



# Smithsonian

*Archives of American Art*

## A Finding Aid to the Robert Chapman Turner Papers, circa 1917-2005, in the Archives of American Art

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Archives of American Art  
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<https://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions>  
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/>

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Robert Chapman Turner papers
<b>Date:</b>	circa 1917-2005
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.turnrobe
<b>Creator:</b>	Turner, Robert Chapman, 1913-2005
<b>Extent:</b>	13.3 Linear feet
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Summary:</b>	The papers of ceramicist Robert Chapman Turner measure 13.3 linear feet and date from circa 1917 to 2005. The papers document Turner's career as an educator and studio potter through biographical material, correspondence, writings, teaching files, professional files including lectures, subject files, printed material, and photographs.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Robert Chapman Turner donated some of his papers in 1982. Additional materials were donated in 2005-2006 by Rosalind Turner Zuses, Turner's daughter.

### Related Materials

Also found in the Archives of American Art is an oral history interview of Robert Turner conducted 2001 June 11, by Margaret Carney, for the Archives of American Art's Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America,

### Processing Information

The collection was processed, and a finding aid prepared by Jayna Josefson in 2019.

### Preferred Citation

Robert Chapman Turner papers, circa 1917-2005. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

### Restrictions

The 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 audiovisual recordings in this collection must use access copies. Contact Reference Services for more information.

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## Biographical / Historical

Robert Chapman Turner (1913-2006) was a ceramicist who was known for functional and abstract pottery. He was active in Alfred Station, New York where he was a longtime faculty member at Alfred University.

Robert Turner was born in Port Washington, New York in 1913. He attended Swarthmore College and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts where he studied economics and painting. With his wife Sue Turner, Robert lived in Europe to study Old Master paintings but returned to the United States after the start of World War II. A Quaker, Turner was a conscientious objector and served at multiple Civilian Public Service (CPS) camps in the United States during the war.

After leaving the CPS camps, Robert Turner enrolled at the New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University to study ceramics and graduated in 1949. Turner was a faculty member at Black Mountain College (1949-1951) and Alfred University (1958-1979). He conducted numerous ceramics workshops throughout his career at many institutions including Haystack Mountain School of Crafts and Penland School of Crafts. Additionally, he was an active member of the (New) York State Craftsman.

Turner died in 2005 in Sandy Spring, Maryland.

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## Scope and Contents

The papers of ceramicist Robert Chapman Turner measure 13.3 linear feet and date from circa 1917 to 2005. The papers document Turner's career as an educator and studio potter through biographical material, correspondence, writings, teaching files, professional files including lectures, subject files, printed material, and photographs.

The bulk of Turner's papers relate to his role as an educator and a lecturer at various institutions including Alfred University, Anderson Ranch Arts Center, Black Mountain College, Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, and Penland School of Crafts. Records, including two sound cassettes, regarding his time at these institutions may be found among his teaching and professional files as well as among photographs. Turner's professional files document his long affiliations with professional organizations such as the York State Craftsmen, National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts, and the International Academy of Ceramics. Correspondence is with artists, family, and friends. Notable correspondents include Margaret Carney, Kenneth Ferguson, Alice Parrott, Toshiko Takaezu, and Frans Wildenhain among many others and may be found in both the correspondence series and professional files. Photographs of note are by John Wood and depict the building of the pottery studio at Black Mountain College.

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## Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 8 series.

- Series 1: Biographical Material, 1930-2002 (0.4 linear feet; Boxes 1, 14)
- Series 2: Correspondence, circa 1938-2005 (1.8 linear feet; Boxes 1-3)
- Series 3: Writings and Notes, 1950s-2000s (0.6 linear feet; Box 3)
- Series 4: Teaching Files, 1957-2005 (0.8 linear feet; Boxes 3-4)
- Series 5: Professional Files, 1952-2005 (5.5 linear feet; Boxes 4-9)
- Series 6: Subject Files, 1950s-2000 (0.8 linear feet; Boxes 9-10)
- Series 7: Printed Material, 1939-2000s (1.5 linear feet; Boxes 10-12, 14)
- Series 8: Photographs, circa 1917-2000s (1.9 linear feet; Boxes 12-14)

## Names and Subject Terms

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

### Subjects:

American studio craft movement  
Ceramics -- Study and teaching  
World War, 1939-1945 -- Conscientious objectors

### Types of Materials:

Sound recordings

### Names:

Black Mountain College (Black Mountain, N.C.)  
Haystack Mountain School of Crafts  
York State Craftsmen

### Occupations:

Ceramicists -- New York (State) -- Alfred Station

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Biographical Material, 1930-2002

#### 0.4 Linear feet (Boxes 1, 14)

Scope and Contents: Biographical materials are scattered and include addresses, awards and certificates, gallery labels, gifts and donation records, and scattered sketches. Of note are records relating to Turner's application and service as a conscientious objector and his role in the CPS camps during World War II. A book entitled *50 Years of Building by Turner* details the history of Turner's father's construction company.

