

Edward Coates correspondence

MS.008

Finding Aid prepared by Hoang Tran



PENNSYLVANIA ACADEMY
OF THE FINE ARTS

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Edward H. Coates correspondence (MS.008)

Updated by Hoang Tran, December 2015

Summary Information

Repository	The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Dorothy and Kenneth Woodcock Archives
Creator	Edward Hornor Coates (1846-1921)
Title	Edward H. Coates correspondence
Date [bulk]	
Date [inclusive]	1875-1912, 1926, undated
Extent	2 folders
Location note	
Language	
Language of Materials note	English
Abstract	<p>This collection consists of twenty-three short letters written to Edward Hornor Coates, and seven letters to the Academy's managing directors John E. D. Trask and Harrison S. Morris, between 1875 and 1912. Letters received by Morris and Trask would be in Coates' possession as he was an important Academy board member for almost thirty years. The letters are written by well-known American artists of the period. Most of the letters are expressions of gratitude for an award or a purchase received by the artists from the Academy, or from Coates personally. The collection also contains a printed menu and program for the Centennial Exhibition dinner held on December 18, 1875, and four printed admission ribbons to the Centennial Exhibition of 1876. There is also one letter written to Florence Earle Coates by Violet Oakley a few years after Coates' death.</p>

A detailed inventory of the letters has been prepared.

Preferred Citation note

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

Historical note

Edward Hornor Coates graduated from Haverford College in 1864. He was a financier, and was able to retire at the age of forty-four. After his retirement he devoted himself to civic and cultural activities. He was especially devoted to the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, serving as a board member from 1877 to 1890, and as the board's president from 1890 to 1906.

He collected art, although much of his collection was European. After his death his widow gave about thirty works of art to the Academy, including portraits of her husband in oil and bronze, and a portrait of herself. Coates was a patron of a number of American artists, among them William Trost Richards, Thomas Hovenden, Robert Vonnoh, and Thomas Eakins.

His relationship with Eakins is well-known, and constitutes an important chapter in the life of the artist. See the literature on Eakins, and especially *Thomas Eakins and the Swimming Picture*, edited by Doreen Bolger and Sarah Cash (1996, Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth Texas).

Scope and Contents note

This collection consists of twenty-three short letters written to Edward Hornor Coates, and seven letters to the Academy's managing directors John E. D. Trask and Harrison S. Morris, between 1875 and 1912. Letters received by Morris and Trask would be in Coates' possession as he was an important Academy board member for almost thirty years. The letters are written by well-known American artists of the period. Most of the letters are expressions of gratitude for an award or a purchase received by the artists from the Academy, or from Coates personally. The collection also contains a printed menu and program for the Centennial Exhibition dinner held on December 18, 1875, and four printed admission ribbons to the Centennial Exhibition of 1876. There is also one letter written to Florence Earle Coates by Violet Oakley a few years after Coates' death.

A detailed inventory of the letters has been prepared.

Arrangement note

Chronological

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access note

Collection is open for research.

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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

The collection was a gift of Alice Coates Adamson of New York City, the great granddaughter of Edward Hornor Coates, in 2006.

Processing Information note

Processed by Cheryl Leibold.

Controlled Access Headings

Person(s)

Corporate Name(s)

Genre(s)

Geographic Name(s)

Subject(s)

Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements note

Collection Inventory

Inventory of the Edward Hornor Coates Papers

Correspondence	Date	Box	Folder
Undated, John Lafarge to Harrison Morris, concerned that an item has not arrived.	undated	1	1

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Correspondence	Date	Box	Folder
Undated, Violet Oakley to Mr. and Mrs. E. H. Coates, cordial greetings and thanks.	undated	1	1
Undated, John Singer Sargent to E. H. Coates, concerning a portrait.	undated	1	1
Undated, Julian Story to E. H. Coates, regrets not being able to be at the Academy opening.	undated	1	1
William Trost Richards to E. H. Coates, Jan. 8, 1875, thanks for purchase of a painting and a drawing.	Jan. 8, 1875	1	1
Printed menu and program for Centennial Exhibition dinner, Dec. 18, 1875, and four printed admission ribbons to the Centennial Exhibition, 1876.	Dec. 18, 1875	1	1
T.B.P. Dixey to E. H. Coates, May 8, 1876, asking Coates to be present at the opening of the Centennial.	May 8, 1876	1	1
William Trost Richards to E. H. Coates, Nov. 11, 1876, thanks for purchase of three drawings. [Richards was a good friend of Coates and more of their correspondence is in the William Trost Richards Papers at the Archives of American Art].	Nov. 11, 1876	1	1
William Trost Richards to E. H. Coates, Dec. 18, 1876, sends two drawings for consideration.	Dec. 18, 1876	1	1
Thomas Hovenden to E. H. Coates, March 4, 1891, praises Academy purchase of Harrison's <i>The Wave</i> , and speaks of a marine painting which he thinks is even better, by an obscure artist named Eichelberger who has since died.	March 4, 1891	1	2
Charles H. Davis to E. H. Coates, March 29, 1891, thanks for allowing him to borrow his painting <i>The Brook</i> , and appreciates knowing how much Mr. Richards think of it.	March 29, 1891	1	2
Walter Shirlaw to E. H. Coates, Jan. 30, 1894, is pleased the Academy is considering buying his painting <i>Sheepshearing</i> .	Jan. 30, 1894	1	2
William Merritt Chase to E. H. Coates, Feb. 16, 1895, thanks for award of the Academy Gold Medal of Honor.	Feb. 16, 1895	1	2
William Trost Richards to E. H. Coates, Dec. 1, 1895, is sending a large self-portrait to the Academy exhibition and hopes Coates will	Dec. 1, 1895	1	2

