



Smithsonian

National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center

Guide to Paint By Number Collection

NMAH.AC.0544

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title:	Paint By Number Collection
Date:	circa 1952-1957, undated
Identifier:	NMAH.AC.0544
Creator:	Schiffman, Jacquelyn (Donor) Palmer Paint Company (Creator)
Extent:	5 Cubic feet (16 boxes)
Language:	English .
Summary:	Collection documents the business activities of the Palmer Paint Sales Company creators and manufacturers of Craft Master Paint by Number kits. Materials Include mail order forms, photographs, advertisements, product information, newspaper and magazine articles, invoices, original artwork, trade literature, and scrapbooks.
Digital Content:	Image(s): Paint By Numbers Collection

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Collection donated by Jacquelyn Schiffman, September 21, 1997.

Separated Materials

Related objects located in the Division of Home and Community Life (now Division of Cultural and Community Life).

Related Materials

Materials at the Archives Center, National Museum of American History

Every Man a Rembrandt! Episode 188, May 1954, demonstrates manufacturing painting sets with numbers. Palmer Paint Sales Company, Detroit, Michigan.

Materials at the Smithsonian Institution Archives

Division of Social History, Exhibition Records Accession 04-069

Office of Exhibits Central, Exhibition Records Accession 08-051

Division of Social History, National Museum of American History

See <http://americanhistory.si.edu/paint/reminiscence.html>

Materials at Other Organizations

Paint By Numbers Museum

Detroit Historical Society

Detroit Historical Museum

Museum of Modern Art

Processing Information

Collection processed by Ida Jones, 1999.

Preferred Citation

Paint By Numbers Collection, circa 1952-1957, Archives Center, National Museum of American History.

Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

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Biographical / Historical

The concept of paint by number was conceived in 1949 by Max Klein (1922-1993) engineer and owner of the Palmer Paint Sales Company and commercial artist John Daniel (Dan) Robbins (1925-2019). Klein was interested in increasing paint sales when he presented Dan Robbins, the company's creator of package designs and children's book illustrations, the challenge. Under the Craft Master name, they created kits with the assistance of other artists who helped Robbins with the task of making the outlines, creating transparent overlays, painting, printing, and proofing artwork. Both Klein's and Robbins's wives spent time painting samples for Craft Master to test and display. In 1959 Klein sold Craft Master which he set up as a separate company after the product became so successful. It has since gone through several ownerships.

Scope and Contents

Collection documents the history and business activities of the Palmer Paint Sales Company primarily the sale of its products and in particular the Craft Master paint by number kits. The kits were sold as boxed sets starting with a canvas and later board printed with a blue line drawing. The drawing's numbered sections corresponded to specific paint colors which were also included in the kits along with brushes and instructions. The paint by number kits varied in size, detail, skill level, and targeted audience. The Palmer Paint Sales Company was not the only merchandiser of paint by number kits, but it was the largest and most prolific probably due to Klein's marketing skills and the artistic talents of the company's employees. The collection includes advertisements, newspaper and magazine articles, invoices, mail order forms, scrapbooks, photographs, original artwork, and trade literature. It is arranged in fourteen series: Series 1, Advertising and Promotional Materials, 1952-1955, undated; Series 2, General Motors Corporation, undated; Series 3, Newspaper Articles, 1953-1954, undated; Series 4, Photographs, 1954, undated; Series 5, Transparencies, undated; Series 6, Painting and Sketch Sets, undated; Series 7, Sketches, undated; Series 8, Paintings, undated; Series 9, Paintings with Color Sketches, undated; Series 10, Paintings, Transparencies, and Sketches, undated; Series 11, Sketches, undated; Series 12, Scrapbooks, 1953-1957, undated; Series 13, Paint By Number Kits, undated; and Series 14, Sheet Music, undated

Arrangement

Collection is arranged in fourteen series.

