



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Theodore F. Wolff
Papers, 1920-2013, bulk 1977-2013,
in the Archives of American Art

Joy Goodwin

2014 April 21

Archives of American Art
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Theodore F. Wolff papers
Identifier:	AAA.wolftheo
Date:	1920-2013 (bulk 1977-2013)
Extent:	8 Linear feet
Creator:	Wolff, Theodore F.
Language:	English The collection is in English.
Summary:	The papers of art critic, writer, and painter Theodore F. Wolff measure 8 linear feet and date from 1920-2013, with the bulk of the material dating from 1977-2013. The collection documents Wolff's career through biographical material, correspondence, interviews, writings, subject files, printed material, a small amount of artwork, and photographs.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

A small amount of material was donated in 1999 by Theodore F. Wolff. Additional papers were donated in 2013 by Collette Wolff, widow of Theodore F. Wolff.

Processing Information

This collection was processed in 2014 by Joy Goodwin.

Preferred Citation

Theodore F. Wolff papers, 1920-2013, bulk 1977-2013. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

Use of original papers requires an appointment. Use of archival audiovisual recordings with no duplicate access copy requires advance notice.

Conditions Governing Use

The Theodore F. Wolff 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.

Biographical / Historical

Theodore F. Wolff (1926-2012) was an art critic, writer, and painter in New York City.

Wolff attended the University of Wisconsin, earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in Art Education in 1949 and a Masters degree in Art and Art History the following year. By the early 1950s, Wolff was living in San Francisco, where he began his professional career as a painter. In 1956, he and his wife, Collette Wolff, moved to New York. During this period, Wolff also worked as an art appraiser and fine arts consultant for collectors, galleries, and museums. In 1977, Wolff began writing art criticism for *The Christian Science Monitor* and held the post of art critic at the publication until 1990. In addition to his art columns to *The Monitor*, Wolff contributed critical and introductory essays on artists for exhibition catalogs and journals. Theodore F. Wolff taught and lectured on art and art education at museums, universities, and conferences. In 1982, he received the National Headliners Award for Consistently Outstanding Column on Art and the Art World Award for Distinguished Newspaper Art Criticism in 1983. In 1990, Theodore Wolff retired from *The Christian Science Monitor*. He devoted the latter part of his career to painting, writing, lecturing, and teaching.

Theodore F. Wolff died in 2012 in New York City. He is survived by his wife, Collette Wolff.

Scope and Contents

The papers of art critic, writer, and painter Theodore F. Wolff measure 8 linear feet and date from 1920-2013, with the bulk of the material dating from 1977-2013. The collection documents Wolff's career through biographical material, correspondence, interviews, writings, subject files, printed material, a small portion of artwork, and photographs.

Biographical material consists of biographical data, curriculum vitae, and awards. Included are outgoing and incoming letters that document Wolff's activities as an art critic, appraiser, and fine arts consultant. A large portion of his correspondence is with artists. Among the correspondents are Richard Diebenkorn, Alexander Hogue, Ynez Johnston, Armin Landeck, Melissa Miller, Robert Natkin, Theodoros Stamos, Athena Tachna, Jerome Witkin, and the writer Tom Wolfe. There is significant correspondence with Morris Graves, James Hubbell, Clyfford Still, and Stow Wengenroth relating to their work and Wolff's writings.

Interviews consist of three interviews with Theodore F. Wolff as well as a panel discussion with Wolff and other artists. Found are interviews with Enrico Donati and James Turrell. Recordings are on five sound cassettes and three videocassettes. Writings consist of Wolff's reviews, mostly tearsheets for *The Christian Monitor* and draft versions of a book. Also included are talks and lectures on art and art education recorded on seven videocassettes and six sound cassettes. Subject files document Wolff's professional interests and relate to his writing projects, exhibitions, talks, and presentations. Included are interviews with artists that were used by Theodore Wolff as source material.

Printed material includes Theodore F. Wolff's published critical writings on art, artists, and education. Included are exhibition catalogs, brochures, journals, and monographs. Artwork consists of seventeen sketches by Wolff done early in his career. Photographs are of Theodore F. Wolff and with friends and colleagues, many of them unidentified. Included are photographs of Wolff with Ida Kohlmeyer.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 8 series.