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Correspondence	Date	Box	Folder
have room for it; wishes a memorial of some kind could be made upon the death of Hovenden; praises the latter's <i>Breaking Home Ties</i> ; will send some works to the Academy exhibition but understands that they may be too big to hang.			
Winslow Homer to Harrison Morris, Sept. 15, 1896, will serve on the committee of selection [the only time Homer did so].	Sept. 15, 1896	1	2
Thomas Wilmer Dewing to E. H. Coates, Dec. 12, 1895, declines serving on jury for the Elkins Prize as he has a painting in competition for it.	Dec. 12, 1895	1	2
Robert Vonnoh to E. H. Coates, Aug. 13, 1893, has put the alterations and letting of 1301 Spruce Street into the hands of Mr. Patterson; describes security arrangements there and regrets delay in getting away for a rest; has completed two portraits [names partly legible]; hopes Coates and his wife are resting up for the winter; asks after Morris; wonders about the Wilstach bequest. [transcribed]	Aug. 13, 1893	1	2
Robert Vonnoh to E. H. Coates, Aug. 17, 1893, renovations almost complete and can get away at last; saw Morris who enthused about Coates' "camp," and hopes to see it someday; pleased with returns thus far for works to come to the Academy exhibition from the Chicago exposition; encouraged by the new school circular; worries that talented Academy student, Miss York, may not be able to return. [transcribed]	Aug. 17, 1893	1	2
Robert Vonnoh to E. H. Coates, Oct. 19, 1893, having trouble arranging date for portrait sitting of Mr. Platt and asks Coates' advice on the problem. [transcribed]	Oct. 19, 1893	1	2
Daniel Chester French to E. H. Coates, April 28, May 26, and Aug. 16, 1898, three letters concerning his selection to undertake the Smith Memorial.	April 28, May 26, and Aug. 16, 1898	1	2
Thomas Eakins to John E. D. Trask, Nov. 27, 1901, hopes to paint Mr. and Mrs. Trask.	Nov. 27, 1901	1	2
Childe Hassam to E. H. Coates, n.d., [1902], will accept four hundred dollars for the painting [probably a reference to <i>Cat Boats- Newport</i>], and is happy to see it enter the Academy collection.	n.d., [1902]	1	2

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Correspondence	Date	Box	Folder
Joseph R. De Camp to E. H. Coates, n.d. [1904], pleased that the Academy has purchased a work [probably <i>The Little Hotel</i> , purchased in 1904].	n.d. [1904]	1	2
John Singer Sargent to E. H. Coates, Feb. 18, [1903], thanks for award of the Academy Gold Medal of Honor.	Feb. 18, [1903]	1	2
Colin Campbell Cooper to E. H. Coates, April 25, 1903, pleased at having won an award.	April 25, 1903	1	2
Giovanni Boldini to E. H. Coates, Jan. 19, 1904, will sell the Academy his portrait of Whistler for sixteen hundred pounds so that it might be in a public collection. [The painting was eventually given to the Brooklyn Museum in 1909 by A. Augustus Healy.]	Jan. 19, 1904	1	2
Thomas Eakins to E. H. Coates, Feb. 20, 1904, received his note and appreciates it "more than the medal itself."	Feb. 20, 1904	1	2
Elizabeth Shippen Green to E. H. Coates, n.d., [1905], thanks for the award of the Mary Smith Prize.	n.d., [1905]	1	2
Edward W. Redfield to John E. D. Trask, May 27, 1907, will arrange for a canal outing at any time.	May 27, 1907	1	2
Edmund Tarbell to E. H. Coates, n.d. [1908], thanks for award of the Academy Gold Medal of Honor.	n.d. [1908]	1	2
Joseph Pennell to John E. D. Trask, Nov. 18, 1910, resents being excluded from American exhibitions due to his residence in Europe.	Nov. 18, 1910	1	2
Joseph Pennell to John E. D. Trask, Nov. 23, 1901, still waiting for news about exhibiting in Montevideo	Nov. 23, 1901	1	2
Joseph Pennell to John E. D. Trask, Dec. 5, 1912, offers help from Europe.	Dec. 5, 1912	1	2
Violet Oakley to Florence Coates, Jan. 18, 1926, praise for her remarks at the memorial for Sargent, and thanks for her remarks and sentiments on Oakley's work.	Jan. 18, 1926	1	2

[Transcription: Robert Vonnoh to Edward H. Coates, Aug. 13, 1893]

1301 Spruce St.

Phila. Aug. 13, 1893

Dear Mr. Coates,

I think you asked me some time ago to send you the plans of alterations of 1301 Spruce St. when I had things in shape which I now enclose. I have put the whole matter of letting etc. into the hands of Mr. Patterson whose card I also enclose and if you should find the time to suit you please confer with him.

