



Smithsonian Institution Archives

Dexter Cirillo Papers, 1991-1998

Finding aid prepared by Smithsonian Institution Archives

Smithsonian Institution Archives
Washington, D.C.
Contact us at osiaref@si.edu

Table of Contents

Collection Overview	1
Administrative Information	1
Descriptive Entry.....	1
Names and Subjects	2
Container Listing	3

Collection Overview

Repository:	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu
Title:	Dexter Cirillo Papers
Identifier:	Accession 18-165
Date:	1991-1998
Extent:	1 cu. ft. (1 record storage box)
Creator::	Cirillo, Dexter
Language:	English

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Accession 18-165, Dexter Cirillo Papers

Descriptive Entry

Dexter Cirillo received her B.A. and M.A. in English from San Diego State University and a Ph.D. in English from the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. Her early career focused on teaching and researching the literature and culture of minority groups in the United States. In 1981, Cirillo left the world of academia and pursued her interest in American Indian art as an independent scholar, art dealer, and curator. Among her publications are *Southwestern Indian Jewelry* (1992), *Across Frontiers - Hispanic Crafts of New Mexico* (1998), and *Southwestern Indian Jewelry - Crafting New Traditions* (2008).

Cirillo's association with the National Museum of American Indian (NMAI) started in New York City where she and Wahleah Davis (Cherokee) organized the first cocktail reception for W. Richard West (founding NMAI Director) and John Colonghi (Director, NMAI National Campaign) to meet some potential donors to the museum in 1991. Alice Burnette, Assistant Secretary for Institutional Advancement, had contacted Wahleah, who then contacted Cirillo to help organize the reception since she ran Gallery 10, a high end gallery of Native American art in New York City, in the mid-1980s and knew many of the collectors of Indian art. Additionally at the time, Cirillo was doing research for her book, *Southwestern Indian Jewelry*, and had done some of her doctoral research at the Museum of the American Indian's library in the Bronx and was one of its supporters urging for a new home to be found for the museum's collection.

From that initial cocktail party, a fundraising committee was launched in New York. When it came time to plan the fundraisers for NMAI, Cirillo was asked to curate the art auctions in 1992, 1994, and 1998, because she knew many of the artists and gallery owners personally. Of note was that a number of the people who attended that first reception in 1991 went on to become members of the NMAI Board and donors to the museum: Valerie and Charles Diker, John L. and Margot Paul Ernst, and James A. and Barbara H. Block.

The Cirillo Papers include correspondence related to each of the auctions, including correspondence with the artists and with the collectors, as well as from W. Richard West and Alice Burnette and other Smithsonian staff members. Also include are the auction catalogs, gala invitations, guest lists, images of auction items, brochures, and clippings.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Benefit auctions
Fund raising
Indian arts -- North America
Indians of North America -- Museums

Types of Materials:

Brochures
Clippings
Color photographs
Manuscripts

Names:

Block, Barbara H.
Block, James A.
Burnette, Alice
Cirillo, Dexter
Colonghi, John
Davis, Wahleah
Diker, Charles
Diker, Valerie
Ernst, John L.
Ernst, Margot Paul
National Museum of the American Indian (U.S.)
West, W. Richard

Container Listing

Box 1

Box 1 of 1	1991 New York reception for W. Richard West
Box 1 of 1	1992 Auction - Invitation, catalog, and slides of art
Box 1 of 1	1992 Auction - Planning notebook
Box 1 of 1	1992 Auction - Thank you correspondence
Box 1 of 1	1994 Auction - Gala invitation and auction catalog
Box 1 of 1	1994 Auction - Correspondence with artists
Box 1 of 1	1994 Auction - Planning materials, artist brochures, and clippings
Box 1 of 1	1998 Auction - Planning notebook (2 folders)
Box 1 of 1	1998 Auction - Gala invitation and auction catalog
Box 1 of 1	1998 Auction - Guest list, correspondence and thank you notes to artists, list of auction artists and contributors, and miscellaneous notes
Box 1 of 1	1998 Auction - Images of auction items