- Series 1: Biographical Material, 1982-2013 (Box 1; 0.1 linear feet)
- Series 2: Correspondence, 1920, 1951-2011 (Box 1; 0.75 linear feet)
- Series 3: Interviews, circa 1990-2002 (Box 2; 0.1 linear feet)
- Series 4: Writings, Talks, and Lectures, circa 1977-2005 (Boxes 2-4; 2.8 linear feet)
- Series 5: Subject Files, circa 1940, 1964-2004 (Boxes 4-6; 1.8 linear feet)
- Series 6: Printed Material, 1956-2006 (Boxes 6-8; 2.2 linear feet)
- Series 7: Artwork, 1942-1948 (Box 7, 1 folder)
- Series 8: Photographs, circa 1980-circa 2011 (Box 7; 0.25 linear feet)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Art -- Study and teaching
Art critics -- New York (State) -- New York
Authors -- New York (State) -- New York
Painters -- New York (State) -- New York

Types of Materials:

Interviews
Photographs
Sketches
Sound recordings
Video recordings

Names:

Diebenkorn, Richard, 1922-1993
Donati, Enrico, 1909-2008
Hogue, Alexandre, 1898-
Johnston, Ynez, 1920-
Kohlmeyer, Ida, 1912-1997
Landeck, Armin, 1905-
Miller, Melissa
Natkin, Robert, 1930-
Stamos, Theodoros, 1922-1997
Tacha, Athena, 1936-
Turrell, James
Witkin, Jerome

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Material, 1982-2013

0.1 Linear feet (Box 1)

This series contains biographical data, curriculum vitae, and awards, including a plaque from Manufacturers Hanover Trust to Wolff for Distinguished Newspaper Art Criticism. Included is a handmade card to Theodore F. Wolff from his colleagues, presumably given to him upon the publication of his book, *The Many Masks of Modern Art*.

The files are arranged by subject.

Box 1, Folder 1	Biographical Data, circa 1983-2013
Box 1, Folder 2	Curriculum Vitae, circa 2005, undated
Box 1, Folder 3	Awards, 1982-1990
Box 1, Folder 4	Congratulatory Card, 1989

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Series 2: Correspondence, 1951-2011, 1920

0.75 Linear feet (Box 1)

This series includes Theodore F. Wolff's correspondence with artists, editors, publishers, museums, and galleries. Subjects relate to Wolff's book projects, reviews, and other writings as well as his activities as an appraiser and fine arts consultant. Outgoing letters, mostly carbon copies, are to friends and family members and are of a personal nature. Types of correspondence include holiday cards, postcards and letters. Some of the letters are annotated and a small portion are illustrated by Wolff.

Found is correspondence with his editors at *The Christian Science Monitor* Henrietta Buckmaster and Allan Bunce, printmakers, Norman and June Kraeft, and the writer, Tom Wolfe. The significant portion of correspondence is with artists, including Richard Diebenkorn, Alexander Hogue, Ynez Johnston, Armin Landeck, Melissa Miller, Peter Milton, Robert Natkin, Theodoros Stamos, Clyfford Still, Athena Tachna, Stow Wengenroth, Jerome Witkin. Of interest, is Wolff's correspondence with Morris Graves and his partner, Robert Yarber. Graves's letters discuss his paintings, exhibitions, Wolff's writings as well as his thoughts on a variety of topics, aging, nature, technology, with allusions to Mayan, Chinese, and Hindu culture. Also found is a file of holograph letters from John Wilde.

In general, letters are filed alphabetically by person or corporate name. Names with five or more letters are filed in their own folders. Wolff's outgoing letters are filed together in the first eleven folders.

Box 1, Folder 5-15	Outgoing Letters (Carbon Copies), 1976-1993, 1920 (Includes a letter from John Taylor Arms)
	Incoming Letters
Box 1, Folder 16	A-C, 1990s-1999
Box 1, Folder 17	D-F, 1977-2008 (Includes single letters from Enrico Donati and Helen Frankenthaler)
Box 1, Folder 18	G-I, 1980s-2011
Box 1, Folder 19	J-L, 1978-1998 (Includes a letter from Morton Kaish)
Box 1, Folder 20	M-N, 1983-1994
Box 1, Folder 21	O-P, 1951, 1993-1994 (Includes a letter from Gordon Onslow-Ford)
Box 1, Folder 22	R-S, 1968-1999 (Includes single letters from Norman Rockwell, John C. Swingdler, Victor Vasarely, and Robert Vickery)
Box 1, Folder 23	T, 1981-1996
Box 1, Folder 24	W, Z, 1975-2010

(Includes single letters from Marian Willard and Betsy Wyeth)

