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Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Torpedo Factory Art Center Records, 1974-1996, in the Archives of American Art

Jean Fitzgerald

2001

Archives of American Art
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Torpedo Factory Art Center records
Date:	1974-1996
Identifier:	AAA.torpfaca
Creator:	Torpedo Factory Art Center
Extent:	4.7 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	The records of the Torpedo Factory Art Center measure 4.7 linear feet and date from 1974-1996. The collection documents the history, operations, and activities of one of the largest and longest-running artist collaboratives in the United States and includes organizational records, correspondence, business and financial records, lists and directories, reports, event files, printed material, and photographs.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The collection was donated to the Archives of American Art in 1998 by Penelope C. Barringer for the Torpedo Factory Artists' Association.

Processing Information

This collection was processed by Jean Fitzgerald in 2001.

Preferred Citation

Torpedo Factory Art Center records, 1974-1996. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

The collection is open for research. Use requires an appointment.

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Biographical Note

Construction of the original U.S. Naval Torpedo Station on the Potomac River, in Alexandria, Virginia, began on November 12, 1918. This station was responsible for the manufacture and maintenance of torpedoes for the next five years, when work stopped and the building served as a munitions storage facility until World War II. At this time, round-the-clock production of both submarine-borne and airborne torpedoes resumed, and ten buildings were added to the complex to accommodate the increased activity.

Torpedo production halted in 1945, and eventually the buildings were used for storage by various federal agencies, including Congress and the Smithsonian Institution. In 1969, the City of Alexandria bought the complex of buildings, but an acceptable plan for their use was not found for several years.

Marian Van Landingham, a delegate for the State of Virginia, President of the Alexandria-based Art League, and Projects and Programs Director of the Alexandria Bicentennial Commission, proposed a project to renovate two of the buildings into working studio spaces for artists. Her proposal was endorsed by the Commission in December 1973, and renovations began in May 1974. Artists worked to remove 40 truckloads of debris from the buildings and, after City crews constructed partial studio walls, they painted the interior. The Torpedo Factory Art Center opened to the public in September, 1974. The new complex of artists' studios was filled from a list of juried artists, and Marian Van Landingham became the first Director of the Art Center.

By 1983, the building needed major repairs and improvements. As part of a federal program sale/lease-back agreement, the building was sold to Alexandria Art Center Associates (AACAA), leased back from AACAA by the City, and subleased to the Torpedo Factory Artists' Association. As part of the sale agreement, the City had a one time repurchase option to be exercised in 1998. On September 1, 1998 the Artists' Association took over all management of the building, and the City now acts as landlord.

In 1998, the Torpedo Factory Art Center boasted of more than eight hundred thousand visitors annually, with eighty-three studios, five cooperative galleries, an art school, and an archaeology laboratory and museum. The artists form the Torpedo Factory Artists Association. The center is also supported by the Friends of the Torpedo Factory.

Scope and Contents

The Torpedo Factory Art Center records span the years 1974 to 1996, and measure 4.7 linear feet. They consist of organizational records, correspondence, an organization file for Friends of the Torpedo Factory Art Center, business and financial records, lists and directories, reports, event files, printed material, and photographs which document the history, operations, and activities of one of the largest and longest-running artist collaboratives in the United States.

The Organizational Records Series describes the origins and operation policy of the Art Center through brief histories and copies of the constitution and by-laws. It includes minutes of meetings and ballots from elections of area representatives.

The Correspondence Series includes both external and internal memoranda and letters. These communications primarily discuss gallery business and operations of the Art Center and its interaction with the community. Additional correspondence is found in the Organization File for the Friends of the Torpedo Factory Art Center Series and the Event Files Series.

The Organization File for the Friends of the Torpedo Factory Art Center Series contains by-laws, correspondence, and newsletters which illustrate this entity's important role in fund-raising and out-reach teaching programs.

The Business and Financial Records Series contains leasing policy statements, tax records, insurance records, general budget information, payroll ledgers, rent records, dues assessments, information desk accounts, publicity receipts, and miscellaneous receipts which document the varied legal and fiscal procedures required in the operation of a large artist collaborative.

