



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Elmer E. Taflinger Papers,
circa 1907-1981, in the Archives of American Art

Caroline Anderson-Gray

2025 March 17

Table of Contents

Collection Overview	
Administrative Information	1
Biographical / Historical	2
Scope and Contents	2
Arrangement	3
Names and Subjects	
Container Listing	
Series 1: Biographical Material, circa 1908-1980	4
Series 2: Correspondence, circa 1910-1981	5
Series 3: Project Files, circa 1921-1979	8
Series 4: Printed Material, circa 1907-1981	9
Series 5: Photographic Material, circa 1910-1979	10

Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Elmer E. Taflinger papers
Date:	circa 1907-1981
Identifier:	AAA.tafilelme
Creator:	Taflinger, Elmer E. (Elmer Edward), 1891-1981
Extent:	6.2 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	The papers of painter and landscape artist Elmer E. Taflinger date from circa 1907-1981, and measure 6.2 linear feet. The papers document his life and career in Indiana and New York City. Found within the collection is biographical material; correspondence with family, friends, colleagues, and students; planning documents and design sketches from <i>The Ruins</i> (1973) in Holliday Park, Indianapolis and other specific artworks; theater programs and catalogues from the Art Students League of New York and other exhibitions; and photographs of studio art classes, completed works of art, works in progress, models, family, and friends.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Donated 1982 by Robert Black, brother-in-law of Taflinger.

Processing Information

Collection processed and a finding aid produced by Caroline Anderson-Gray in 2025.

Preferred Citation

Elmer E. Taflinger papers, circa 1907-1981. 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

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

Painter and landscape designer Elmer E. Taflinger (1891-1981), lived, studied, and worked in Indianapolis, Indiana, with stints in New York City and Florence, Italy. Taflinger first studied art with at Manual High School in Indianapolis, followed by the Art Students League of New York. He was then hired by theater producer David Belasco as an art director and stage manager from 1914 to 1922. After leaving Belasco, Taflinger split his time between further study in Florence and at the Art Students League under George Bridgman. He contributed drawings to an anatomy textbook by Bridgman.

Taflinger returned to Indianapolis in 1928, where he taught life-drawing classes in his own studio, as well as at the Indianapolis Art League until 1965. In 1933 he protested that Thomas Hart Benton was awarded the commission for murals depicting the history of Indiana for the Chicago World's Fair because Benton was not a native of the state.

Taflinger's largest project was a design for *The Ruins* at Holliday Park in Indianapolis. His design helped Indianapolis gain possession of Karl Bitter's sculpture *The Races of Man*, after its original home, the St. Paul Building in New York City, was demolished. Taflinger's design was centered around the statues, and included additional sculptures and columns, a reflecting pool, fountains and landscaping. The project stretched from 1958 to 1973, prolonged due to lack of funds and changes to the design by Taflinger. It was finally dedicated in October, 1973. Taflinger continued to suggest the addition of the "Constitution Mall" to the project in the lead-up to the 1976 bicentennial, and that portion of the project was dedicated in 1977.

Taflinger was also an enthusiastic amateur radio broadcaster. He died in Indianapolis in 1981.

Scope and Contents

The papers of painter and landscape designer Elmer E. Taflinger date from circa 1907-1981, and measure 6.2 linear feet.

Biographical material includes ephemera from secondary and post-secondary school, a handwritten play and other short writings, administrative documents and teaching notes from art classes, an essay based on an interview with Taflinger, an annuity agreement, and awards and recognitions.

Correspondence includes letters from colleagues, students, friends, and family throughout Taflinger's life and career, as well as extensive letters between Taflinger and his longtime girlfriend, Jessica Daube, some with illustrations. There are also a handful of postcards, and an original comic strip by Bill Juhre with a note to Taflinger.

Project files consist of design and planning materials for a variety of projects, including designs and sketches, source material, construction specifications, and financial planning records for *The Ruins* (1973) at Holliday Park in Indianapolis.

Printed Material includes newspaper and magazine clippings, some in scrapbooks, related to Taflinger's work, as well as theater programs, including several from David Belasco productions. There are also catalogs from the Art Students League of New York and other assorted exhibitions, as well as a few brochures from cruises Taflinger was a passenger on.

Photographic material consists of extensive shots of Taflinger himself, as well as family, friends, and models, including some of Jessica Daube at her home in Mexico and other assorted travel. There are also photos from Taflinger's studio art class, of *The Ruins* (1973) in Holliday Park, Indianapolis, and of other works of art. This series includes some negatives and transparencies.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 5 series:

- Series 1: Biographical Material, circa 1908-1980 (0.2 linear feet; Box 1)
 - Series 2: Correspondence, circa 1910-1981 (3.1 linear feet; Box 1-4; OV 8)
 - Series 3: Project Files, circa 1921-1979 (0.7 linear feet; Box 4; OV 9)
 - Series 4: Printed Material, circa 1907-1981 (1.0 linear feet; Box 4-5; OV 10)
 - Series 5: Photographic Material, circa 1910-1979 (1.2 linear foot; Box 5-7; OV 11)
-

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Landscape design
Painting -- Indiana -- Indianapolis

Types of Materials:

Drawings
Interviews
Scrapbooks

Occupations:

Landscape architects
Painters -- Indiana -- Indianapolis

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Material, circa 1908-1980

.2 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Biographical material includes ephemera from secondary and post-secondary school, a handwritten play and other short writings, administrative documents and teaching notes from art classes, an essay based on an interview with Taflinger, an annuity agreement, and awards and recognitions.