Box 1, Folder 25-26	Graves, Morris, 1981-1999
Box 1, Folder 27	Graves, Morris - Letters for a Book Proposal , circa 1932-circa 1997
Box 1, Folder 28	Wilde, John, 1994-1998
Box 1, Folder 29	First Names, 1983-1997, undated
Box 1, Folder 30	Loose Envelopes, 1976-1996

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Series 3: Interviews, circa 1990-2002

0.1 Linear feet (Box 2)

This series includes three interviews with Theodore Wolff and a panel discussion with Wolff and other artists, including Kim Emerson, Robert Erwin, and James Hubbell. Interviews with Enrico Donati and James Turrell were presumably used for source reference for Wolff's writings. Recordings are on five sound cassettes and three videocassettes.

Interviews are arranged in chronological order.

Box 2, Folder 1	Interview with James Turrell, circa 1990 <i>2 Sound cassettes</i>
Box 2, Folder 2	Discussion with Theodore F. Wolff and Other Artists (1992 April 26), 1992 <i>1 Sound cassette</i>
Box 2, Folder 3	Theodore F. Wolff Interview with Dan Erwine (1992 April 27), 1992 <i>1 Sound cassette</i>
Box 2, Folder 4	Interview with Enrico Donati, "Politics of Culture" (1998 October 20), 1998 <i>1 Sound cassette</i>
Box 2, Folder 5	Interview - "Degas with Theodore F. Wolff", 1998 <i>1 videocassettes (vhs)</i>
Box 2, Folder 6	Interview with Theodore F. Wolff on "UO Today", 2002 <i>2 videocassettes (vhs)</i>

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Series 4: Writings, Talks, and Lectures, circa 1977-2005

2.8 Linear feet (Boxes 2-4)

This series consists of photocopies and tearsheets of art columns that appeared in *The Christian Science Monitor*. Found are drafts and a set of tearsheets of articles numbered by Wolff for use in his book *The Many Masks of Modern Art*. Interspersed among the writings are clippings, letters, and lists. Two notebook binders, maintained by Wolff list the artists and topics that he wrote for *The Monitor*. Talks, lectures, and discussions on artists and art education are recorded on seven videocassettes and six sound cassettes.

Writings are arranged by format and thereafter in chronological order.

Box 2, Folder 7	Binder 1: Subject List of Articles and Reviews, circa 1977-circa 1990
Box 2, Folder 8	Binder 2: Subject List of Articles and Reviews, circa 1977-circa 1990
Box 2, Folder 9-14	Articles and Reviews , 1977-1981
Box 3, Folder 1-10	Articles and Reviews , 1982-1990
Box 3, Folder 11	Articles and Reviews in the International Edition of <i>The Christian Science Monitor</i> , 1982-1983
Box 3, Folder 12	Drafts, <i>The Many Masks of Modern Art</i> , 1980-1983
	Articles Used for <i>The Many Masks of Modern Art</i>
Box 3, Folder 13-14	Tearsheets #1-#70, 1980-1982
Box 3, Folder 15-16	Tearsheets #134-#216, 1983-1984
Box 3, Folder 17	Tearsheets #72-#154, 1985
Box 3, Folder 18	Tearsheets #217-#247, 1986-1988
Box 3, Folder 19	One Set of Articles Used for <i>The Many Masks of Modern Art</i> , 1980-1986
Box 3, Folder 20	Book, <i>The Many Masks of Modern Art</i> , 1989
Box 3, Folder 21	Draft, <i>Discipline-Based Art Education: Becoming Students of Art</i> (1985 November), 1985
Box 3, Folder 22	Wolff Talks on Willem de Kooning and "The Chicago Fifth Art Fair Exposition" (1984 May 18), 1984 2 Sound cassettes

- Box 3, Folder 23 Lecture, Tamarind Institute of Lithography, 1984
1 Sound cassette
- Box 3, Folder 24 Talk, "What is Unique About 20th Century Art" (1989 October 26), 1989
1 videocassettes (vhs)
- Box 4, Folder 1 Talk, "Refigured Painting" (1989 March 9), 1989
1 videocassettes (vhs)
- Box 4, Folder 2 Theodore F. Wolff Talks to Visual Arts Teachers Association (1989 October 26),
1989
1 videocassettes (vhs)
- Box 4, Folder 3 Threadevents Symposium, "Quilts and Art" (1991 January 23), 1991
2 Sound cassettes
- Box 4, Folder 4 Will Barnet and Theodore F. Wolff Talk at the National Academy of Design, 1993
1 videocassettes (vhs)
- Box 4, Folder 5 Talk at the Farnsworth Museum (1995 July 19), 1995
1 videocassettes (vhs)
- Box 4, Folder 6 Lecture, "John Wilde: Master of Facts and Fancy" (1999 November 14), 1999
1 Sound cassette
- Box 4, Folder 7 Theodore F. Wolff Discusses "Morris Graves: Longing and Reconciliation, Mystic
Painters of the Northwest" (2002 April 11) , 2002
1 videocassettes (vhs)
- Box 4, Folder 8 Talk, "The Creative Journey of Morris Graves: Clues from the Jordan Schnitzer
Museum of Art Collection" (2005 April 8) , 2005
1 videocassettes (vhs)

