

Finding Aid to Catharina Baart Biddle Papers 1938-2002 Archives of Women Artists

Finding Aid Prepared by and Collection Processed by:
Nancy Cooley, 2012

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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:

Catharina Baart Biddle Papers

Provenance:

Collection was donated by a legatee of the Catharina Baart Biddle estate, Thomas A. O'Callaghan, in two installments in 2011 and 2012.

Collection Dates:

Approximately 1938-2002

Physical Description:

3.17 linear feet

Summary:

The National Museum of Women in the Arts is the primary repository for the personal papers of Catharina Baart Biddle (1912-2005), artist, educator, and philanthropist. The collection includes a variety of materials documenting her life and work, notably a large assortment of correspondence, photographs, and memorabilia. Also included are personal documents, personal writings, clippings, drawings, scrapbooks, and slides. Materials in the collection range in date from the early 1900s until 2005, with the majority of items dating from 1938 to 2002.

Finding Aid URL:

https://nmwa.org/sites/default/files/shared/catharina_baart_biddle_papers_-_finding_aid.pdf

Administrative Information

Access Information:

The collection is open for research upon appointment.

Preferred Citation:

Item, Date, Series, Catharina Baart Biddle Papers, 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.

Alternate Formats:

Digital reproductions of the Catharina Baart Biddle scrapbooks (series 9) are located on the LRC drive.

Related Materials Note:

LRC Collection

Catharina Biddle artist file
Biddle, Livingston. Our government and the arts: a perspective from the inside.
New York, NY: ACA Books, 1988. (NX735 .B54 1988)
Gilbard, Florence. Phoebe Beasley, Catharina Baart Biddle, Jean-Louis Emond,
Gerard Le Roux, Fred Moorison, Thomas O'Callaghan, Linda Touby: Alex Gallery.
1992. (VF CAT N6490 .P56 1992)

The National Gallery of Art Library in Washington, D.C., houses the [Livingston & Catharina Biddle Collection](#)¹, which includes albums assembled by Mary Baart, travel-related collection of guides and pamphlets with information about architectural sites that the Biddles visited and three digital reproductions of slides of Catharina's paintings.

Livingston L. Biddle, Jr. papers at the Archives of American art, containing material related to Catharina Baart Biddle. Finding aid:

<http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/livingston-l-biddle-jr-papers-16123>

Biographical Note

Artist, educator, and philanthropist Catharina Baart Biddle was born December 8, 1912 in the Netherlands. At the age of 12 she and her sister, Mary Baart Snelling, immigrated to Long Island, New York. Catharina studied art at George Washington University, where she earned her B.A. in 1938 and M.A. in 1940. In 1945 Catharina traveled to

¹https://library.nga.gov/permalink/01NGA_INST/1p5jkkvq/alma991759073804896

Europe where she studied at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière in Paris and traveled extensively in Western Europe. During this time she met the artists Henri Matisse, Raoul Dufy, and Pablo Picasso. Catharina returned to Washington, D.C. in the early 1950s, taking lecturer positions with the National Gallery of Art and the USDA Graduate School. She also taught private art lessons and met Ralph W. Stephan, whom she married in 1956. In 1960 the pair moved to Libya, where they lived for the next several years. During this time Catharina was able to paint, teach, and exhibit her work. The Stephans returned to Washington, D.C. in the late 1960s and divorced in 1967. From 1967 to 1974, Catharina taught art in the D.C. public school system. In 1973 she married Livingston Biddle, who helped draft the legislation that created the National Endowment of the Arts and the National Endowment of the Humanities. Livingston also served as Chairman of the NEA from 1977 to 1981, during which time Catharina was an avid NEA volunteer. Catharina retired from teaching in 1974 and focused on her art. In 1981 she earned an M.F.A. in painting from American University. Over the last few decades of her life, Catharina was featured in several solo and group exhibitions. Along with her husband, Catharina was recognized as an active proponent for women artists and contributed greatly to the arts and art education. In 2002, Catharina helped endow the International Gallery at NMVA as a tribute to her husband and their passion for the arts. Catharina suffered from Parkinson's disease in her later years and died from pneumonia in 2005.

Organization and Arrangement Information

Arrangement Note:

The collection is divided into 9 series:

- Series 1: Correspondence
- Series 2: Personal Documents
- Series 3: Personal Writings
- Series 4: Clippings
- Series 5: Memorabilia
- Series 6: Photographs
- Series 7: Art Work
- Series 8: Scrapbooks
- Series 9: Slides

Processed by:

Nancy Cooley, 2012

Processing Note:

This collection is processed.

