. He was influenced by African art after traveling to Nigeria on the Ware Memorial Traveling Scholarship during his studies at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. During his career he participated in over 100 exhibitions in Denmark, Nigeria, and throughout the United States.

Searles taught art at several institutions including the Pratt Institute, the University of the Arts (Philadelphia College of Art), and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. He also completed commission work for Newark Station, PATCO (Port Authority Transit Corporation), and MTA (Metropolitan Transportation Authority).

Searles moved to New York, NY in 1978 where he spent most of his career. He was married to artist Kathleen Spicer until his death on November 27, 2004.

---

## Scope and Contents

The papers of sculptor and painter Charles Searles measure 3.9 linear feet and date from 1953 to 2010. The collection documents his career through scattered biographical material, correspondence, personal business records, printed material, artwork, photographs, and a scrapbook.

Scattered biographical material includes legal papers, address books, transcripts, and awards. Correspondence includes correspondence with galleries, museums, and organizations. Personal business records consist of Searles' files on commissions, exhibitions, workshops and programs, and employment contracts. Printed material includes exhibition announcements, exhibition catalogs, as well as printed material of interest to Searles, but not directly documenting his career. Artwork consists of sketches, designs, flyers, a portrait of Kathleen Spicer by Russell Gordon, and a portrait of Searles by K. Spicer. Photographs depict Searles, Searles' artwork, and artist Walt Edmonds. Scrapbooks consist of news clippings and loose material that was originally inserted in between the pages in no particular order.

---

## Arrangement

This collection is arranged as 7 series.

- Series 1: Biographical Material, 1963-2004 (0.5 linear ft.; Boxes 1, 6)
- Series 2: Correspondence, 1956-2004 (5 folders; Box 1)

- Series 3: Personal Business Records, 1969-2007 (1.2 linear feet; Boxes 1-2,6)
- Series 4: Printed Material, 1953-2010 (1.4 linear feet; Boxes 3-4, 6)
- Series 5: Artwork, circa 1980s-2000 (9 folders; Box 5)
- Series 6: Photographs, circa 1964-2000 (3 folders; Box 5)
- Series 7: Scrapbooks, circa 1970s-2005 (0.3 linear ft.; Box 6)

---

## Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

African American artists

Types of Materials:

Photographs  
Scrapbooks  
Sketches  
Transcripts

Names:

Edmonds, Walt  
Gordon, Russell Talbert, 1936-  
Spicer, Kathleen

Occupations:

Muralists -- New York (State) -- New York  
Muralists -- Pennsylvania -- Philadelphia  
Painters -- New York (State) -- New York  
Painters -- Pennsylvania -- Philadelphia  
Sculptors -- New York (State) -- New York  
Sculptors -- Pennsylvania -- Philadelphia

---

## Container Listing

### Series 1: Biographical Material, 1963-2004

*0.5 Linear feet (Boxes 1, 6)*

Biographical material includes two address books, interview transcripts, artist statements and writings by Searles, academic papers on Searles' artwork, certificates and awards, blueprints and documents for Searles' home in upstate New York, and legal documents pertaining to disputes between the tenants of 640 Broadway and management.

Box 1, Folder 1-2	Address Books, undated
Box 1, Folder 3	Interview Transcripts, Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1973-1974
Box 1, Folder 4	Academic Papers, Artist Statements, Notes, circa 1973
Box 1, Folder 5	Certificates and Awards, 1963-2003 <i>Oversize material housed in Box 6, Folder 7.</i>
Box 1, Folder 6-7	House Upstate N.Y., 1990-1999, 2000-2004
Box 1, Folder 8	640 Rental Agreements, 1984-1985
Box 1, Folder 9-10	Legal, 640 Broadway Loft Board, circa 1984-2003
Box 1, Folder 11-16	Lawsuits, 640 Broadway, circa 1990-2000
Box 1, Folder 17-18	Lawsuits, 640 Broadway Leak, 2002
Box 1, Folder 19	Heller Realty Documents, 2000-2004
Box 1, Folder 20	Legal, City of Philadelphia, 1985-1991
Box 6, Folder 7	Oversize Certificates and Awards from Box 1, Folder 5, 1972

*[Return to Table of Contents](#)*

## Series 2: Correspondence, 1956-2004

### *5 Folders (Box 1)*

Correspondence consists of letters regarding exhibitions, teaching, and art related subjects. Searles maintained a separate file for gallery and museum correspondence, but correspondence with galleries and museums can also be found in the general correspondence.

Box 1, Folder 21-24      General Correspondence, 1956-2004

Box 1, Folder 25      Galleries and Museums, 1975-1998

*[Return to Table of Contents](#)*

## Series 3: Personal Business Records, 1968-2007

### 1.2 Linear feet (Boxes 1-2, 6)

Personal business records document Searles' commissions, exhibitions, workshops, employment contracts, and other activities. Records are filed by name of organization, museum, gallery, or project and may include correspondence, notes, printed materials, contracts, and invoices.