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Series 5: Subject Files, 1964-2004, circa 1940

1.8 Linear feet (Boxes 4-6)

Subject files document Wolff's professional interests, his writing projects, presentations, and talks. Letters, notes, annotated typescripts, tearsheets, agreements, press releases, printed material, clippings of reviews, exhibition catalogs, announcements, brochures, and photographs of artwork are found in varying combinations.

Television interviews or documentaries on Joseph Solman, Enrico Donati, Esteban Vicente and a panel conference with Theodore F. Wolff at the Mid-Atlantic Fiber Association are recorded on four videocassettes.

Files are arranged in alphabetical order.

Box 4, Folder 9	"The Art of Joseph Solman", 1992 <i>1 videocassettes (vhs)</i>
Box 4, Folder 10	Aspell, Peter, circa 1980
Box 4, Folder 11	Barnet, Will, 1994-2000
Box 4, Folder 12	Birmelin, Robert, 1986, 1988
Box 4, Folder 13	Bloom, Hyman, 1990
Box 4, Folder 14	Book Proposal, <i>Twentieth Century American Printmaking</i> , 1990s
Box 4, Folder 15	Brosen, Frederick, 1983-2000
Box 4, Folder 16	Curry, John Steuart, 1993-1998
Box 4, Folder 17	Documentary, "The Art & Vision of James Hubbell", 1989 <i>1 videocassettes (vhs)</i>
Box 4, Folder 18	Donati, Enrico, 1982-2004
Box 4, Folder 19	Eastern Influences on Watercolor Painting, 1985, undated
Box 5, Folder 1	"Esteban Vicente at 90", 1989 <i>1 videocassettes (vhs)</i>
Box 5, Folder 2	Exhibition Cards, 1997
Box 5, Folder 3	Frumkin/Adams Gallery, 1989-1990
Box 5, Folder 4	"The Genius of Art" , circa 1980

Box 5, Folder 5	Goya, 1989
Box 5, Folder 6-10	Graves, Morris, 1982-2000
Box 5, Folder 11	Graves, Morris and Mark Tobey, 1993-1994
Box 5, Folder 12	The Henry Art Gallery, 1989
Box 5, Folder 13	Jessup, Robert, 2000
Box 5, Folder 14	Kaish, Morton, 1993-1996
Box 5, Folder 15	Kiefer, Anselm, 1988
Box 5, Folder 16	Kohlmeyer, Ida, 1983-1997
Box 5, Folder 17	Landscape, 1984-1999
Box 5, Folder 18	Laumier Park, circa 1980
Box 5, Folder 19	Maury, Richard - Sherry French Gallery, 1986-1989
Box 5, Folder 20	Mabe, Manabu, 1987, 1983
Box 5, Folder 21	MAFA Conference (2001 June), 2001 <i>1 videocassettes (vhs)</i>
Box 5, Folder 22	Maine, 1991-2001
Box 5, Folder 23	Mangravite, Peppino, 1982
Box 5, Folder 24	Milton, Peter, 1984
Box 5, Folder 25	<i>The Monitor</i> and the Arts, 1986-1990
Box 5, Folder 26	Natkin, Robert, 1981-2004
Box 5, Folder 27	"The New York School: Four Decades"- Guggenheim Museum, 1982
Box 5, Folder 28	Peltenberg-Brechneff, Christian, 1983
Box 5, Folder 29	Print Show, 1988-1990