Before being processed in 2012, the collection was amassed and roughly organized by Thomas A. O'Callaghan, an artist friend of the Biddles and a legatee of her estate. When the collection was received it was generally arranged by format. During the 2012 processing, duplicate copies of letters, clippings, photographs, slides, ephemera, and documents as well as materials deemed to have little intellectual or historical value were returned to O'Callaghan or discarded.

Scope and Content Note

The Catharina Baart Biddle Papers includes a variety of materials, notably a large collection of correspondence, photographs, and memorabilia. Also included are personal documents, personal writings, clippings, artwork, scrapbooks, and slides. Materials in the collection range in date from the early 1900s until 2005, with the majority of items dating from 1938 to 1960 and 1973 to 2002. The collection mainly concerns Catharina's early and later life and contains many materials from third parties.

Series 1: Correspondence

This series includes letters to and from Catharina and her family, personal relations, and business associates. The series is divided into five sections: "Family," "Personal," "Business," "Third Party," and "Unidentified." The items range in date from 1938 to 2003. The bulk of the items are personal in content and date from the 1980s and 1990s. Of particular interest are the letters between Catharina and her sister Mary, which reveal some of Catharina's early life experiences, and the large collection of letters Catharina and Ralph W. Stephan wrote to one another before their marriage in 1956.

Series 2: Personal Documents

This series includes financial and legal documents, biographical sketches, and medical information. Also included are similar items from third parties. The series is divided into two sections: "Catharina Baart Biddle" and "Third Party." Much of the collection is made up of legal documents, such as birth certificates, marriage licenses, certificates of citizenship, and last will and testaments. Also included are several passports, an address book, resumes, and medical records. Dates range from 1925 to 2005.

Series 3: Personal Writings

This series consists of essays and notes written by Catharina during her education, spanning from the high school to graduate level. Also included are diaries from Catharina, her sister Mary Baart Snelling, and their mother Catharine Baart Melker. The series also includes poetry written and dedicated to Catharina by her husband Livingston Biddle. The series is divided into four sections: "Education," "Diary," "Writings of Others," and "Unidentified."

Series 4: Clippings

This series includes articles written about Catharina dating from the 1920s to 2005, but mainly concern Catharina's activities in the 1930s and 1980s. Also included are clippings for Livingston Biddle and Ralph W. Stephan. The series is divided into two sections: "Catharina Baart Biddle" and "Third Party."

Series 5: Memorabilia

This series consists of ephemera relating to Catharina's education, art, and travel. The series is divided into five parts: "Catharina Baart Biddle," "Education," "Exhibitions," "Travel," and "Third Party." Many of the items concern Catharina's time studying at George Washington University in the 1930s and 1940s as well as the ephemera from her solo and group exhibitions.

Series 6: Photographs

This is the largest series in the collection, spanning from the early 1900s to 2002. It is divided into fifteen sections, most of which are arranged in rough chronological order unless otherwise noted. The first, "Catharina Baart Biddle," includes photographs of Catharina from her infancy to her later years. Also included in this subseries are pictures of Catharina with artists and celebrities, including Andy Warhol, Mikhail Baryshnikov, and Luciano Pavarotti. The second, "Portraits," includes professionally-taken images of Catharina that primarily date from the late 1930s to the 1940s. "Travel" comprises the third subseries and consists of Catharina's photographs of Europe in the 1940s and Northern Africa in the 1960s as well as her journey to China and Peru. The fourth subseries, "Art Work," includes photographs of Catharina's paintings and is not arranged in any particular manner. The subseries, "Exhibitions," includes photographs of Catharina's solo and group exhibitions in the 1980s and 1990s. "Teaching," makes up the sixth subseries and includes images of Catharina with her students from the D.C public school system. The seventh series, "Family," includes images of Catharina's relatives and ranges in date from the early 1900s to the 1980s. The next few subseries are the photographs of third parties who were significant to Catharina's life, including "Biddle, Livingston," "O'Callaghan, Thomas," and "Stephan, Ralph W." They are arranged by whether Catharina is included in the images and then chronologically. "Miscellaneous" is the final subseries and is comprised of friends, pets, houses, and unidentified photographs. These items are not arranged in any particular order.

Series 7: Art Work

This series contains a limited number of Catharina's original art work and drawings as well as a sketchbook. Also included is a drawing of Catharina by an unidentified artist.

Series 8: Scrapbooks

This series includes three scrapbooks, which were created by Catharina or her mother (Catharine Baart Melker) and concern the first three decades of Catharina's life (approximately 1912-1940) and include photographs, artifacts, correspondence, and ephemera. The scrapbooks remain in their original page order and are divided into three subseries: "Album 1," "Album 2," and "Album 3." Digital surrogates of the scrapbooks have been made and are available upon request.

