



Smithsonian  
*Archives of American Art*

A Finding Aid to the King W. Vidor Papers,  
1936-1982, in the Archives of American Art

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Archives of American Art  
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Washington, D.C. 20001  
<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>	King W. Vidor papers
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.vidoking
<b>Date:</b>	1936-1982
<b>Extent:</b>	2.1 linear feet
<b>Creator:</b>	Vidor, King, 1894-1982
<b>Language:</b>	English  Collection is in English.
<b>Summary:</b>	The papers of King Vidor measure 2.1 linear feet and include correspondence, printed material, and a variety of materials related to the documentary <i>Metaphor: King Vidor Meets Andrew Wyeth</i> (1980) written and directed by Vidor, including production notes, photographs, and motion picture film.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Donated 1985 by the King Vidor Trust.

### Related Materials

There is an oral history interview with King Vidor held by Columbia University.

### Available Formats

A video copy of a selection of outtakes from Vidor's film *Metaphor* is available for reference use.

### Processing Information

Motion picture film reels were inspected and re-housed in 2017 with funding provided by the Smithsonian Collections Care and Preservation Fund. Motion picture film was processed by Jennifer Graves, and the entire collection was arranged and described by Megan McShea in 2017. Digital photographs of original film containers were created when the collection was processed showing all original labeling and arrangement of outtakes and trims and are filed in Series 4. Original containers have been discarded.

### Preferred Citation

King W. Vidor papers, 1936-1982. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

## Restrictions

Use of original papers requires an appointment and is limited to the Archives' Washington, D.C. Research Center. Use of archival audiovisual recordings with no duplicate access copy requires advance notice. Contact Reference Services for more information.

## Conditions Governing Use

The King W. Vidor papers are owned by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Literary rights as possessed by the donor have been dedicated to public use for research, study, and scholarship. The collection is subject to all copyright laws.

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## Biographical / Historical

King Vidor was an American film director whose prolific career began in 1913, during the silent era, and continued through 1959 when he stopped directing large scale film projects. In addition to his prolific film career, Vidor was an avid collector of American Art who owned works by Thomas Hart Benton and Grant Wood, among others.

Vidor's final film, *Metaphor: King Vidor Meets Andrew Wyeth* (1980), is a documentary in which he and Wyeth discuss the impact of Vidor's most celebrated film of the silent era, *The Big Parade*, on Wyeth's painting. The project began when Wyeth wrote a lengthy letter to Vidor crediting his film, which Wyeth claimed to have watched over a hundred times, with having had a direct impact on the compositions of his paintings, which he only noticed after the fact when his wife, Betsy, pointed it out to him.

When Wyeth contacted Vidor for permission to use clips from *The Big Parade* in a documentary project by the Metropolitan Museum of Art to accompany a 1976 exhibition of these works, *Two Worlds of Andrew Wyeth: Kuerners and Olsons*, instead of lending his film to that effort, Vidor went to Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania to film Wyeth himself. Together, the two set out to make a documentary telling the story of the aesthetic relationship between their work, with Vidor directing. The film was completed in 1980 but was never commercially released.

Vidor died in 1982.

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## Scope and Contents

The papers of King Vidor measure 2.1 linear feet and include correspondence, printed material, and a variety of materials related to the documentary *Metaphor: King Vidor Meets Andrew Wyeth* (1980) written and directed by Vidor, including production notes, photographs, and motion picture film.

Correspondence is mainly between Vidor and multiple galleries and artists whose artworks Vidor collected, and includes single letters from artists Grant Wood, Thomas Hart Benton, and Andrew Wyeth. Lengthy correspondence with Associated American Artists is found among other correspondence with galleries. Loan requests from museums borrowing from Vidor's painting collection, and image requests for reproduction rights for paintings owned by Vidor from various publishers are also found, as well as a few sheets of notes related to valuation of paintings.

Printed material includes exhibition catalogs for Millard Sheets and Diego Rivera, clippings on a variety of subjects, including a long article about his film project *Metaphor* published in the *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, and periodicals with articles about the artist Grant Wood.

Scattered slides are mostly of unidentified artwork.

Material related to *Metaphor*, Vidor's film project with Andrew Wyeth include photographs of Wyeth and Vidor in Pennsylvania, stills from Vidor's 1925 film *The Big Parade*, and a still from *Metaphor*. Production notes include detailed footage and edit notes as well as typescripts of draft narration. Some production notes are arranged as a group, and others are arranged with documentation of the original film containers in which they were found. Motion picture film found in the collection includes a print of the final version of the film, edit master film material (A and B rolls), outtakes, and trims.

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## Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 4 series. Digital photographs of original film containers are filed in Series 4.