Box 5, Folder 30	"Quality" - Jean Lipman, 1987-1990
Box 5, Folder 31	Quijada, Robert, 1983-1987
Box 5, Folder 32	Rickey, George, 1964-1997
Box 5, Folder 33	Santa Fe, 1988
Box 5, Folder 34	Speech in Boston - "Letter to a Reader Requesting a Precise Definition of Art" , circa 1980
Box 5, Folder 35	"Spiritual Values in Contemporary Art", 1989
Box 5, Folder 36	Springville Museum of Art, 1990s
Box 5, Folder 37	Stamos, Theodoros, 1985-1990
Box 5, Folder 38	Tamarind Speech, "Print Connoisseurship in the Post-Modern Era", circa 1980-1990
Box 5, Folder 39	Tremain, Joyce, 1985-1997
Box 5, Folder 40	Turrell, James, 1981-1987
Box 5, Folder 41	Valpariso, 1990
Box 6, Folder 1	Warhol, Andy, 1990
Box 6, Folder 2	Weber, Idelle, 1982-1987
Box 6, Folder 3	Welz, Rebecca, 1991-2000
Box 6, Folder 4	Whitmore, Coby, 1986-1988
Box 6, Folder 5	Whitaker, Frederic, circa 1940-2004
Box 6, Folder 6-7	Wilde, John, 1984-2004
Box 6, Folder 8	Witkin, Jerome, 1987-2003
Box 6, Folder 9	Wyeth, Andrew , 1997-1998

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Series 6: Printed Material, 1956-2006

2.2 Linear feet (Boxes 6-8)

Found are books, exhibition catalogs, brochures, and journals that include Theodore F. Wolff's published reviews and essays on art and artists as well as his texts on the role of criticism in art education. Interspersed among the pages of the books are letters, clippings, and scattered printed material. A catalog of a Salvador Dalí exhibition is inscribed by the artist to Wolff.

Files are arranged alphabetically by type of printed material.

Box 6, Folder 10	Book, <i>Enrico Donati: The Most Recent Work</i> , 1984
Box 6, Folder 11	Book, <i>Occluded Front: James Turrell</i> , 1985
Box 6, Folder 12	Book, <i>A Home Forum Reader</i> , 1989
Box 6, Folder 13	Book, <i>Morris Graves: Flower Paintings</i> , 1994 Oversized material housed in Box 8.
Box 6, Folder 14	Book, <i>Joseph Solman</i> , 1995
Box 6, Folder 15	Book, <i>Enrico Donati: Surrealism & Beyond</i> , 1996
Box 6, Folder 16	Book, <i>Art Criticism and Education</i> , 1997
Box 6, Folder 17	Book, <i>Joyce Tremain</i> , 1997 Oversized material housed in Box 8.
Box 6, Folder 18-19	Book, <i>John Steuart Curry: Inventing the Middle West</i> , 1998
Box 7, Folder 1	Book, <i>Wondrous Strange: The Wyeth Tradition</i> , 1998
Box 7, Folder 2	Book, <i>Wildeworld: The Art of John Wilde</i> , 1999
Box 7, Folder 3	Book, <i>Richard Kidwell Miller</i> , 2004
Box 7, Folder 4	Book, <i>The Watercolors of James Hubbell: Meditations on Nature and Life</i> , 2005
Box 7, Folder 5	Exhibition Brochures, 1987-2005
Box 7, Folder 6	Exhibition Catalog, "Salvador Dalí" (1956 December 4-1957 January 5), 1956
Box 7, Folder 7-14	Exhibition Catalogs, 1983-2003
Box 7, Folder 15	Journals, 1976-2001

- Box 7, Folder 16 Monograph, *Drawings by Joseph Solman, 1925-1991*, circa 1993
- Box 7, Folder 17 Proceedings of an Interdisciplinary Symposium, *Discipline in Art Education*, 1986
- Box 8 Oversized Book, *Morris Graves: Flower Paintings*, 1994
Oversized material from Box 1, Folder 13.
- Box 8 Oversized Book, *Joyce Tremain*, 1997
Oversized material from Box 6, Folder 17.

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Series 7: Artwork, 1942-1948

1 Folder (Box 7)

Found here are seventeen sketches by Theodore F. Wolff, including several self-portraits.

Box 7, Folder 18

Sketches, 1942-1948

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Series 8: Photographs, circa 1980-circa 2011

0.25 Linear feet (Box 7)

Included are portrait shots of Theodore F. Wolff, as well as photos of Wolff at an installation exhibition, in a classroom, and in his studio. Found are group photographs including two photographs of Wolff with Ida Kohlmeyer at an unidentified venue. There is a photograph of Wolff on an art critics' tour of Amsterdam. Most of the individuals are unidentified.

Box 7, Folder 19 Theodore F. Wolff, circa 1980-circa 2011

Box 7, Folder 20 Theodore F. Wolff with Others, circa 1980

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