Box 1, Folder 26	2nd World Black-African Festival Program, 1973-1976
Box 1, Folder 27	Afro-American Historical Museum Exhibition, 1976-1977
Box 1, Folder 28	Balch Institute Exhibition, circa 1976
Box 1, Folder 29-30	Brooklyn Sculpture Commission, 1993-1997
Box 1, Folder 31	Bryn Mawr College, 1971-1972
Box 1, Folder 32	Commission Proposals, circa 1990-1995
Box 1, Folder 33	Dallas Museum of Art Exhibition, 1989-1991 <i>Oversize material housed in Box 6, Folder 8.</i>
Box 2, Folder 1	Dempsey Center Harlem Commission, 1988-1990
Box 2, Folder 2	First District P.A. Commission, 1990-1995
Box 2, Folder 3	G.S.A. Mural Contract-Commission, 1975-1977
Box 2, Folder 4	Herbert Johnson Museum N.Y. Exhibition, 1974
Box 2, Folder 5	Howard Univ., D.C. Exhibition, 1973-1975
Box 2, Folder 6	Ile-Ife Museum, 1972-1975
Box 2, Folder 7	June Kelly Gallery Exhibition, 1993-2007
Box 2, Folder 8	Kentucky State Univ., Frankfort, K.Y. Exhibition, 1974-1975
Box 2, Folder 9	Mallory Playground Mural Commission, 1976-1977
Box 2, Folder 10	Merabash Museum, Henderson, N.J. Exhibition, 1973-1974
Box 2, Folder 11	Miscellaneous Art Organizations, 1971-1980



Box 2, Folder 12	Miscellaneous Universities, 1969-1989
Box 2, Folder 13	MTA Jamaica St. Commission, 1995-2001
Box 2, Folder 14	National Center of Afro-American Artists Exhibition, 1974-1976
Box 2, Folder 15	National Conference of Artists Membership, circa 1973-1977
Box 2, Folder 16-18	Newark Station Arts Commission, 1980-1985
Box 2, Folder 19	PATCO Commission, 2000-2004
Box 2, Folder 20	Pennsylvania Academy of Art, 1971-1972
Box 2, Folder 21	Philadelphia College of Art, Employment Contracts, 1973-1994
Box 2, Folder 22	Philadelphia Museum of Art, Div. Education, 1970-1975
Box 2, Folder 23	Philadelphia Museum of Art, Urban Outreach, 1971-1974
Box 2, Folder 24	Playground P.A. Richert Commission, circa 1990
Box 2, Folder 25	Ryno Fab, circa 1992-1997
Box 2, Folder 26	Sande Webster Gallery Exhibition, 1984-2004
Box 2, Folder 27	State Museum, Harrisburg, P.A. Exhibition, 1994-1996
Box 2, Folder 28	Studio Museum, Harlem, N.Y., 1968-1974
Box 2, Folder 29	U. of South Alabama, Sales, 1970-1973
Box 2, Folder 30	West Philly Library Commission, 1983-1984
Box 2, Folder 31	Whitney Museum, N.Y. Exhibition, 1971-1977
Box 2, Folder 32-33	Workshops and Programs, 1989-1992, circa 1980-1988
Box 6, Folder 8	Oversize Dallas Museum of Art Exhibition from Box 1, Folder 33, 1989

*[Return to Table of Contents](#)*

## Series 4: Printed Material, 1953-2010

### 1.4 Linear feet (Boxes 3-4, 6)

Printed materials consists of flyers, calendars, magazines and journals, exhibition announcements, posters, and catalogs that were of interest to or feature Searles. Printed material also includes a collection of published cartoons by Gerald 2X compiled by Searles, Bebe's Kids Teleplay by Reginald Hudlin, and memorabilia.

Box 3, Folder 1-4	Exhibition Announcements, circa 1973-2010
Box 3, Folder 5	Exhibition Posters, 1984, 1990
Box 3, Folder 6-12	Exhibition Catalogs, 1969-2009
Box 3, Folder 13	Flyers, circa 1978-1992
Box 3, Folder 14	Calendars, 1989, 1993 <i>Oversize material housed in Box 6, Folder 9</i>
Box 3, Folder 15	Bebe's Kids Teleplay, 1990
Box 3, Folder 16	Memorabilia, circa 1953-1982
Box 4, Folder 1-4	Magazines and Journals, 1968-1979, 1992-2005, 1990
Box 4, Folder 5	Cartoons by Gerald 2X, 1967-1969
Box 6, Folder 9	Oversize Calendar from Box 3, Folder 14, 1992

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

## Series 5: Artwork, circa 1980-2000

### *9 Folders (Box 5)*

Artwork consists of pencil and ink drawings, flyers, doodles, designs, mixed media works, and reproductions of works by Searles. Artwork includes a pencil drawing of Searles by K. Spicer, and a pencil drawing of Kathleen Spicer by Russell Gordon.

Box 5, Folder 1	Pencil Drawing of Charles Searles by K. Spicer, 1984
Box 5, Folder 2	Pencil Drawing of Kathleen Spicer by Russell Gordon, undated
Box 5, Folder 3	Ink Drawings, undated
Box 5, Folder 4	Pencil Drawings, undated
Box 5, Folder 5	Designs, undated
Box 5, Folder 6	Doodles, circa 1980-1989
Box 5, Folder 7	Mixed Media, 1983, 1989
Box 5, Folder 8	Flyers by Charles Searles, circa 1980-1989
Box 5, Folder 9	Reproductions, circa 2000

*[Return to Table of Contents](#)*

## Series 6: Photographs, 1964-2000

### *3 Folders (Box 5)*

Found here are two photographs of Searles, one group photograph with Searles at the University of Pennsylvania in 1964, a small group of photographs of Searles' artwork, and one photograph of artist Walt Edmonds.

Box 5, Folder 10          Photographs of Charles Searles, circa 1964-2000

Box 5, Folder 11          Photographs of Artwork, 1995, 1974

Box 5, Folder 12          Photograph of Walt Edmonds, 1987

*[Return to Table of Contents](#)*

## Series 7: Scrapbook, 1970-2005

### *0.3 Linear feet (Box 6)*

One scrapbook consists of 21 pages that were removed from a binder as well as loose material that was originally inserted in between the scrapbook pages in no particular order. The scrapbook consists mainly of newspaper and magazine clippings documenting Searles' career.

Box 6, Folder 1-4          Scrapbook, circa 1970-1999

Box 6, Folder 5-6          Loose Material from Scrapbook, circa 1970-2005

*[Return to Table of Contents](#)*