The Notes Series contains lists of artists' names, artist directories, minutes of meetings, ballots from elections of area representatives, responses to various questionnaires and surveys, and miscellaneous notes which support other series with more detailed information.

The Reports Series contains reports which describe the Art Center's interaction with the surrounding community.

The Event Files Series contains correspondence, receipts, notes, and printed material concerning the planning and execution of a wide range of special events from the large annual fund-raising Mardi Gras Costume Ball to the "Art in the Vineyards" competition held between the Art Center's artists.

The Printed Material Series contains clippings, newsletters from both the Art Center and other arts organizations, exhibition announcements and brochures.

The Photographs Series consists of photographs of the Torpedo Factory Art Center, miscellaneous artists, events, and art works.

Arrangement

The Torpedo Factory Art Center records are arranged as nine series, based on type of document. Each series has been arranged chronologically.

Missing Title:

- Series 1: Organizational Records, 1974-1995 (box 1, 0.9 linear ft.)
- Series 2: Correspondence, 1974-1995 (boxes 1-2, 1.4 linear feet)
- Series 3: Organization File for Friends of the Torpedo Factory Art Center, 1980-1992 (box 3, 8 folders)
- Series 4: Business and Financial Records, 1974-1995 (boxes 3-4, 1.3 linear ft.)
- Series 5: Lists and Directories, 1975-1996 (box 4, 8 folders)
- Series 6: Reports, 1986-1994 (box 4, 5 folders)
- Series 7: Event Files, 1979-1995 (box 4, 0.3 linear feet)
- Series 8: Printed Material, 1975-1995 (box 5, 24 folders)
- Series 9: Photographs, 1983-1989 (box 5, 10 folders)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Art, Modern -- 20th century -- Virginia
Artists -- Virginia

Names:

Torpedo Factory Art Center. Friends
Torpedo Factory Artists' Association

Functions:

Art centers -- Virginia

Container Listing

Series 1: Organizational Records, 1974-1995

0.9 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: This series describes the history, founding, and organizational structure of the Torpedo Factory Art Center.

Arrangement: The files are arranged chronologically

Box 1, Folder 1	Brief histories, 1975-1994
Box 1, Folder 2-3	Constitution and by-laws, 1977-1990, undated
Box 1, Folder 4-22	Minutes of meetings, 1974-1994
Box 1, Folder 23-24	Ballots from elections of area representatives, 1988-1990, undated
Box 1, Folder 25	Responses to publicity questionnaire, undated
Box 1, Folder 26	Responses to sales questionnaire, 1984
Box 1, Folder 27	Responses to question of an open evening on, Aug 12, 1991
Box 1, Folder 28	Responses to question of open evenings on Thursdays, 1991
Box 1, Folder 29	Responses to question of open evenings on Thursdays, 1993
Box 1, Folder 30	National Park Service visitation numbers, 1993
Box 1, Folder 31	Responses to visitors' survey, 1993
Box 1, Folder 32	Results of Visitor Impact Study, 1994
Box 1, Folder 33-34	Results of Comprehensive Arts Center Survey, 1995

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Series 2: Correspondence, 1974-1995

1.4 Linear feet (Boxes 1-2)

Scope and Contents: This series consists of both external and internal communications which discuss the business of the Torpedo Factory Art Center, including legal and financial matters, and the planning of exhibitions, events, and classes. Correspondents include Marian Van Landingham, Margaret Alderson, James Dean, and Betty Rice Seim. Additional correspondence is found in the Organization File for the Friends of the Torpedo Factory Art Center Series and the Event Files Series.

Arrangement: The files are arranged chronologically.

Box 1, Folder 35 Correspondence, undated

Box 1, Folder 36-66 Correspondence, 1974-1985

Box 2, Folder 1-67 Correspondence, 1986-1995

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Series 3: Organization File for Friends of the Torpedo Factory Art Center, 1980-1992

8 Folders (Box 3)

Scope and Contents: This series includes copies of the Friends of the Torpedo Factory Art Center by-laws, correspondence primarily concerning fund-raising and outreach teaching programs, newsletters, and brochures.

