



Smithsonian  
*Freer Gallery of Art and  
Arthur M. Sackler Gallery*

Helen D. Ling Papers

FSA.A2019.04

Max Howell (2017) and Penelope Weinstein (2022)

Funding for partial processing of the collection in 2017 was supported by a grant from the Smithsonian Institution's Collections Care and Preservation Fund (CCPF). Processing of an accretion in 2022 was supported by a grant from the Smithsonian Institution's American Women's History Initiative (AWHI).

2022 March

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives
<b>Title:</b>	Helen D. Ling Papers
<b>Date:</b>	1928-2008 (bulk 1945-1982)
<b>Identifier:</b>	FSA.A2019.04
<b>Extent:</b>	6.15 Cubic feet (consisting of 14 boxes and 1 flat box.)
<b>Language:</b>	Collection is primarily in English with some material in written Chinese.
<b>Summary:</b>	The Helen D. Ling Papers, dating from 1928-2008 with the bulk of material dating from 1945-1982, measure 6.15 cubic feet and include biographical material, research, writings, correspondence, printed material, and audiovisual material related to Ling's life and work as a collector and dealer of Asian art.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Gift of Ann S. Ling.

### Processing Information

In 2016, with funding provided by the Smithsonian Institution's Collections Care and Preservation Fund, the Archives at the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives implemented the use of minimal level processing standards to increase information about and facilitate access to more of our collections.

Minimal processing included arrangement to the folder level, based on prior processing and preservation action, with retention of the pre-existing arrangement when possible. Otherwise, an order was imposed by the Processing Archivist. For this collection, minimal level processing was implemented, which included arrangement to the series, subseries and folder levels, adhering to the creator's original arrangement as much as possible. Generally, folder contents were simply verified with the original folder titles, but items within folders were not arranged further. Non-archival housing was replaced for long-term stability, but staples and other fasteners have not all been removed.

Minimal level processing and machine-readable finding aid completed by Max Howell, 2017 August. Through funding provided by the Smithsonian's American Women's History Initiative, Penelope Weinstein processed an accretion to the collection and updated the finding aid in 2022 February.

### Preferred Citation

Helen D. Ling Papers, FSA.A2019.04. National Museum of Asian Art Archives. Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Gift of Ann S. Ling.

### Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

## Conditions Governing Use

Permission to reproduce and publish an item from the Archives is coordinated through the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery's Rights and Reproductions department. Please contact the Archives in order to initiate this process.

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## Biographical Note

Helen Dalling Ling was born Helen Dalling on July 28, 1901 in Uhrichsville, Ohio, and grew up in Everett, Pennsylvania. Ling was an American collector, dealer, and connoisseur of Asian art and antiques.

In 1925, Ling attended an American Baptist Foreign Mission picnic where she met Tien-Gi (Ti-Gi) Ling, a Chinese research chemist who was studying for his master's and subsequent doctorate in industrial chemistry from Brown University and Cornell University, respectively. Ling traveled to Shanghai by herself in 1928 to see if she could live in China, as marrying Ti-Gi would strip her of her American citizenship. Content in Shanghai, she and Ti-Gi married several months after her arrival in the spring of 1928.

The pair lived throughout South China, Hong Kong, and Singapore where she held various positions including as an English teacher and secretary. The couple had one son, James G. Ling, in 1930. Ling became interested in antiques prior to moving abroad, and eventually opened an antique shop in Shanghai in 1938 called the Green Dragon. When the Lings moved to Singapore in 1951 after escaping the Communists in Shanghai, Helen Ling opened another shop under her own name which she operated until her death on May 15th, 1982. Ling was very active in the field of Southeast Asian art, regularly giving lectures and was regularly featured in publications on her expertise in Asian art. She co-founded and served as the first president of the Southeast Asian Ceramic Society, Singapore in 1971. Ling was thrust onto the global stage when her friend, Jim Thompson, co-founder of Thai Silk Company Limited disappeared while visiting her and Ti-Gi at their home, Moonlight in 1967. Thirty-four Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery collection items were once part of Ling's personal collection, and were either sold or donated to the museum after her death by her family.

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## Scope and Contents

The papers of Helen Ling measure 6.15 cubic feet and date from 1928 to 2008, with the bulk of material dating between 1945-1982. The papers largely relate to Ling's personal life, research, and collections of Chinese objects. The papers include biographical material, research, writings, correspondence, printed material, and audio recordings.

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## Arrangement

The Helen D. Ling papers are organized into six series: Series 1: Biographical Material; Series 2: Diaries; Series 3: Research Files; Series 4: Writings and Notes; Series 5: Correspondence; Series 6: Printed Material; Series 7: Audiovisual Material; Series 8: Lectures; Series 9: Sales Records

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## Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Art -- Collectors and collecting

Art, Asian  
Art, Chinese  
Pottery - Asia

Types of Materials:

Notes  
Photographs  
Slides

Places:

Shanghai (China)  
Singapore

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Biographical Material, 1928-2000, undated

Arrangement: Arranged by format.