Box 1, Folder 1	Addresses and Contacts, 1950s-1980s
Box 1, Folder 2	Aptitude Testing, 1944
Box 1, Folder 3-5	Awards and Certificates, 1930-2002
Box 1, Folder 6-9	Biographical Sketches, Resumes, and Chronologies, circa 1950-1999
Box 1, Folder 10	Conscientious Objector Service Records, 1942-1943
Box 1, Folder 11	Gallery Labels, circa 1940s
Box 1, Folder 12	Gifts and Donations to Museums and Institutions, 1999-2001
Box 1, Folder 13	Guest Book, circa 1990
Box 1, Folder 14	Legal Records, Traffic Accident, 1948
Box 1, Folder 15	50 Years of Building by Turner: Turner Construction Company, 1952
Box 1, Folder 16	Sketches and Doodles, circa 1970
Box 14, Folder 3	Oversized Award, circa 1960

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## Series 2: Correspondence, circa 1938-2005

### 1.8 Linear feet (Boxes 1-3)

Scope and Contents: Robert Turner's general correspondence is with artists, friends, family, colleagues, institutions, and museums. Early letters are from the Cleveland Museum of Art and the Bertha Shaefer Gallery among others. Notable correspondents include Margaret Carney, Kenneth Ferguson, Ben Howard, Alice Parrott, Charles Redfern, Toshiko Takaezu, Frans Wildenhain, and Barry Zawachi. Additional letters regarding and with specific people, institutions, exhibitions, and projects can also be found in Series 5: Professional Files.

Box 1, Folder 17	Condolence Letters to Sue Turner, 2005
Box 1, Folder 18	Regarding Job Search, circa 1938-1950
Box 1, Folder 19	Carney, Margaret, 2000s
Box 1, Folder 20	Howard, Ben, 1990s-2000s
Box 1, Folder 21	Redfern, Charles, 1978-1981
Box 1, Folder 22	Zawachi, Barry, 1999-2000
Box 1, Folder 23	General, 1940s
Box 1, Folder 24-33	General, 1950s
Box 2, Folder 1-3	General, 1960s
Box 2, Folder 4-6	General, 1970s
Box 2, Folder 7	General, 1980s
Box 2, Folder 8-14	General, 1990s
Box 2, Folder 15-20	General, 2000s
Box 3, Folder 1-2	General, 2000s

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## Series 3: Writings and Notes, 1950s-2000s

### 0.6 Linear feet (Box 3)

Scope and Contents: Writings and notes are largely on art theory and the technical aspects of creating pottery, such as glazing and kiln notes detailing recipes for glazes. A notebook from the 1950s includes travel expenses and notes about Midwest and Great Lakes museums from Turner's early job search trip.

Box 3, Folder 3	Artist Statements and Reviews, 1990s
Box 3, Folder 4	Lists, circa 1980
Box 3, Folder 5	General, by Turner, 1980s-1990s
Box 3, Folder 6-8	Notebooks, 1950s-2000s
Box 3, Folder 9	Notes and Doodles, circa 1970s-2000s
Box 3, Folder 10-11	Glazing and Kiln Notes, 1950s-1980s
Box 3, Folder 12	by Others, 1990

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## Series 4: Teaching Files, 1957-2005

### 0.8 Linear feet (Box 3-4)

**Scope and Contents:** Turner's teaching files contain material directly related to teaching classes and workshops. Grading information, lecture notes, a cassette tape likely containing a lecture from the Anderson Ranch Arts Center, and syllabi may be found.

**Arrangement:** Files for institutions where Turner taught and gave workshops may also be found in Series 5 and are more general and are typically administrative.