Series 9: Slides

This series includes the photographic slides of Catharina's art work and travels. The items date from the 1950s to the 1980s and include the subseries "Art Work" and "Travel." Within the "Art Work" subseries the items are in alphabetical order by subject type and further arranged chronologically. The travel slides are organized alphabetically by country.

Inventory

Series 1: Correspondence

Subseries: Family

Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
1	1	Baart Family, n.d.
1	2	Beerling, Jeannette, 1961-62, 1970, 1989, 1991-93, 2004-05
1	3	Biddle Family [Joel, Erika, Ana, Joan, Livy], 1983, 1989, n.d.
1	4	Dietrich Family [Christian, Richard, Ti], 1989, 1991
1	5	Gaarthuis Family, 1948, 1991, 1996, 2011
1	6	Genet, Y. Olbers, 1986, 1989
1	7	Melker, Catharine Baart, 1948, 1950, 1956, 1959-60, n.d.
1	8	Snelling, Mary Baart, 1933, 1938-39, 1948-51, 1953-54, 1956- 57, 1960
1	9	Snelling, Mary Baart, 1961, 1963-64, 1980-81, n.d.

Subseries: Personal

Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
1	10	A-D, 1960, 1983, 1986-90, 1995, n.d.
1	11	E-L, 1987-89, 1992, 2001, n.d.
1	12	M-N, 1986-89
1	13	O-Z, 1938, 1948, 1959, 1964, 1988-91, 1999, 2003
1	14	Biddle, Livingston, 1973
1	15	Cajori, Charles, 1988, 2000, 2002, n.d.
1	16	Seawell, Donald R., 1988
1	17	Seybolt, George Crossan, 1988
1	18	Stephan, Ralph W. (from Catharina), n.d. [1956]
1	19	Stephan, Ralph W., 1956
1	20	Stephan, Ralph W., 1956
1	21	Stephan, Ralph W., 1956
1	22	Stephan, Ralph W., 1956
1	23	Stephan, Ralph W., 1956
1	24	Stephan, Ralph W., 1970-71, 1991-92, n.d.
1	25	Stephan Family, [1981?], 1989-90, 1992, 1996, 2002, n.d.
1	26	van de Molen, Dirk and Mieke, 1988-91, 2003-04

Subseries: Business

Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
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2	27	A-Z, 1988, 1994-96, 2000, n.d.
2	28	American University, 2003-04
2	29	Gaeton, Victor, 1989, 1991
2	30	National Museum of Women in the Arts, 2002

Subseries: Third Party

Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
2	31	Livingston, Biddle, 1979, 1987, 1989, 1992, 1995
2	32	Melker, Catharine Baart, 1930, 1953, 1956, n.d.
2	33	Snelling, Mary Baart, 1942, 1945, 1949, 1954, 1961, 1970, 1976, 1979, n.d.
2	34	Snelling, Mary Baart and Catharine Melker, 1948, 1953, 1956, 1958-60, n.d.

Subseries: Unidentified

Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
2	35	1938, 1940, 1961, 1988-90, 1992, n.d.

Series 2: Personal Documents

Subseries: Catharina Baart Biddle

Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
2	36	Birth Certificate, 1912; U.S. Citizenship, 1938; Marriage Certificates and Marriage License, 1956, 1973; Death Certificate, 2005
2	37	Biography, Curriculum Vitae, Business Card, n.d.
2	38	Grade School Certificate, 1926; High School Admission Certificate, 1928
2	39	Decree of Divorce, 1968; Property Settlement, 1967
2	40	Last Will and Testament, 1971, 1982, 2003
2	41	Passports, Visas, 1950, 1959, 1964, 1965, 1974, 1989, 1999
2	42	Address Book, n.d.

Subseries: Third Party

Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
2	43	1925, 1938, 1941, 1956, 1970, 1983, 2002

Subseries: Catharina Baart Biddle

Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
6	129	M.F.A. Diploma from American University, 1981

Series 3: Personal Writings

Subseries: Education

Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
3	44	1930-31, n.d.
3	45	American University Course Writings, 1976-77, n.d.
3	46	From Visualization to Pictorial Creativity (MFA Thesis), 1981
3	47	Course Writings, Notes, Miscellaneous, n.d.

Subseries: Diary

Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
3	48	Travel in Africa, af. 1960
3	49	France, n.d.
Subseries: Writings of Others		
Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
3	50	Melker, Catharine, n.d.
3	51	Biddle, Livingston, Love Poetry to Catharina [ca. 1975]
3	52	Snelling, Mary Baart, Diary of the Inlet Waterway, 1941-42
3	53	Snelling, Mary Baart, n.d.
Subseries: Unidentified		
Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
3	54	Poem: "Miracles", n.d.