Scope and Contents: Includes autobiographical accounts of Ling's life, address books, collected business cards, calendars, photographs, a scrapbook, and records related to Ling's business. Business records comprise of two certificates of registration for unspecified objects and one receipt from the Registrar of Business Names at the Supreme Court of Singapore.

Box 1, Folder 1	Autobiographical Writing, 1963 Language: English.
Box 1, Folder 2	Business Records, 1953-1954 Language: English.
Box 1, Folder 3	Address Book, 1979 Language: English.
Box 1, Folder 4	Address Book, undated Language: English.
Box 1, Folder 5	Address Book, undated Language: English.
Box 1, Folder 6	Address Books, 1966-1976, undated Language: English.
Box 1, Folder 7	Business Cards, undated Language: English.
Box 1, Folder 8	Dealer Cards, undated Language: English.
Box 2, Folder 1	Calendar, 1966 Language: English.
Box 2, Folder 2	Photo albums, 1982 Language: English.
Box 2, Folder 3	Assorted photographs and postcards, 1962-2000 Language: English.
Box 2, Folder 4	Assorted photographs and postcards, 1928-1983 Language: English.
Box 2, Folder 5	Photo album, 1928

Language: English.

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## Series 2: Diaries, 1949-1976

Language: English.

Arrangement: Arranged chronologically.

Scope and Contents: Consists of diaries Ling kept to document her daily activities, both personal and professional.

Box 3, Folder 1	1949, 1950 Diaries, 1949-1950 Language: English.
Box 3, Folder 2	1952, 1953 Diaries, 1952-1953 Language: English.
Box 3, Folder 3	1954, 1955 Diaries, 1954-1955 Language: English.
Box 3, Folder 4	1956, 1957 Diaries, 1956-1957 Language: English.
Box 4, Folder 1	1958, 1960 Diaries, 1958, 1960 Language: English.
Box 4, Folder 2	1960, 1961 Diaries, 1960-1961 Language: English.
Box 4, Folder 3	1962, 1963 Diaries, 1962-1963 Language: English.
Box 4, Folder 4	1964, 1965 Diaries, 1964-1965 Language: English.
Box 4, Folder 5	1965, 1966 Diaries, 1965-1966 Language: English.
Box 5, Folder 1	1967, 1968 Diaries, 1967-1968 Language: English.
Box 5, Folder 2	1969, 1970 Diaries, 1969-1970 Language: English.
Box 5, Folder 3	1971 Diaries, 1971 Language: English.
Box 5, Folder 4	1973, 1974 Diaries, 1973-1974 Language: English.
Box 6, Folder 1	1975 Diaries, 1975 Language: English.



Box 6, Folder 2

1975, 1976 Diaries, 1975-1976  
Language: English.

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## Series 3: Research Files, 1945-2008

**Arrangement:** Arranged by format, thereunder alphabetically by subject, thereunder alphabetically by title.

**Scope and Contents:** Includes photographs and publicity material for collections, research related to collections and Chinese art and porcelains, and background material on individuals. Research related to individuals include news clippings, monographs, and correspondence. Photographs and publicity material for collections are included throughout the files. Includes materials on the disappearance of Jim Thompson and correspondence from Tenzig Norgay.

Box 7, Folder 1	Chinese Art, undated Language: English.
Box 7, Folder 2	Chinese Porcelain [Melchior Collection] [Folder 1 of 2], 1945, undated Language: English.
Box 7, Folder 3	Chinese Porcelain [Folder 2 of 2], undated Language: English.
Box 7, Folder 4	Chinese Porcelain- Tang, undated Language: English.
Box 7, Folder 5	Collections- Chow Catalogue, undated Language: English.
Box 7, Folder 6	Collections- Ho Catalogue, undated Language: English.
Box 7, Folder 7	Collections- Melchior Collection, 1945-1997 Language: English.
Box 7, Folder 8	Collections- Shiro Porcelains, undated Language: English.
Box 7, Folder 9	Collections- Wong Catalogue (NY) [Folder 1 of 2], undated Language: English.
Box 7, Folder 10	Collections- Wong Catalogue (NY) [Folder 2 of 2], undated Language: English.
Box 7, Folder 11	Collections- Photographs, undated Notes: Decorative box with images of collection objects and descriptive text.
Box 7, Folder 12	Collections- Photograph postcards, undated Language: English.
Box 7, Folder 13	Collections- Publicity [Folder 1 of 2], undated Language: English.

Box 8, Folder 1	Collections- Publicity (Folder 2 of 2), 1979-1995 Language: English.
Box 8, Folder 2	Modern Business, 1931 Language: English.
Box 8, Folder 3	Individuals- Jim Thompson Biography, 1970 Language: English.
Box 8, Folder 4	Individuals- Jim Thompson, assorted articles, 1959-2000 Language: English.
Box 8, Folder 5	Individuals- Jim Thompson, 1962-2000 Language: English.
Box 8, Folder 6	Individuals- Julia Andrews, 1979-1983 Language: English.
Box 9, Folder 1	Individuals- Tenzig Norgay, 1968-2008 Language: English.
Box 9, Folder 2	Individuals- Tenzig Norgay Autobiography, 1955 Language: English.
Box 13, Box 1	Melchior Collection Photos, undated Language: English.