Box 1, Folder 1 Ephemera, Secondary/Post-Secondary Education, 1908-1909

Box 1, Folder 2 Handwritten Play, circa 1920s - 1930s

Box 1, Folder 3 Annuity Agreement, circa 1930

Box 1, Folder 4 Elmer Taflinger Resume, circa 1930-1950

Box 1, Folder 5 Studio Art Classes - Administration Documents and Teaching Notes, circa 1932-1963

Box 1, Folder 6 Short Writings - Various, circa 1940s-1960s

Box 1, Folder 7 Amateur Radio - Membership Certificates, FCC Applications, and Awards, circa 1955 - 1980

Box 1, Folder 8 Essay About The Ruins at Holliday Park, Based on Elmer Taflinger Interview, circa 1970s

Box 1, Folder 9 Awards and Recognitions, 1975-1976

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 2: Correspondence, circa 1910-1981

3.1 Linear feet (Box 1-4, OV 8)

Scope and Contents: Correspondence includes letters from colleagues, students, friends, and family throughout Taflinger's life and career, as well as extensive letters between Taflinger and his longtime girlfriend, Jessica Daube, some with illustrations. There are also a handful of postcards, and an original comic strip by Bill Juhre with a note to Taflinger.

Box 1, Folder 10	General, 1911-1929
Box 1, Folder 11	General, 1930
Box 1, Folder 12-13	General, 1931
Box 1, Folder 14-15	General, 1932
Box 1, Folder 16	General, 1933-1939
Box 1, Folder 17	General, 1941-1960
Box 1, Folder 18	General, with Photographs and Illustrations, 1961-1963
Box 1, Folder 19	General (Aug.-Sep.), 1963
Box 1, Folder 20	General (Oct.) , 1963
Box 1, Folder 21-22	General with Illustrations (Nov.), 1963
Box 1, Folder 23	General (Dec.), 1963
Box 1, Folder 24	General (Jan.), 1964
Box 2, Folder 1	General (Feb.1-14) , 1964
Box 2, Folder 2	General (Feb.15-29), 1964
Box 2, Folder 3-4	General (Mar.), 1964
Box 2, Folder 5	General (Apr.-Sep.) , 1964
Box 2, Folder 6-7	General (Oct.), 1964
Box 2, Folder 8	General (Nov. 1-15), 1964
Box 2, Folder 9	General (Nov. 16-30), 1964
Box 2, Folder 10	General (Dec.), 1964

Box 2, Folder 11	General (Jan.-Apr.), 1965
Box 2, Folder 12	General (May 1-15), 1965
Box 2, Folder 13	General (May 16-31), 1965
Box 2, Folder 14	General (Jun.), 1965
Box 2, Folder 15	General (Jul.-Sept.), 1965
Box 2, Folder 16	General (Oct.), 1965
Box 3, Folder 1	General (Nov.) , 1965
Box 3, Folder 2	General (Dec.), 1965
Box 3, Folder 3	General (Jan.-Apr.), 1966
Box 3, Folder 4	General (May 1-12), 1966
Box 3, Folder 5	General (May 13-31), 1966
Box 3, Folder 6	General (Jun.), 1966
Box 3, Folder 7	General (Jul.), 1966
Box 3, Folder 8	General, 1967
Box 3, Folder 9	General, 1968
Box 3, Folder 10	General, 1969
Box 3, Folder 11	General, 1970-1975
Box 3, Folder 12	General, 1976-1977
Box 3, Folder 13	General, 1978-1979
Box 3, Folder 14	General, 1980-1981
Box 3, Folder 15	General (Undated), circa 1910s-1981
Box 3, Folder 16	Postcards, circa 1920s-1970s
Oversize 8	Artwork, Comic Strip by Bill Juhre, with Note to Elmer Taflinger, circa 1949
Box 3, Folder 17-18	Jessica Daube to Taflinger, circa 1920s-1960s

Box 3, Folder 19-20	Jessica Daube to Taflinger - from Mexico, circa 1960s
Box 3, Folder 21	Taflinger to Jessica Daube, with Illustrations, circa 1920s-1960s
Box 4, Folder 1-4	Taflinger to Jessica Daube, with Illustrations, circa 1920s-1960s
Box 4, Folder 5	Various to Jessica Daube, circa 1950s

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 3: Project Files, circa 1921-1979

.6 Linear feet (Box 4, OV 9)

Scope and Contents: Project files consist of design and planning materials for a variety of projects, including designs and sketches, source material, construction specifications, and financial planning records for *The Ruins* (1973) at Holliday Park in Indianapolis.

