

Finding Aid to the Letters of Intemperance Collection, 1988-1991 Archives of Women Artists

Finding Aid Prepared by and Collection Processed by:
Bianca Rawlings, (August, 2015)

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Overview

Repository Information:

National Museum of Women in the Arts,
Betty Boyd Dettre Library & Research Center
1250 New York Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20005
Email: lrc@nmwa.org
Phone: 202-783-5000

Title:

Letters of Intemperance Collection

Provenance:

The Letters of Intemperance were sent to the National Museum of Women in the Arts by Christine Steel between 1988 and 1991.

Collection Dates:

Inclusive Dates: 1988-1991

Physical Description:

1 boxes (approx. 0.42 linear feet)

Summary:

This collection is comprised of 55 letters by Belgian artist Christine Steel. The letters are a part of the mail art project, "The Letters of Intemperance," that occurred from 1988 to 1991.

Finding Aid URL:

Administrative Information

Access Information:

Unrestricted

Preferred Citation:

Item, Date, Series, Letters of Intemperance, Archives of Women Artists, National Museum of Women in the Arts, Betty Boyd Dettre Library & Research Center.

Publication and Photocopies Note:

Permission from the National Museum of Women in the Arts required for publication and reproduction of original materials. Photocopies of original materials can be made for a fee and at the discretion of the library director.

Processed by:

Bianca Rawlings, August 2015

Processing Note:

The Letters of Intemperance were sent by Christine Steel to the National Museum of Women in the Arts. Each letter is addressed to the museum and dated; they were sent between 1988 and 1991. The collection is contained in one box, which is located in the Library and Research Center. An inventory of the collection, as well as a finding aid, was written by Bianca Rawlings in August 2015. The collection was also re-housed in a new box and all of the letters were taken out of their respective envelopes and placed in Mylar sheets with acid-free paper separating the materials therein. Materials were also transferred from Christine Steel's vertical Artist File to the collection to make it more complete.

Biographical Note

Christine Steel is a Belgian artist, born in Sint-Niklaas in 1945. She studied fiber arts at the LUCA School of Arts in Gent. In 1965, she moved to Brugge in 1965, where she spent 25 years teaching visual arts education while also pursuing her own artistic career. In 1987, she founded her own workshop, Ateliers Steel. She has done collaborative exhibition work with Russian artists in Vladivostok and has, in turn, brought their work to Brugge.

Scope and Content Note

The collection contains a mail art project that consists of 55 letters by artist Christine Steel, sent to notable figures in the international art world and spread out over seven acts. The materials are both textual and visual—the letters are composed of original “verses” by Steel as well as handmade paper crafts, with the exception of the 5th letter, the “tidings” letters, and the final 49th letter. The 48 letters comprising the “main” project are numbered, while five other letters (sent before each act) are marked with “tidings.” The final letter is marked with “Question.” The project ran from 1988 to 1991 and was exhibited at the Cultural Centre Scharpoord in Belgium. The collection also includes a transcript of the letters and a flyer for the exhibition of the project’s finale.

All materials are in excellent condition, with minimal folding, fading, or brittleness aside from a few letters that appear to have dark splotches and the adhesive sticker still attached to each envelope. Some of the handmade paper is cut, glued, or contains other elements (ex. dead insects) that should be handled carefully.

Organization and Arrangement Information

Arrangement Note:

This collection is divided into two series.

Series 1: The Letters of Intemperance

Series 2: Project Information

Series 1, The Letters of Intemperance, is comprised of the letters that make up “The Letters of Intemperance” project; 48 letters that encompass seven acts, five “tidings” letters that precede certain acts, and a final “49th” letter, imploring readers to assist in finding a place to display the finished project.

Series 2, Project Information, consists of two other documents relating to the project, including a transcript and a flyer for the exhibition of the project’s finale. The 48 letters are each numbered, and all of the other letters are marked with either “tidings” or “Question.”

Names and Subject Terms

Steel, Christine, artist, 1945-
Mail art—20th century.

Women artists—Belgium—20th century.

Container Inventory

Series 1: The Letters of Intemperance

Box 1	Folder #	Folder Title
1	1	Act 1, Letters 1-7
1	2	Act 2, Letters 8-14
1	3	Act 3, Letters 15-21
1	4	"tidings," Act 4, letters 22-28
1	5	"tidings," Act 5, letters 29-35
1	6	"tidings," Act 6, letters 36-42
1	7	"tidings," "Question," Act 7, letters 43-48

Series 2: Project Information

Box 1	Folder #	Folder Title
1	8	Transcript of "The Letters of Intemperance," and Flyer for project finale