

# Harrison S. Morris papers

MS.063

Finding Aid prepared by Hoang Tran

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PENNSYLVANIA ACADEMY  
OF THE FINE ARTS

The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts  
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Philadelphia, PA 19102

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215-972-2066

Updated by Hoang Tran, May 2016

## Summary Information

|                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Repository</b>                 | The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Dorothy and Kenneth Woodcock Archives   |
| <b>Creator</b>                    | Harrison S. Morris (1856-1948)   |
| <b>Title</b>                      | Harrison S. Morris papers  |
| <b>Date [bulk]</b>                | 1890-1944  |
| <b>Date [inclusive]</b>           | 1890-1944  |
| <b>Extent</b>                     | 1.5 linear feet  |
| <b>Location note</b>              |  |
| <b>Language</b>                   |  |
| <b>Language of Materials note</b> | English  |
| <b>Abstract</b>                   | Collection includes 2 large bound volumes; 2 two small collection catalogues; 22 photographs. The papers of Harrison Morris comprise several files related to Morris's non-Academy activities either during or after his tenure as an Academy administrator. The collection includes Morris's personal file on Thomas Eakins, which he kept for more than three decades, and memorabilia related to his work for the 1911 International Exposition in Rome. There are also two copies of his memoir <i>Confessions in Art</i> (for which a ten-page summary has been prepared), and a photograph of Morris from about 1930. The well-known 1860 portrait of him, by Thomas Eakins, is in the Academy's permanent collection. |

### **Preferred Citation note**

[identification of item], Title of Collection, Collection ID#, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts Archives, Philadelphia, PA.



## **Historical note**

Harrison S. Morris (1856-1948) served as the Secretary/Managing Director of the Academy from 1892-1905. Morris was one of this country's first professional arts administrators and his impact on the institution was profound. Under Morris's directorship the Academy sponsored many important exhibitions including the Philadelphia Photograph Salons (1898-1901), four landmark exhibitions of photographic art. In addition, during Morris's tenure, which ended with his stormy resignation in 1905, the Academy engaged in some of the most enlightened collecting in its history.

He also served as an editor at Lippincott's Magazine from 1899 to 1905, and on the Philadelphia Board of Education from 1902 to 1905. During his lifetime he served as a leader and participator in various organizations, including the National Academy of Design, National Institute of Arts and Letters, Philadelphia Contemporary Club, Newport Art Association, the Keats-Shelley Memorial Association of Rome, and the Wagner Free Institute.

He was a prolific writer who authored fiction, poetry, and biographies of Walt Whitman and William Trost Richards. He wrote numerous articles in art magazines including "Philadelphia's Contribution to American Art," a 1905 piece in *The Century Magazine*. He also enjoyed a lively correspondence on controversial art matters in newspapers of the day. His autobiography, *Confessions in Art* (New York: Sears Publishing Company, 1930), is strongly critical of the Academy board, but is, nevertheless, a fascinating account of the daily workings of a major museum and of art world dynamics at the turn of the century. His personal papers are preserved at Princeton University.

Harrison's correspondence during his years at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts is voluminous. His outgoing letters are preserved primarily as press copies in bound letterbooks. These are stored separately from incoming letters. Board minutes and minutes of the standing committees are also sources of information on his career. The Academy Archives houses several files related to Morris's later and outside activities (see list below). There is also a photograph of Morris, from about 1930. The 1896 portrait of him, by Thomas Eakins, is in the permanent collection.

## **Scope and Contents note**

The papers of Harrison Morris comprise several files related to Morris's non-Academy activities either during or after his tenure as an Academy administrator. The collection includes Morris's personal file on Thomas Eakins, which he kept for more than three decades, and memorabilia from his work for the 1911 International Exposition in Rome. There are also two copies of his memoir *Confessions in Art* (for which a

ten-page summary has been prepared), and a photograph of Morris from about 1930. The well-known 1896 portrait of him, by Thomas Eakins, is in the Academy's permanent collection.

## **Arrangement note**

## **Administrative Information**

### **Conditions Governing Access note**

Collection is open for research.

The archives reserves the right to restrict access to materials of sensitive nature. Please contact the department for further information.

### **Conditions Governing Use note**

The collection is the physical property of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Archives. The Museum holds literary rights only for material created by Museum personnel or given to the Museum with such rights specifically assigned. For all other material, literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. Researchers are responsible for obtaining permission from rights holders for publication and for other purposes where stated.

### **Immediate Source of Acquisition note**

### **Provenance note**

Morris's file on Thomas Eakins was the gift of his grandson Harrison Wright in 2000. The 1911 memorabilia was the gift of his granddaughter Anna Templeton-Cotill in 2008. The provenance of the other items is unknown, but likely to have been Morris's daughter Catharine Morris Wright, an artist and Academy supporter for many years.

In addition to the various donated items of personal memorabilia on Morris, it should be noted that the Academy archives houses Harrison's voluminous correspondence from his years as an administrator at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

### **Processing Information note**

Processed by Cheryl Leibold, 2008.