Box 3, Folder 13	Grade Book, 1962
Box 3, Folder 14-16	Anderson Ranch Arts Center, 1988-2000 includes one sound cassette
Box 3, Folder 17-21	Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, 1979-2005
Box 4, Folder 1-2	Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, 1979-2005
Box 4, Folder 3-11	Penland School of Craft, 1971-2001
Box 4, Folder 12	Syracuse University, circa 1975
Box 4, Folder 13	University of Mississippi, 1984
Box 4, Folder 14	University of Wisconsin, 1957

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## Series 5: Professional Files, 1950s-2005

### 5.5 Linear feet (Boxes 4-9)

Scope and Contents: Professional files form the bulk of the collection and include records relating to the administration of Turner's teaching career, exhibitions, invitations to lecture, gallery affiliations, organizational affiliations, and projects. Files retain Turner's original order and folder titles. Files may include correspondence from, to, and about the named person or organization. Of note is Turner's research and study of Africa and traditional African pottery making; book project files which likely contains material from *Robert Turner: Shaping Silence; A Life in Clay*, by Marsha Miro and Tony Hepburn; records from Turner's long affiliation with the American Craft Council, International Academy of Ceramics, National Council on Education of the Ceramic Arts, and the York State Craftsmen (now the New York State Craftsmen); and Turner's art sales and exhibitions at the Dorothy Weiss Gallery, Exhibit A Gallery, The Fabric Workshop, Hand and the Spirit, Okun Gallery, Revolution Gallery, and Santa Fe Clay.

Files may contain correspondence, exhibition announcements and catalogs, writings and notes, personal business records such as sales records, and photographs. The Lectures and Talks files include one sound cassette.

Box 4, Folder 15-17	Africa, 1970s-1980s
Box 4, Folder 18	Alfred University, 2000s
Box 4, Folder 19	Appalachian Center for Crafts, 1993
Box 4, Folder 20-26	American Craft Council, 1956-2000
Box 4, Folder 27-29	Archie Bray Foundation, 1999-2002
Box 5, Folder 1	Barra Foundation, 1995-1996
Box 5, Folder 2	Bellas Artes, 1990s
Box 5, Folder 3-5	Black Mountain College, Oral History Interview and Exhibition, 1990s
Box 5, Folder 6-27	Book Project Files, 1985-2001
Box 6, Folder 1	C. Duryea Smith III Fund, 1996-1998
Box 6, Folder 2	Carney, Margaret, 2001
Box 6, Folder 3-4	Criticisms and Reviews, 1990s-2001
Box 6, Folder 5	Dallas Museum of Art, 1997
Box 6, Folder 6	Dorothy Weiss Gallery, 1984-1991
Box 6, Folder 7	Everson Museum of Art, 2001

Box 6, Folder 8-13	Exhibit A Gallery, Alice Westphal, 1970-1990
Box 6, Folder 14-24	Exhibitions, 1952-2005
Box 6, Folder 25-26	The Fabric Workshop, 1980s-1990s
Box 6, Folder 27	Galleries, General, 2000s
Box 6, Folder 28	Gallery W.D.O., 2001
Box 7, Folder 1	Greenberg Gallery, 1989-1993
Box 7, Folder 2	Hawaii Craftsmen, 1980s
Box 7, Folder 3-4	The Hand and the Spirit Gallery, 1998-2001
Box 7, Folder 5-7	Helen Drutt Gallery, 1989-2001
Box 7, Folder 8-9	International Academy of Ceramics (IAC), 1990-2002
Box 7, Folder 10	Journals, 1997
Box 7, Folder 11	King, Marcia, 1990s
Box 7, Folder 12	Kodansha International, 2004
Box 7, Folder 13-30	Lectures and Talks, 1970s-2005 Includes 1 sound cassette
Box 8, Folder 1	Lincoln Contemporary Pots Collection, 1990s
Box 8, Folder 2	MacArthur Foundation, 2000-2001
Box 8, Folder 3	Milwaukee Art, Gerald Norland, 1985
Box 8, Folder 4-9	National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts, 1997-2001
Box 8, Folder 10-12	Northern Clay Center, 1999-2000
Box 8, Folder 13	Oakwood Friends School, 1999
Box 8, Folder 14	Okun Gallery, 1990s
Box 8, Folder 15	Parry, Bill, 1998
Box 8, Folder 16	The Peter Callas Studio, 1999
Box 8, Folder 17	Price Lists, 1981-1997