Arrangement: The files are arranged chronologically

Box 3, Folder 1 By-laws and articles of incorporation, 1980

Box 3, Folder 2-6 Correspondence, 1984-1992

Box 3, Folder 7-8 Printed material, 1986-1991

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Series 4: Business and Financial records, 1974-1995

1.3 Linear feet (Boxes 3-4)

Scope and Contents: These files document various legal and financial transactions, and include leasing policies, tax records, insurance records, general budget information, payroll ledgers, rent records, dues assessments, information desk accounts, publicity receipts, and miscellaneous receipts. The leasing policies include signed subleasing agreements, 1983. The general budget information includes miscellaneous check registers, income and expense ledgers, cost projections, and a report of net cost analysis.

Arrangement: The files are arranged chronologically.

Box 3, Folder 9-32	Leasing policies, 1982-1994, 1979
Box 3, Folder 33-41	Eviction file, 1984-1993
Box 3, Folder 42-55	Tax records, 1976-1990
Box 3, Folder 56	Insurance records, 1983-1984
Box 3, Folder 57-67	General budget information, 1974-1986
Box 4, Folder 1-8	General budget information, 1987-1994 Notes: Oversized material housed in Box 6
Box 4, Folder 9	Payroll ledgers, 1980-1989
Box 4, Folder 10	Rent records, 1983-1985 Notes: Oversized material housed in Box 6
Box 4, Folder 11	Dues assessments, 1990-1993
Box 4, Folder 12	Information desk ledger, 1988-1989
Box 4, Folder 13	Miscellaneous information desk accounts, 1989-1994
Box 4, Folder 14-20	Publicity receipts, 1990-1994
Box 4, Folder 21-26	Miscellaneous receipts, 1976-1995
Box 6	Oversized General budget information from Box 4, Folders 1-8, 1987-1994
Box 6	Oversized Rent records from Box 4, folder 10, 1983-1985

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Series 5: Lists and Directories, 1975-1996

8 Folders (Box 4)

Scope and Contents: This series consists of listings of artists' names, results of miscellaneous questionnaires and surveys, and miscellaneous notes.

Arrangement: The files are arranged chronologically.

Box 4, Folder 27-29	Lists of artists, 1975-1978
Box 4, Folder 30-33	Artist directories, 1985-1996
Box 4, Folder 34	Miscellaneous notes, undated

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Series 6: Reports, 1986-1994

5 Folders (Box 4)

Scope and Contents: This series consists of reports on the operations and management strategy of the Art Center and the cultural plans of the City of Alexandria.

Arrangement: The files are arranged chronologically.

Box 4, Folder 35	"A Cultural Assessment of the City of Alexandria," 1992
Box 4, Folder 36	"Final Report of the Torpedo Factory Art Center Working Group," 1994
Box 4, Folder 37	"The Alexandria Cultural Plan," 1994
Box 4, Folder 38	"The Management of Strategy Evaluation" by Marcia Guttentag, circa 1986
Box 4, Folder 39	"Letters to the Conference" by Robert Ashley, Leslie Fiedler, Ann Hawley, Thulani Davis, Howard Klein, Mary Macarthur Griffin, Owen Kelly, Ursula Von Rydingsvard, Jim Pomeroy, Ruby Lerner, Martha Rosler, 1986

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Series 7: Event Files, 1979-1995

0.3 Linear feet (Box 4)

Scope and Contents: This series contains correspondence, reports, receipts, notes, and printed material concerning the planning of special events, including the annual Mardi Gras Costume Ball, and the "Art in the Vineyards" competition.

Arrangement: The files are arranged chronologically.