## **Controlled Access Headings**

**Person(s)**

**Corporate Name(s)**

**Genre(s)**

**Geographic Name(s)**

**Subject(s)**

**Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements note**

**Collection Inventory**

| Folder title   | Date | Box | Folder |
|--|------|-----|--------|
| Correspondence and minutes, 1894-97, from Morris's service on the <i>Committee on the Decoration of City Hall</i> , an unsuccessful attempt to commission murals in that building.   |      | 1   | 1      |
| Clippings, 1905-20, re Morris's departure from the Academy, and examples of his many public pronouncements and letters to the editors on American art matters. This file also contains a copy of his 1905 article in <i>The Century Magazine</i> , and his obituary.   |      | 1   | 2      |
| Letters written by Morris to the Directors of the Academy after his departure (1915-46). These items were probably removed from the general office files of the Academy in the 1950s, and segregated into this file. There may still be additional letters from these years in the general correspondence files. |      | 1   | 3      |
| A letter, provenance unknown, from Morris to Violet Oakley and Edith Emerson, September 8, 1942, thanking them for a cordial visit. This item was presumably a gift from one of the two women.   |      | 1   | 4      |
| Morris's personal file on Thomas Eakins. (see separate item inventory)   |      | 1   | 5      |

**Inventory of Harrison S. Morris's file on Thomas Eakins, and on Eakins's 1896 portrait of him. The file was presented to the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts by Morris's grandson, Harrison Morris Wright, on the occasion of the luncheon celebrating the acquisition of the portrait by the Academy, December 4, 2000.**

- Letter from Thomas Eakins to Harrison S. Morris, June 25, 1896.

Transcription: *My dear Morris/ Your very kind letter was duly received and gave me double pleasure; for it had been on my conscience that perhaps you might not be caring for my portrait, and yet had gone to the expense of a frame for it. Mrs. Eakins and I send our heartfelt wishes for a long and happy life to you both, and anticipate with pleasure a visit to your fireside./ Yours truly, Thomas Eakins.* [ALS, 1 page]

- Printed card of invitation to *Exhibition of Pictures and Statuary by Mr. Eakins and Mr. Murray* at the University of Pennsylvania Faculty Club, 1901.
- Exchange of letters between Susan Macdowell Eakins and Harrison S. Morris, August-September, 1917 (transcriptions; location of originals unknown). Susan informed HSM of the upcoming memorial exhibition of the work of Eakins at the Metropolitan Museum of Art; HSM expressed enthusiastic support and offered loan of his portrait; Susan replied that, according to Bryson Burroughs of the Met, there would probably not be room for it. [It was shown only at the Academy venue.]
- Text of HSM article on the Metropolitan exhibition and on Eakins's career, November 15, 1917, with additional page listing titles of Eakins works headed: *"I add below the list of his works given to me by Thomas Eakins in June 1913, which I asked for as a valuable record for the future which I knew would be enduring."* [5 page typescript]
- Copy of the *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, October, 1917. [cover and short article by Bryson Burroughs]
- Letter from Newman F. McGirr, of the Home Book and Art Shop, Ardmore, Pennsylvania, to Mrs. Harrison S. Morris, September 21, 1932, offering the sketch for the portrait of Harrison S. Morris by Eakins [now owned by the Newark Museum] for the sum of \$700.00. [1 page, typed]
- 1938-39: obituary of Susan Macdowell Eakins and five other newspaper clippings relating to her estate, and to the Babcock Gallery exhibition
- Letter from Seymour Adelman to HSM, October 29, 1939, asking for his support in saving the Eakins house. [1 page typed]
- HSM to Seymour Adelman, October 30, 1939, acknowledging letter concerning the Eakins house and adding: *"keeping that conventional brick tenement in a row of such can do little.... If it were a house of charming style in grounds of its own, your idea might appeal."* [1 page carbon copy]
- E.C. Babcock to HSM, October 6, 1939 bringing to his attention the sketch for his portrait in the estate sale. [1 page, photocopy]
- HSM to E.C. Babcock, October 9, 1939, asking for price of the sketch. [1 page, photocopy]
- Checklist for the Babcock Galleries *Exhibition of the Sketches, Studies, and Intimate Paintings of Thomas Eakins*, October 31 – November 25, 1939.
- April–June, 1944, three newspaper clippings concerning the Eakins centennial exhibitions.

- Eight letters concerning conservation treatments of the Morris portrait, 1954, 1967, 1968. [transferred to the Academy Museum Registrar's file on the painting]
- Photocopy of catalogue cover for the 148<sup>th</sup> Annual Exhibition of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1953, reproducing the Morris portrait [probably added to file by Mrs. Morris as she is acknowledged as a supporter of the exhibition in the caption].

**Summary of Harrison Morris Wright's remarks on the occasion of the lunch celebrating the acquisition of Thomas Eakins's portrait of Harrison S. Morris, Dec. 4, 2000**

*My grandfather was 72 years old when I was born in 1928, but I knew him for twenty years since he died in 1948. I recall visiting him often. He was gruff but likeable – seemed not quite sure what to do around the three boys. We often went for lunch at the house, Pear Hill in the Oak Lane section of the city (now a youth center and a park). The portrait by Eakins hung in the front hall and I recall it well.*

*When my grandfather died and my grandmother was moving to a smaller home in Rhode Island, the grandchildren were asked what they would each like from the home. One of my brothers chose a landscape by William Trost Richards, another chose a Packard convertible. I chose the Eakins probably because I was named for my grandfather. An appraiser had valued it at \$140.00, so it was not thought that, young as I was, I was being given anything too valuable.*

*At that time my wife, Josy, and I lived in married student housing and had no room for it, so it remained here in the vaults of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts for eight years. In the 1950s, when we moved into a large home in Swarthmore, we retrieved it, with some reluctance on the part of the Academy, and enjoyed it there for many years. Eventually we, too, moved to smaller quarters in Rhode Island and could no longer hang the painting. We deposited it at the Rhode Island School of Design for five years. During this time I received obscenely high offers for it from various dealers, one ostensibly from an anonymous collector in Seattle who promised to show it once a year at the Seattle Art Museum.*

*I've always wanted it to come to the Academy and it makes me very happy to see this day arrive.*