Series 1, Advertising and Promotional Materials, 1952-1955, undated

Series 2, General Motors Corporation, undated

Series 3, Newspaper Articles, 1953-1954, undated

Series 4, Photographs, 1954, undated

Series 5, Transparencies, undated

Series 6, Painting and Sketch Sets, undated

Series 7, Sketches, undated

Series 8, Paintings, undated

Series 9, Paintings with Color Sketches, undated

Series 10, Paintings, Transparencies, and Sketches, undated

Series 11, Sketches, undated

Series 12, Scrapbooks, 1953-1957, undated

Series 13, Paint By Number Kits, undated

Series 14, Sheet Music, undated

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Art, American -- 1930-1960

Leisure -- United States

Painting -- 1930-1960

Types of Materials:

Clippings

Designs

Layouts -- 1930-1960

Photographs -- 20th century

Sheet music -- 1920-1960

Container Listing

Series 1: Advertising and Promotional Materials, 1952-1955, undated

Scope and Contents: Contain printed and visual materials for products sold and marketed by the Palmer Paint Sales Company. Materials include invoices, mail order forms, cartoons, paint sales inventory, art script pamphlets, and advertisements for Toleware, PANN, Craft Master, Paint the Number (PTN), Tile-n-Frame, and Publishers Montage products. Of interest is the materials relating to personal portrait kits. The personal portrait kits were custom created for consumers from the photographs they sent to Palmer Paint Sales Company who would then produce a paint by number kit. In addition, there are materials relating to the artist Kathi Urbach. Materials are arranged in chronological order.

Box 1, Folder 1	Invoices, 1952
Box 1, Folder 12	Personalized portrait advertisements, 1952-1955
Box 1, Folder 13	Artist supplies, 1952-1955
Box 1, Folder 15	Paint By Number, advertisements, 1952-1955
Box 1, Folder 16	Tile-n-Frame, painting set advertisements, 1952-1955
Box 1, Folder 3	Advertisements, 1953
Box 1, Folder 18	Publishers Montage, 1953-1954
Box 1, Folder 19	Publishers Montage, 1953-1954
Box 1, Folder 4	Craft Master, advertisements, 1954
Box 1, Folder 17	Palmer Paint Sales Company, paint sales inventory, 1955
Box 1, Folder 2	PTN master, undated
Box 1, Folder 5	Advertisements, undated
Box 1, Folder 6	Paint A Number, advertisements, undated
Box 1, Folder 7	Craft Master, mail order form, undated
Box 1, Folder 8	Palmer Paint Sales Company, PANN, mail order form, undated
Box 1, Folder 9	Toy train catalog
Box 1, Folder 10	Paint By Number, cartoons, undated

Box 1, Folder 11	PANN, product mail order, undated
Box 1, Folder 14	Toleware by Craft Master
Box 1, Folder 20	Portrait art script, promotional materials
Box 1, Folder 21	Kathi Urbach, artist, pamphlet, undated

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Series 2: General Motors Corporation, undated

Scope and Contents: Contains information about Max Klein's previous employer and possible source of his marketing knowledge and skills. Materials are arranged in chronological order.

Box 1, Folder 22 Company literature

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Series 3: Newspaper Articles, 1953-1954, undated

Scope and Contents: Contain newspaper articles from various sources documenting the use and popular culture surrounding Paint-By-Number kits. The articles include advertisements and marketing campaigns used by the Palmer Paint Sales Company. In addition, there are user testimonies. Materials are arranged in chronological order.

Box 2, Folder 4 User testimonies, Paint By Number

Box 2, Folder 5 Newspaper clippings, 1953

Box 2, Folder 4 Newspaper clippings, 1953-1954

Box 2, Folder 2 Newspaper clippings, 1954

Box 2, Folder 3 Newspaper clippings, 1954

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Series 4: Photographs, 1954, undated

Scope and Contents: Consist of photographic prints and negatives documenting the creation of paint by number kits in the factory, paintings, painting demonstrations, advertisements, and displays of painting designs. Of interest is a demonstration of personal portrait usage, a painting kit developed from a photograph of an individual, by President Dwight D. and Mamie Eisenhower. Images of other well-known people include American radio and television broadcaster and entertainer Arthur Morton Godfrey (August 31,1903-March 16,1983) and American actor, comedian, singer, and pianist James (Jimmie) Francis Durante (February 10,1893-January 29,1980). In addition, there are images of Max Klein. Materials are arranged in alphabetical order.