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## Series 4: Writings and Notes, 1945-1993, undated

Arrangement: Arranged by subject in reverse alphabetical order.

Scope and Contents: Includes drafts of publications and related notes, lecture drafts and slides, journals containing material related to collections, personal journals, and sketchbooks. Titles of the lecture slides were established by the creator and have been maintained.

Box 9, Folder 3	Publications [Folder 1 of 2], 1945, undated Language: English.
Box 9, Folder 4	Publications [Folder 2 of 2], 1950-1993 Language: English.
Box 9, Folder 5	Lectures- Singapore Lectures, 1952-1976 Language: English.
Box 9, Folder 6	Lectures, 1967-1969, undated Language: English.
Box 9, Folder 7	Lectures, 1925-1970 Language: English.
Box 10, Folder 1	Lectures, 1952-1976 Language: English.
Box 10, Folder 2	Lectures, 1967 Language: English.
Box 10, Folder 3	Lectures, 1970-1982 Language: English.
Box 10, Folder 4	Lectures, 1968, undated Language: English.
Box 10, Folder 5	Journals and Sketchbooks, undated Language: English.
Box 10, Folder 6	Journals and Sketchbooks, undated Language: English.
Box 10, Folder 7	Journals and Sketchbooks, 1971-1976, undated Language: English.

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## Series 5: Correspondence, 1928-1989

Language: English.

Arrangement: Arranged by subject in reverse alphabetical order.

Scope and Contents: Consists of outgoing and incoming letters from correspondents including James Cahill, Joseph Alsop, Richard Barnhart, Mario Bussagli, Charles Blitzer, Elizabeth Hay Bechtel, Helena Chen, and Kazini of Chakhung. Correspondences that are bound together were established by the creator and have been maintained.

Box 11, Folder 1      Correspondence "K" [Folder 1 of 2], 1967-1981  
Language:      English.

Box 11, Folder 2      Correspondence "K" [Folder 2 of 2], 1976-1981  
Language:      English.

Box 11, Folder 3      Assorted Correspondence, 1928-1989  
Language:      English.

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## Series 6: Printed Material, 1948-1995

Arrangement: Arranged by subject.

Scope and Contents: Includes magazines, news clippings, newsletters. Subjects include performing arts, Hong Kong, and trade in Singapore.

Box 11, Folder 4            Magazines, 1980-1995  
Language:            English.

Box 11, Folder 5            Assorted Articles and Magazines, 1962-1984  
Language:            English.

Box 11, Folder 6            Assorted Printed Articles, 1948-1991  
Language:            English.

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## Series 7: Audiovisual Material, 1977, 1991, undated

Arrangement: Arranged in reverse chronological order.

Scope and Contents: Includes audiocassettes, a VHS tapes, and aluminum disc sound recording.

Contents:

Box 12, Cassette 1	Bari Interview of Dr. T.G. Ling, Seattle, 1991 Notes: Cassette tape.
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Box 12, Cassette 2	Mrs. Helen Ling Talks to the China Society of Sadar House, 1977 January 14 Notes: Cassette tape.
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Box 12, Video 3	Untitled VHS, undated Notes: VHS tape.
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Box 12, Disk 4	Untitled Aluminum Disk, undated Language: Chinese. Notes: Aluminum disc sound recording. Text on object sleeve is in written Chinese.
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## Series 8: Lectures, undated

Arrangement: Arranged by subject.

Scope and Contents: Consists of photographic slides used to illustrate lectures.

Contents:

Box 12, Slidebox 5	HDL Singapore (Store, Thompson, Lectures), undated Notes: Slides. Images include individuals, buildings, works of art. Labeled sections include "Shanghai - Store," and "Art Exhibitions and Lectures."
Box 12, Slidebox 6	Shanghai, undated Notes: Slides. Images include individuals and newspaper clippings.
Box 12, Slidebox 7	HDL Early through Soochow, undated Notes: Slides. Images of individuals. Labeled sections include "Shanghai University," "Wedding," "Soochow," and "Hangkow."
Box 12, Slidebox 8	Untitled, undated Notes: Slides. Images of objects and statues.
Box 12, Slidebox 9	Untitled, undated Notes: Slides. Images of objects and statues.
Box 12, Slidebox 10	Untitled, undated Notes: Slides. Images of book pages.

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## Series 9: Sales Records, 1982

Language: English.

Arrangement: Arranged in original order.

Scope and Contents: Consists of notecards documenting the items Ling bought and sold in her Singapore store.

Box 14, Folder 1	"Helen D. Ling, A, "U", ok 15/5/2, B+M- HDL "U" Cards", 1982 Language: English.
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Box 14, Folder 2	"M.P., H.D.L, ok 15/5/82", 1982 Language: English.
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Box 15, Folder 1	Untitled Sales Cards, 1982 Language: English.
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Box 15, Folder 2	Untitled Sales Cards, 1982 Language: English.
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