Box 8, Folder 18	Program Plans, 1980s
Box 8, Folder 19	Publicity, 1960s-2000s
Box 8, Folder 20-25	Revolution Gallery, 1980s-2001
Box 8, Folder 26-28	Sales and Loan Records, 1959-2002
Box 9, Folder 1	Santa Fe Clay, 1999-2000
Box 9, Folder 2-3	Shaw Festival, 1998-2000
Box 9, Folder 4	Sketches, of Pottery, circa 1980s-1990s
Box 9, Folder 5	Sun Setter, 2003
Box 9, Folder 6-7	Studio, Supplies, 2000s
Box 9, Folder 8	Toledo Museum of Art, 1958
Box 9, Folder 9	Voulkos, Peter, 1998
Box 9, Folder 10-11	Westphal, Alice and Kenneth, 1984-1989
Box 9, Folder 12	Wildenhain, Frans, 1970s
Box 9, Folder 13-17	Workshops, 1980s-1990s
Box 9, Folder 18	York State Craftsmen, Administrative Material, 1950s-1960s
Box 9, Folder 19-22	York State Craftsmen, Correspondence, 1953-1966
Box 9, Folder 23-25	York State Craftsmen, Committee Meeting Minutes, 1954-1966
Box 9, Folder 26	York State Craftsmen, Writings, 1963-1974
Box 9, Folder 27	York State Craftsmen, Printed Material, 1954-1966
Box 9, Folder 28-29	York State Craftsmen, Pottery Orders, Sales, Price Lists, 1949-1977

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## Series 6: Subject Files, 1950s-2000

### 0.8 Linear feet (Box 10)

Scope and Contents: Subject files are very general and are likely to contain clippings, brochures, exhibition catalogs, and photocopies relating to people and subjects of interest to Turner. Original folder titles have been maintained.

Box 9, Folder 30	American Southwest, 1990s
Box 10, Folder 1-2	Art, 1960s-1990s
Box 10, Folder 3	Chinese Tea Sets, 1994
Box 10, Folder 4	Daley, William P., 1994
Box 10, Folder 5	Dillingham, Rick, 1994
Box 10, Folder 6-8	Ideas, 1990s
Box 10, Folder 9	Lichtenstein, Roy, 1997
Box 10, Folder 10	Martin, Agnes, circa 1990s
Box 10, Folder 11	Music, circa 1960s
Box 10, Folder 12-14	Pendle Hill, 1990s
Box 10, Folder 15	People, 1990s
Box 10, Folder 16	Price, Ken, 1992
Box 10, Folder 17-19	Readings, 1950s-1970s
Box 10, Folder 20	Shaner, David, 1999
Box 10, Folder 21-27	Thoughts, Quotes, Writings, 1970s-2000

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## Series 7: Printed Material, 1939-2000s

### 1.5 Linear feet (Boxes 10-12, 14)

Scope and Contents: The bulk of the printed materials relate to art and exhibitions. Materials from Black Mountain College include course offerings and informational brochures dating from Turner's time at the college; newer Black Mountain College items concern an oral history project. Also found are the items that hung along the walls and used to decorate the Alfred University Pottery Shop.

Box 10, Folder 28	from Black Mountain College, 1952, 1990s
Box 10, Folder 29-32	Clippings, 1939-1990s
Box 11, Folder 1-4	Clippings, 1950s-1990s
Box 11, Folder 5-21	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1940s-2000s
Box 12, Folder 1-2	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1940s-2000s
Box 12, Folder 3	Items from Alfred University Pottery Shop Walls, 1990s
Box 12, Folder 4	Reproductions of Works of Art, 1950s
Box 12, Folder 5	Travel Brochures, 1990s
Box 14, Folder 1	Oversized Clippings, 1950s-1990s

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## Series 8: Photographs, circa 1917-2000s

### 1.9 Linear feet (Boxes 12-14)

Scope and Contents: Photographs depict Robert Turner, the Turner family, Sue Turner and their children, friends, and colleagues. Photos of Turner include portraits and snapshots and show Turner at work in pottery shops, demonstrating, and teaching classes. Photos of workshops show the building of and completed interiors of the Black Mountain College pottery workshop and Alfred University shop. Many of the photos of Turner's artwork were taken by John Wood.

Box 12, Folder 6-9	Robert Chapman Turner and Family, circa 1917-2000s
Box 12, Folder 10-11	Robert Chapman Turner at Work and Teaching, 1940s-2000s
Box 12, Folder 12	Ireland, Cresson Trip, 1939
Box 12, Folder 13-21	Workshops and Kilns, 1949-1988
Box 12, Folder 22	Exhibition Opening, Joseph Collection (St. Louis, Missouri), 1996
Box 12, Folder 23-25	Exhibitions, 1970s-1980s
Box 12, Folder 26-28	Photos by John Wood, of Robert Chapman Turner and his Artwork, 1956-1957
Box 12, Folder 29-40	Photos of Works of Art, 1950s-2000s
Box 13, Folder 1-15	Photos of Works of Art, 1950s-2000s
Box 13, Folder 16-19	Slides, 1977-1990s
Box 14, Folder 2	Oversized Photographs, 1950s-1980s

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