Series 4: Clippings

Subseries: Catharina Baart Biddle

Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
3	55	George Washington University, 1932, 1937-38, 1940, n.d.
3	56	Travel and Art, 1957, 1966
3	57	1978, 1981, 1988
3	58	1990, 1994
3	59	2002-03, 2005
3	60	n.d.

Subseries: Third Party

Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
3	61	Biddle, Livingston, 1988, 2002
3	62	Melker, Catharine Baart, 1943; Snelling, Mary Baart, n.d.; Stephan, Ralph W., 1946, n.d.

Series 5: Memorabilia

Subseries: Catharina Baart Biddle

Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
3	63	Oral History of Catharina collected by Thomas O'Callaghan, 2004-05
3	64	Awards and Acknowledgements, 2001, n.d.
3	65	Women's National Democratic Club, 1990-91
3	66	National Museum of Women in the Arts Reception, 2002
3	67	Programs, 1939
3	68	Miscellaneous Flyers, 1954, 1979, 1988, n.d.
3	69	Wedding Invitation, 1956
3	70	Wedding Invitation, 1973
3	71	Planner, 1977

Subseries: Exhibitions

Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
3	72	1978, 1988, 1990, 1995, 1999, 2000, n.d.

Subseries: Travel

Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
3	73	North Africa [ca. 1959-1965]

Series 6: Photographs

Subseries: Catharina Baart Biddle

Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
3	74	[ca. 1912-40], 1941
3	75	1956, 1958-60, n.d.
3	76	Wedding, 1973
3	77	1970, 1972, 1974, 1976-77, 1979, n.d.
3	78	1981, 1983-84, n.d.
3	79	[ca. 1990s]
3	80	2002, 2005, n.d.

Subseries: Portraits

Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
4	81	Catharina Baart Biddle, n.d.

Subseries: Travel

Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
4	82	[1945-1951?]
4	83	Poland, [ca. 1948]
4	84	North Africa, [ca. 1960-65]
4	85	Giverny, France, 1988; China, n.d.; Peru, 1985
4	86	Unidentified

Subseries: Art Work

Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
4	87	n.d.
4	88	From Visualization to Pictorial Creativity (MFA Thesis), 1981

Subseries: Exhibitions

Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
4	89	Art Barn, 1978
4	90	Alex Gallery, 1988
4	91	Benefit in Georgetown, 1989
4	92	Capital to Capital, 1989
4	93	Creative Artists Network, 1995
4	94	Unidentified, n.d.

Subseries: Teaching

Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
4	95	D.C. Public Schools, [ca. 1970]

Subseries: Family

Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
4	96	Melker, Catharine Baart, 1942, 1948, 1959, n.d.
4	97	Snelling, Mary Baart, [ca. 1930-1983] (1 of 2)
4	98	Snelling, Mary Baart, [ca. 1930-1983] (2 of 2)

4	99	Snelling, Mary Baart and Catharina, 1950, 1965-67, 1974, 1976, 1978, 1982, n.d.
4	100	[ca. 1910-20]
4	101	Holland, 1965, 1967, 1979, n.d.

Subseries: Biddle, Livingston

Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
4	102	Biddle and Catharina, [ca. 1974], 1976, 1984-86, 1994, n.d.
4	103	Biddle and Catharina, [1990]

Subseries: O'Callaghan, Thomas

Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
4	104	1984-88, n.d.

Subseries: Stephan, Ralph W.

Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
5	105	Youth, Portraits, Miscellaneous, n.d.
5	106	Stephan and Catharina, 1958, 1965-66, n.d.
5	107	Stephan Family and Catharina, 1982-83, n.d.

Subseries: Miscellaneous

Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
5	108	Michael, Romeo, n.d.
5	109	Cats, Dogs, 1968, 1974, n.d.
5	110	House at 3050 P ST. NW, Washington, D.C., 1958, 1974, 1976, 1978, 1986, 1991, n.d.
5	111	Holland: Home, School, n.d.
5	112	Unidentified

Series 7: Art Work

Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
5	113	George Washington University, [ca. 1938]
5	114	Sketchbook, n.d.
5	115	Sketches, n.d.
5	116	Bayl---, Ann, Portrait of Catharina, 1948

Series 8: Scrapbooks

Subseries: Album 1

Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
5	117	Melker, Catharine Baart [ca. 1910-1926]

Subseries: Album 2

Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
5	118	[af. 1916]

Subseries: Album 3

Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
6	119	[ca. 1925-1938]

Series 9: Slides

Subseries: Art Work

Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
7	120	Abstract, n.d.
7	121	Fantasy, n.d.
7	122	Landscape, 1984-88
7	123	Portraits, 1983, 1985-88
7	124	Still Lifes, 1986-89, n.d.

Subseries: Travel

Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
7	125	Egypt, n.d. [1962?]
7	126	Greece, n.d.
7	127	Netherlands, n.d.
7	128	Unidentified, [1960-1964?]