- Series 1: Correspondence, 1941-1982 (Box 1, 1 folder)
- Series 2: Printed Material, 1936-1980 (Box 1, 3 folders)
- Series 3: Slides, 1964 (1 folder; Box 1)
- Series 4: *Metaphor: King Vidor Meets Andrew Wyeth* (1980), 1976-1980 (1.9 linear feet; Box 1, FC 1-17)

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## Names and Subject Terms

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

Cultures:

Art -- Collectors and collecting -- California -- Los Angeles  
Art, American -- Collectors and collecting  
Filmmakers -- California -- Los Angeles

Types of Materials:

Motion pictures (visual works)  
Photographs  
Typescripts  
Video recordings

Names:

Associated American Artists  
Benton, Thomas Hart, 1889-1975  
Big parade (Motion picture)  
Metaphor: King Vidor meets with Andrew Wyeth (motion picture)  
Rivera, Diego, 1886-1957  
Sheets, Millard, 1907-1989  
Wood, Grant, 1891-1942  
Wyeth, Andrew, 1917-2009

Occupations:

Painters -- Pennsylvania

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Correspondence, 1941-1982

#### *1 folder (Box 1)*

Correspondence is mainly from galleries and artists whose works Vidor collected. Notable correspondents include single letters from the artists Grant Wood, Thomas Hart Benton, and Andrew Wyeth. A lengthy correspondence is found with Associated American Artists; other galleries and dealers represented in the correspondence include Frank K.N. Rehn, inc., the Principia Corporation, James Maroney incorporated, and Biltmore Galleries. Also found are loan requests from museums borrowing from Vidor's painting collection, image requests for reproduction rights for paintings owned by Vidor from various publishers, and a few sheets of notes related to valuation of paintings.

Arrangement is chronological.

Box 1, Folder 1                      Correspondence, 1941-1982

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## Series 2: Printed Material, 1936-1980

### *3 folders (Box 1)*

Printed material includes exhibition catalogs for Millard Sheets and Diego Rivera, clippings on a variety of subjects, including a long article about his film project *Metaphor* published in the *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, and periodicals with stories about the artist Grant Wood.

Box 1, Folder 2            Exhibition Catalogs, 1936-1949, 1972

Box 1, Folder 3            News Clippings, circa 1946-1980

Box 1, Folder 4            Periodicals, 1944-1947

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## Series 3: Slides, 1964

*1 folder (Box 1)*

Slides consist of four slides of unidentified paintings, and one slide of an unidentified couple.

Box 1, Folder 5

Slides, 1964

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**Series 4: *Metaphor: King Vidor Meets Andrew Wyeth* (1980), circa 1978-1982***1.9 linear feet (Box 1, FC 1-17)*

Series includes production notes, photographs, and motion picture film related to the documentary *Metaphor: King Vidor Meets Andrew Wyeth* (1980) written and directed by Vidor. The film's subject concerns the influence of Vidor's 1925 film, *The Big Parade*, on Wyeth's paintings and features a lengthy interview of Andrew and Betsy Wyeth by Vidor.

Photographic material related to Vidor's film project with Andrew Wyeth include photographs of Wyeth and Vidor in Pennsylvania, stills from Vidor's 1925 film *The Big Parade*, and a still from *Metaphor*. Production notes include detailed footage and edit notes as well as typescripts of draft narration. Production notes, film strips, and timing cards found in original containers are arranged with the printed digital photographs of the original containers.

Motion picture film found in the collection includes a print of the final version of the film, edit master film material in the form of A and B roll separated into 2 reels, outtakes of separate picture and soundtrack, and trims.

See also Correspondence, Series 1, for a letter from Andrew Wyeth describing the influence of Vidor's 1925 film, *The Big Parade*, on his paintings, a subject which figures largely in the film. See also Printed Material, Series 2, for a clipping of a lengthy article about the film production from the Los Angeles Herald

A video copy of a selection of outtakes from the film is available for reference use.

Box 1, Folder 6	Production Notes, circa 1976-1979
Box 1, Folder 7	Photographic Materials, King Vidor and Andrew Wyeth in Pennsylvania, circa 1978
Box 1, Folder 8	Photographic Materials, Stills from <i>The Big Parade</i> , circa 1979
Box 1, Folder 9	Photographic Materials, Still from <i>Metaphor</i> , circa 1980
Box 1, Folder 10	Film Titles, circa 1978 <i>Transparencies</i>
Box 1, Folder 11	Original Film Container Documentation, Film Print and Edit Master, circa 1980 Contains notes, original timing cards for edit masters, and film strips
Box 1, Folder 12-14	Original Film Container Documentation, Outtakes and Trims, circa 1980 Contains production notes and film strips found in original film containers
Box FC 1	<i>Metaphor</i> , Film Print of Completed Documentary, 1980 <i>1 film reel (color, sound; 16mm, 1,285 feet)</i>
Box FC 2-5	Edit Master, Reels 1 and 2, A and B rolls, 1980 <i>4 film reels (16mm)</i>
Box FC 6-9	Outtakes, Picture, Interview with Andrew Wyeth, circa 1980 <i>26 film reels (housed in 4 film cans; color, silent, includes 2 negatives; 16mm)</i> See Box 1, folder 15 for video reference copy
Box FC 10-11	Outtakes, Picture, Clips from <i>The Big Parade</i> (1925), circa 1980

*13 film reels (housed in 2 film cans; black and white, 2 reels have soundtrack, 11 silent; 16 mm)*

See Box 1, folder 15 for video reference copy

Box FC 12-14

Outtakes, Soundtrack, Interview with Andrew Wyeth, circa 1980  
*19 film reels (housed in 3 film cans; fullcoat magnetic soundtrack; 16mm)*

See Box 1, folder 15 for video reference copy

Box 1, Folder 15

Outtakes, circa 1980  
*1 videocassette (vhs) (Duplicate of film outtakes)*

Reference copy of most of the outtakes housed in FC 6-14

Box FC 15-17

Trims, circa 1980  
*63 film reels (housed in 3 film cans; picture and soundtrack; 16mm)*

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