



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Gladys Nelson Smith Papers, 1891-1989, in the Archives of American Art

Jayna M. Josefson

Processing of this collection received support from
the Smithsonian American Women's History Initiative.

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Gladys Nelson Smith papers
Date:	1891-1989
Identifier:	AAA.smitglad
Creator:	Smith, Gladys Nelson, 1890-1980
Extent:	1.2 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	The papers of painter Gladys Nelson Smith measure 1.2 linear feet and date from 1891 to 1989. Compiled and annotated by Smith's sister Josephine Nelson, the papers were used for Nelson's memoir <i>My Sister Gladys</i> (1984). Found are biographical materials on Smith and the Nelson family, scattered correspondence, exhibition material, personal business records, photographs, printed material, and writings by Smith. Also found is a diary kept by Smith on a trip to Europe from 1930 to 1931 and three textbooks used by Smith as a student in which she includes painted and pencil sketches and doodles.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Donated 1989 and 1992 by Josephine Nelson.

Processing Information

The collection was processed, and a finding aid prepared by Jayna Josefson in 2023 with support from the Smithsonian American Women's History Initiative.

Preferred Citation

Gladys Nelson Smith papers, 1891-1989. 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

Gladys Nelson Smith (1890-1980) was a painter in Washington, D.C.. Born in El Dorado, Kansas, Smith studied art at the University of Kansas and followed her husband, Errett Smith to New York City where she enrolled at the Art Students League. Eventually, settling in Washington, D.C., Smith studied at the Corcoran School of Art with Edmund Tarbell. She was a member of the Landscape Club of Washington. Smith died in Chevy Chase, Maryland, in 1980.

Scope and Contents

The papers of painter Gladys Nelson Smith measure 1.2 linear feet and date from 1891 to 1989. Compiled and annotated by Smith's sister Josephine Nelson, the papers were used for Nelson's memoir *My Sister Gladys* (1984). Found are biographical materials on Smith and the Nelson family, scattered correspondence, exhibition material, personal business records, photographs, printed material, and writings by Smith. Also found is a diary kept by Smith on a trip to Europe from 1930 to 1931 and three textbooks used by Smith as a student in which she includes painted and pencil sketches and doodles.

Arrangement

Due to the small size of this collection the papers are arranged as one series.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Women artists
- Women painters

Types of Materials:

- Diaries
- Drawings

Names:

- Nelson, Josephine

Occupations:

- Painters -- Washington (D.C.)

Container Listing

Series 1: Gladys Nelson Smith Papers, 1891-1989

1.2 Linear feet (Boxes 1-2)

Scope and Contents: Biographical materials consist of compiled material and writings by Josephine Nelson on Gladys Nelson Smith and their father, Joseph Kibler Nelson. Material focuses on Smith's early life, health issues, and death and also includes correspondence. Genealogy of the Nelson family focuses on the descendants of Joseph Nelson and Ida May Brown. Also found are Joseph Nelson's recollections of growing up in Cassoday, Kansas, edited by Josephine Nelson.

Scattered personal correspondence is between Gladys Nelson Smith and her sisters Josephine and Lorraine Nelson. Professional correspondence includes letters from Nelson's art dealers, Marie Witwer in Kansas of The What-Not Shop, the Turner Art Galleries, and the Thurber Galleries. A letter from the Art League of Washington includes a membership card.

A diary was kept during a trip to Europe in 1930 to 1931 along with a letter from Smith to her parents describing the trip. An exhibition file consists of clippings, price lists, printed material, and correspondence from group and solo exhibitions held in Kansas and around Washington, D.C.. Personal business records include an agreement with Thurber Galleries, scattered pricelists, and sales records.

Photographs depict Smith, the Nelson family, and friends as well as homes and farms, and works of art. Writings are by Gladys Nelson Smith and includes a notebook with notes about handicrafts such as rugs and frames, poetry, and short stories. Short stories may also include correspondence with publishers and editors and many are based on her experiences as a painter. Also found are stories written by Archer Grantin. It is unclear if this is a pen name or what the relationship is to Nelson or Smith.

Three textbooks used by Smith as a school girl include painted and pencil sketches of landscapes and small portraits.

Box 1, Folder 1	Biographical Material, Gladys Nelson Smith, 1926-1989
Box 1, Folder 2	Biographical Material, Joseph Kibler Nelson, 1960
Box 1, Folder 3-4	Correspondence, 1921-1952
Box 1, Folder 5	Diary, 1930-1931
Box 1, Folder 6	Exhibition File, 1929-1988
Box 1, Folder 7	Notebook, on Handicrafts, circa 1920s
Box 1, Folder 8	Personal Business Records, 1924-1939
Box 1, Folder 9-10	Photographs, 1891-1971
Box 1, Folder 11-13	Photographs, Works of Art, circa 1950s-1980s

Box 1, Folder 14	Printed Material, 1934-1984
Box 1, Folder 15-17	Textbooks, with Sketches, 1909-1912
Box 1, Folder 18	Writings, Poetry, 1904-1947
Box 1, Folder 19	Writings, Short Stories, 1913-1967
Box 2, Folder 1-2	Writings, Short Stories, 1913-1967

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