Box 3, Folder 3	Craft and toy show displays, 1954
Box 3, Folder 7	Craft Master art mobile
Box 3, Folder 11	Jimmy Durante and woman
Box 3, Folder 10	Arthur Godfrey and Paint By Number demonstration
Box 3, Folder 8	Max Klein
Box 3, Folder 6	Paint By Number, exhibit of paintings
Box 3, Folder 9	Paint By Number, factory production
Box 3, Folder 5	Paint By Number, portrait advertisements
Box 3, Folder 2	Painting demonstrations, undated
Box 3, Folder 1	Paintings, undated
Box 3, Folder 12	Paintings, negatives
Box 3, Folder 4	Sales and advertisements

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Series 5: Transparencies, undated

Scope and Contents: Include the transparent overlay sheets, in most cases over sketches, created by company artists from the original artwork. The transparency was placed over the original painting to outline the shapes for each hue and shade. Each segment was then assigned a number and corresponding color. Some of the transparencies include paint information such as color numbers, color samples, and color diagrams. Materials are approximately 8.5" x 11" and, in some cases, have a box kit number.

Box 4, Folder 1	Color numbers
Box 4, Folder 2	Color samples
Box 4, Folder 3	Sketch transparency
Box 4, Folder 4	Transparency with color samples
Box 4, Folder 5	Transparency with color samples
Box 4, Folder 6	Sketches, K-12A-12B
Box 4, Folder 7	Sketches, K-13A-13B
Box 4, Folder 8	Sketches, K-14A-14B
Box 4, Folder 9	Sketches, K-15A-15B
Box 4, Folder 10	Sketches, K-17A-17B
Box 4, Folder 11	Sketches, K-19A-19B
Box 4, Folder 12	Sketches, K-20A-20B
Box 4, Folder 13	Sketches, K-22A-22B
Box 4, Folder 14	Sketches, K-23A
Box 4, Folder 15	Sketches, BNA 105 P 503 P 505
Box 4, Folder 16	Sketch, P521B
Box 4, Folder 17	Sketches, unnumbered
Box 4, Folder 18	Sketch color diagram
Box 4, Folder 19	Sketch color diagram
Box 4, Folder 20	Sketch color diagram

Box 4, Folder 21 Sketch color diagram

Box 4, Folder 22 Sketch color diagram

Box 4, Folder 23 Sketch color diagram

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Series 6: Painting and Sketch Sets, undated

Scope and Contents: Consist of sets of at least two copies of one image. Each set includes a 9.5 x 12 sketch without color and the matching painted version. The sets are titled and have item numbers but are undated. Materials arranged in alphabetical order by title.

Box 5, Folder 1	Blossom Time, K-24A
Box 5, Folder 2	Blossom Time, K-24B
Box 5, Folder 3	Feline Fun, K-22A
Box 5, Folder 4	Feline Fun, K-22B
Box 5, Folder 11	Feline Fun, K-22B
Box 6, Folder 4	Feline Fun, K-22B
Box 5, Folder 5	Flight South, K-26A
Box 5, Folder 6	Flight South, K-26B
Box 5, Folder 7	Meditation-Good Shepherd, K-25A
Box 5, Folder 8	Meditation-Good Shepherd, K-25B
Box 5, Folder 12	Still Life, unknown number
Box 6, Folder 5	Still Life, unknown number
Box 5, Folder 9	Tropical Skies, K-23A
Box 5, Folder 10	Tropical Skies, K-23B
Box 6, Folder 1	Winter Snow, K-20
Box 6, Folder 2	Winter Snow, K-20
Box 6, Folder 3	Painting and transparency, unidentified scene

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Series 7: Sketches, undated

Scope and Contents: Include a small number of boards that have not been painted. Some of the boards have titles and others just have numbers. Materials are arranged first in alphabetical order by title or subject and then by number.

Box 6, Folder 15	Banquet of Flowers, K-21 A
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Box 6, Folder 17	Dog, number unknown
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Box 6, Folder 16	Unknown title, P521-B
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Series 8: Paintings, undated

Scope and Contents: Consist of materials that have been painted primarily illustrating landscapes. Other subjects include animals and a dancer. Subject ideas for paint by number kits were provided by the customers. Materials are arranged in alphabetical order by title or subject.