Box 4, Folder 40	Mardi Gras Costume Ball announcement and report, 1986
Box 4, Folder 41	Mardi Gras Costume Ball report, 1987
Box 4, Folder 42	Mardi Gras Costume Ball report, list of expenses, and photographs, 1988
Box 4, Folder 43-45	Mardi Gras Costume Ball correspondence, 1988-Feb. 1989
Box 4, Folder 46	Mardi Gras Costume Ball lists of expenses, 1989
Box 4, Folder 47-48	Mardi Gras Costume Ball receipts, 1988-1989
Box 4, Folder 49	Mardi Gras Costume Ball letters and notes concerning mask-making, 1988-1989
Box 4, Folder 50	Mardi Gras Costume Ball notes and clippings concerning musical groups for hire, 1988-1989
Box 4, Folder 51	Mardi Gras Costume Ball notes and brochures concerning decorations, 1989
Box 4, Folder 52	Mardi Gras Costume Ball notes concerning food and drink, 1988-1989
Box 4, Folder 53	Mardi Gras Costume Ball notes and press releases concerning publicity, 1989
Box 4, Folder 54	Mardi Gras Costume Ball miscellaneous notes, 1989
Box 4, Folder 55	Mardi Gras Costume Ball miscellaneous committee reports, 1989
Box 4, Folder 56	Mardi Gras Costume Ball clippings, 1988-1989
Box 4, Folder 57	Mardi Gras Costume Ball announcements and tickets, 1989
Box 4, Folder 58	Mardi Gras Costume Ball miscellaneous printed material, 1989-1991
Box 4, Folder 59	Mardi Gras Costume Ball photographs by Betty Anderson, 1989
Box 4, Folder 60-62	Mardi Gras Costume Ball photographs by Nina Tisara, 1989
Box 4, Folder 63	Fifteen Years exhibition, 1989

Box 4, Folder 64	Art in the Vineyards competition correspondence and printed material, 1989
Box 4, Folder 65	Art in the Vineyards competition photographs of artists, 1989
Box 4, Folder 66	Art in the Vineyards competition correspondence and printed material, 1990
Box 4, Folder 67	Art in the Vineyards competition correspondence and printed material, 1991
Box 4, Folder 68	First Waterfront Wedding Show receipts, notes, and printed material, 1994
Box 4, Folder 69-70	Miscellaneous musical groups available for events, 1979-1995

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Series 8: Printed Material, 1975-1995

24 Folders (Box 5)

Scope and Contents: This series consists of clippings, newsletters, exhibition announcements, brochures, and schedules of classes.

Arrangement: The files are arranged chronologically.

Box 5, Folder 1-9	Clippings, 1975-1995
Box 5, Folder 10-12	Newsletter: Arts Washington, 1988-1990
Box 5, Folder 13	Newsletter: Factory Facts, 1988-1989
Box 5, Folder 14-19	Newsletter: Alexandria Commission on the Arts News, 1988-1992, 1986
Box 5, Folder 20	Newsletter: The Art League Tidings, 1987-1994
Box 5, Folder 21	Exhibition announcements, 1988-1989, undated
Box 5, Folder 22	Brochures about the Torpedo Factory Art Center, undated
Box 5, Folder 23	Brochure about the Virginia Commission for the Arts, 1986-1989
Box 5, Folder 24	Schedule of classes for The Art League, 1987-1993

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Series 9: Photographs, 1983-1989

10 Folders (Box 5, sol 6)

Box 5, Folder 25	Photographs of the Torpedo Factory Art Center, [1988-1989]
Box 5, Folder 26	Photographs of miscellaneous events and buildings, [1983-1989]
Box 5, Folder 27	Photograph of Carol Levin, undated
Box 5, Folder 28	Photographs of miscellaneous artists, 1988-1989
Box 5, Folder 29-31	Contact sheets of unidentified artists, [1988-1989]
Box 5, Folder 32	Color transparencies of an unidentified artist, [1988-1989]
Box 5, Folder 33	Color transparency of painting Southern Storm by Ellen Glasgow, 1983
Box 5, Folder 34	Photographs of an unidentified exhibition, 1989
Box 6	Oversized Photographs, 1983-1989

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