I propose to include with the rooms light, heat (steam & hot air) fuel for open fires, taking care of rooms etc. The front door is entered by speaking tube & electric door latch so that the house is always secure from intrusion. You will observe by plan that in the second story back [illegible word] cooking may be done, the front 2nd story & 3rd story not having that convenience. I suppose you will say that the rooms are too much cut up for any but one or two people's convenience but I could not arrange to better winterize with the material I had to work with. The work has kept me so busy that since I returned from Chicago I have been on the go all the time & I expect it will be the 20th of Aug. before I can get away to get a bit of rest. The wretched plasterers are the cause of all the delay [illegible word] out on strike just about the time I wanted them.

During the delay I finished a portrait of Mr. Henry Rand [Ranch ?] & about completed the full length of Miss Anne [illegible; Thouron?] which I think will interest you. My new studio is going to be excellent as I shall have beautiful light and every [illegible word] strongly under my control.

I suppose you good people are having a delightful time & getting strong and full of health for the coming winter. How is that "rascal Morris"? I saw Bancroft the other day & he showed me the list of acceptances from Chicago which seemed very encouraging for our Ex. Is it in order to ask you what you think might be done toward getting the Com. for the Wilstach fund for yearly purchase of pictures to lay aside a stated amount with which to buy pictures from next Ex at [the] Acad.? The D[?] Bequest may yield something in that direction later on, who knows?

Mrs. Vonnoh joins me in sincerest regard for Mrs. Coates & Miss Alice as well as for yourself & that "rascal Morris."

Vonnoh

P.S. Please return the plan as it is the only one I have. R.W. V.

[Transcription: Robert Vonnoh to Edward H. Coates, Aug. 17, 1893]

Dear Mr. Coates,

Tomorrow [illegible word] I shall actually get away from town & this dreadful house that has used up all my summer, or very nearly all.

The good work is at last practically completed & I think you will like the general effect & arrangement. I hope to get 6 weeks vacation but fear I shall have to be on hand here about the middle of Sept., but shall try hard to stay away until school opens.

I saw Morris yesterday & he seems to have benefited greatly by the vacation with you. He told me in most enthusiastic terms how lovely it all was up in your camp. I hope some day to myself see that lovely spot when there is no dreadful house to break up the beautiful summer.

I am very much pleased with the returns from the Fair for our Ex. & everything promises well towards a successful result.

In regard to the school I am much pleased with the circular as it now gotten up & Morris says that the applications are beginning to come in away in advance of last year already. I am very much troubled about losing Miss York who wrote me for a letter of recommendation for a position to teach drawing in Reading & the probability is that she will not return to school, in fact she admits as much in her letter. I wish that something might be done for her when in Phila., as we ought not to lose so strong a student. Strong students you know are [illegible word] for the Academy. We must try to keep them at all costs. I came to know Mr. Patterson through Mr. Day the architect & he seems a very good man. Morris knows him well. Your letters gave me much pleasure. Many thanks for your kindly interest in my welfare. In health I feel all right & I think a good rest will prepare me in good shape for the winter. Mrs. Vonnoh joins me in the best of wishes for you and Mrs. Coates and also Miss Alice & that you are all well and having a beautiful summer.

Very Sincerely yours,

R.W. Vonnoh

1301 Spruce St., Phila., Aug. 17/93

[Transcription: Robert Vonnoh to Edward H. Coates, Oct. 19, 1893]

Dear Mr. Coates,

Enclosed you will find a letter from Mr. Platt in answer to mine asking when it would please him to begin sittings. On the 14th of Jan. last Mr. Platt came to my studio & ordered his portrait which was confirmed by your letter soon after stating the size to be a 40 x 50 canvas as you recollect. Twice he pleaded being too busy to sit which one can readily understand in a man of his position.

I can also understand his aversion to such a thing as sitting for an artist merely to be stared at, but the enclosed letter is a novel experience that happens to me for the first time in my experience as a portrait painter & I don't know what to say or think, so I naturally go to you my father confessor as it were.

I hope you will pardon me for bringing this matter to your attention & doubtless it would have been in better taste to have let the matter drop.

Sincerely yours,

R.W. Vonnoh

P.S. Kindly return the letter (Platt's).

1301 Spruce St., Phila., Oct. 19, 1893