Box 6, Folder 14	Cat, unknown number
Box 6, Folder 8	Dancer, unknown number
Box 6, Folder 9	Dancer, unknown number
Box 6, Folder 10	Dog, unknown number
Box 6, Folder 13	Flight South, K-26A
Box 6, Folder 6	Landscape, unknown number
Box 6, Folder 7	Landscape, unknown number
Box 6, Folder 11	Landscape with Lighthouse, unknown number
Box 6, Folder 12	Seascape, unknown number

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Series 9: Paintings with Color Sketches, undated

Scope and Contents: Include paintings with corresponding color sketches of various subjects including animals, the Mediterranean, landscapes, and the Versailles Chateau. Materials arranged in alphabetical order by title or subject.

Box 7, Folder 1	Animals Portraits, KB-203A
Box 7, Folder 2	Animals Portraits, KB-203B
Box 7, Folder 3	Ballet Modes, KB-203A
Box 7, Folder 4	Ballet Modes, KB-203B
Box 7, Folder 5	Mediterranean, unknown number
Box 7, Folder 6	Mediterranean, unknown number
Box 7, Folder 10	Mediterranean, unknown number
Box 7, Folder 9	Peaceful Countryside, KB-201A
Box 7, Folder 8	Post Revolutionary, unknown number
Box 7, Folder 7	Seabreezes, KB 202A
Box 7, Folder 11	Versailles Chateau, unknown number
Box 7, Folder 12	Versailles Chateau, unknown number
Box 7, Folder 13	Versailles Chateau, unknown number

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Series 10: Paintings, Transparencies, and Sketches, undated

Scope and Contents: Consist of paintings with the corresponding transparency and sketch. Subjects include the Mediterranean, post-revolutionary war era, still life, and Versailles Chateau. Materials arranged in alphabetical order by title.

Box 8, Folder 8	Mediterranean, unknown number
Box 8, Folder 5	Mediterranean, unknown number
Box 8, Folder 2	Portrait, unknown number
Box 8, Folder 6	Post Revolutionary, unknown number
Box 8, Folder 7	Post Revolutionary, unknown number
Box 8, Folder 1	Scene, unknown number
Box 8, Folder 3	Still Life, unknown number
Box 8, Folder 4	Versailles Chateau, unknown number

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Series 11: Sketches, undated

Scope and Contents: Contain large graphics that have not been painted laid out in a typical paint by number format. Subjects primarily illustrate landscapes. Materials are arranged in alphabetical order by title or subject.

Box 8, Folder 9 Peaceful Countryside, KB-201A

Box 8, Folder 10 Sacred Hearts, unknown number

Box 8, Folder 11 Seabreezes, KB 202B

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Series 12: Scrapbooks, 1953-1957, undated

Scope and Contents: Include bound and loose-leaf pages of materials relating primarily to paint by number advertising and popular culture. Materials are arranged in chronological order.

Box 9, Folder 3	Paint By Number, circa 1953-1955
Box 10, Folder 2	Craft Master advertisements, circa 1954
Box 10, Folder 1	Tile-'n-Frame, circa 1957
Box 9, Folder 1	Bound volume with loose pages, undated
Box 9, Folder 2	Bound volume, undated
Box 11, Folder 1	Craft Master and Tile-'n-Frame, bound volume, undated, undated
Box 12, Folder 1	Bound volume with loose pages, undated
Box 13, Folder 1	Illustrated bound volume with loose pages, undated

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Series 13: Paint By Number Kits, undated

Scope and Contents: Contain materials used to package and promote the paint by number products including a ballet dancer kit, personalized portrait kit, and kit with packaged paints. Materials are arranged in alphabetical order.

Box 14, Folder 1	Ballet dancer kit with sketch, unknown number
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Box 16, Folder 1	Personalized portrait kit, marketing packet
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Box 15, Folder 1	Sellable kit with packaged paints
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Series 14: Sheet Music, undated

Scope and Contents: Consist of a music score composed by Frank and Dorothy Daniels relating to the possibilities of paint by number probably used for promotional purposes.

Box 1, Folder 1

Song composed by Frank and Dorothy Daniels

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