

Helen D. Ling Papers

FSA.A2019.04

Max Howell (2017) and Penelope Weinstein (2022)

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2022 March

Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives National Museum of Asian Art Archives Washington, D.C. 20013 Business Number: 202-633-0533 AVRreference@si.edu

https://asia.si.edu/research/archives/

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Collection Overview

Repository: Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives

Title: Helen D. Ling Papers

Date: 1928-2008

(bulk 1945-1982)

Identifier: FSA.A2019.04

Extent: 6.15 Cubic feet (consisting of 14 boxes and 1 flat box.)

Language: Collection is primarily in English with some material in written Chinese.

Summary: 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.

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 acccretion 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.

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 subsquent 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 there 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.

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.

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

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

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Material, 1928-2000, undated

Arrangement: Arranged by format.

Scope and 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.

Series 2: Diaries

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Series 2: Diaries, 1949-1976

Language: English.

Arrangement: Arranged chronologically.

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

Contents:

Contents.	
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.

Series 2: Diaries

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Box 6, Folder 2 1975, 1976 Diaries, 1975-1976

Language: English.

Series 3: Research Files

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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 disapearence 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.

Series 3: Research Files

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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.

Series 4: Writings and Notes Helen D. Ling Papers FSA.A2019.04

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

Arrangement: Arranged by subject in reverse alphabetical order.

Scope and Includes drafts of publications and related notes, lecture drafts and slides, journals containing Contents:

material related to collections, personal journals, and sketchbooks. Titles of the lecture slides were

established by the creator and have been maintained.

establishe	d 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.

Series 5: Correspondence

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Series 5: Correspondence, 1928-1989

Language: English.

Arrangement: Arranged by subject in reverse alphabetical order.

Scope and Consists of outgoing and incoming letters from correspondents including James Cahill, Joseph Contents: 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.

Series 6: Printed Material

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Series 6: Printed Material, 1948-1995

Arrangement: Arranged by subject.

Scope and Includes magazines, news clippings, newsletters. Subjects include performing arts, Hong Kong, and

Contents: 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.

Series 7: Audiovisual Material

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Series 7: Audiovisual Material, 1977, 1991, undated

Arrangement: Arranged in reverse chronological order.

Scope and 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.

Box 12, Cassette 2 Mrs. Helen Ling Talks to the China Society of Sadar House, 1977 January 14

Notes: Cassette tape.

Box 12, Video 3 Untitled VHS, undated

Notes: VHS tape.

Box 12, Disk 4 Untitled Aluminum Disk, undated

Language: Chinese.

Notes: Aluminum disc sound recording. Text on object sleeve is in written

Chinese.

Series 8: Lectures

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Series 8: Lectures, undated

Arrangement: Arranged by subject.

Scope and Consists of photographic slides used to illustrate lectures.

Contents:

Contonto.	
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 newsclippings.
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.

Series 9: Sales Records

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Series 9: Sales Records, 1982

Language: English.

Arrangement: Arranged in original order.

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

Contents:

Box 14, Folder 1 "Helen D. Ling, A, "U", ok 15/5/2, B+M- HDL "U" Cards", 1982

Language: English.

Box 14, Folder 2 "M.P., H.D.L, ok 15/5/82", 1982

Language: English.

Box 15, Folder 1 Untitled Sales Cards, 1982

Language: English.

Box 15, Folder 2 Untitled Sales Cards, 1982

Language: English.