Box 4, Folder 3	Beaux-Arts Bal Modurne - Planning Sketches and Brochure, 1957
Box 4, Folder 4	Booth War Memorial, Unrealized - Planning Sketches, circa 1950s
Box 4, Folder 5	Indiana State Library Murals - Proposal and Brochure, 1933
Box 4, Folder 6	The Merchant of Venice - David Belasco Production, circa 1921-1931
Box 4, Folder 7	The Ruins (1973) - Construction Specifications, 1959-1960
Box 4, Folder 8	The Ruins (1973) - Financial Records, circa 1958-1973
Box 4, Folder 9	The Ruins (1973) - Planning Documents, circa 1958-1978
Box 4, Folder 10	The Ruins (1973) - St. Paul Building Records, circa 1959
Box 4, Folder 11-14	The Ruins (1973) - Sketches and Designs, circa 1958-1973
Oversize 9	The Ruins (1973) - Planning Sketches and Source Material, circa 1950s-1970s
Box 4, Folder 15	Valle Vista - Planning Sketches, 1979

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 4: Printed Material, circa 1907-1981

1 Linear foot (Box 4-5, OV 10)

Scope and Contents: Printed Material includes newspaper and magazine clippings, some in scrapbooks, related to Taflinger's work, as well as theater programs, including several from David Belasco productions. There are also catalogs from the Art Students League of New York and other assorted exhibitions, as well as a few brochures from cruises Taflinger was a passenger on.

Box 4, Folder 16-18	Art Students League of New York - Catalogs, 1908-1968
Box 4, Folder 19	Clippings, 1915-1949
Box 4, Folder 20	Clippings, circa 1940s-1970s
Box 4, Folder 21	Clippings, circa 1950s-1960s
Box 4, Folder 22	Clippings, 1970-1973
Box 4, Folder 23	Clippings, 1974-1981
Box 4, Folder 24	Clippings re: Jessica Daube, circa 1960s
Box 4, Folder 25	Clippings, The Ruins (1973), circa 1958-1975
Box 4, Folder 26	Clippings, Scrapbook, circa 1940s-1950s
Oversize 10	Clippings, Scrapbook Saved by Clementine Taflinger, circa 1940s
Box 5, Folder 1	Cruise Passenger Brochures, Various, circa 1920s
Box 5, Folder 2-3	Exhibition Catalogs , 1911-1977
Box 5, Folder 4	Magazine Illustrations, circa 1930-1945
Box 5, Folder 5-6	Theater Programs, 1907-1910
Box 5, Folder 7-8	Theater Programs, 1910-1924
Box 5, Folder 9	Theater Programs, circa 1910s-1920s

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 5: Photographic Material, circa 1910-1979

1.1 Linear feet (Box 5-7, OV 11)

Scope and Contents: Photographic material consists of extensive shots of Taflinger himself, as well as family, friends, and models, including some of Jessica Daube at her home in Mexico and other assorted travel. There are also photos from Taflinger's studio art class, of *The Ruins* (1973) in Holliday Park, Indianapolis, and of other works of art. This series includes some negatives and transparencies.

Box 5, Folder 10-17	Elmer Taflinger, circa 1920s-1970s
Box 5, Folder 18	Family , circa 1920s-1960s
Box 5, Folder 19	Jessica Daube; Home in Mexico, circa 1930s-1960s
Box 5, Folder 20-22	Students and Friends, circa 1910s-1970s
Box 5, Folder 23-24	Amateur Radio, circa 1930s-1970s
Oversize 11	American Radio Relay League, 1957
Box 5, Folder 25	David Belasco Theater Productions, circa 1910s-1920s
Box 5, Folder 26	Talbot Street Art Fair, circa 1958
Box 5, Folder 27	Travel, circa 1910s-1970s
Box 5, Folder 28	Various - Studio Cats, Landscapes, Beauty Contest, circa 1940s-1970s
Box 6, Folder 1	Ima Fountain - Construction, circa 1970s
Box 6, Folder 2-6	Models, Nude Studies, circa 1920-1940s
Box 6, Folder 7	Model for Green Goddess Painting, circa 1930s-1940s
Box 6, Folder 8	The Ruins (1973) - Removal of The Races of Man from St. Paul Building, circa 1958
Box 6, Folder 9	The Ruins (1973) - Models and Design, circa 1958-1973
Box 6, Folder 10-11	The Ruins - Construction, circa 1958-1973
Box 7, Folder 1	The Ruins (1973) - Groundbreaking; Dedication; Completion, circa 1960s-1970s
Box 7, Folder 2	1307 Spring Hollow Road, circa 1937
Box 7, Folder 3	Student Work, circa 1930s-1970s

Box 7, Folder 4-6	Studio Classes - 46 S. Pennsylvania Ave./158 E 14th St., Indianapolis, circa 1940s-1960s
Box 7, Folder 7-9	Works of Art, circa 1920s-1970s
Box 7, Folder 10	Works of Art - Transparencies and Negatives, circa 1920s-1970s

[Return to Table of Contents](#)