

Arthur B. Carles papers

MS.050

Finding Aid prepared by Hoang Tran



PENNSYLVANIA ACADEMY
OF THE FINE ARTS

The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts
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Updated by Hoang Tran, January 2016

Summary Information

Repository	The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Dorothy and Kenneth Woodcock Archives
Creator	Arthur B. Carles (1882-1952)
Title	Arthur B. Carles papers
Date [bulk]	
Date [inclusive]	1900-1941
Extent	11 document boxes, 2 1/2 document boxes
Location note	
Language	
Language of Materials note	English
Abstract	Collection comprises of dated correspondence to and from Carles, miscellaneous correspondence, photographs, notes, and printed matter from his art career.

Preferred Citation note

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

Historical note

Arthur B. Carles (1882-1952) was one of the leading exponents of modern painting to emerge from, and remain in, Philadelphia. In 1901, and from 1903-07, he studied at the Pennsylvania Academy. At the Academy, Carles won two Cresson Travel Scholarships that allowed him to travel to Europe in the summer of 1905, and again in June of 1906, when he commenced a three-year stay. The American painter Alfred Maurer introduced Carles to modern European art. It was also through Maurer that Carles met the collectors Gertrude and Leo Stein. While in Europe, Carles became close friends with the painter and photographer Edward Steichen. He was also profoundly influenced by the expressionist work of Henri Matisse.

Returning to Philadelphia in 1910, he began a career that would last over thirty years. His vivid studies of flowers, figure studies and nudes were considered some of the most avant-garde work produced in the city. In 1917, the Academy invited Carles to join the teaching faculty. He quickly established a reputation as a magnetic teacher and exponent of modernism. Dismissed in 1925, he pursued his painting and made several lengthy visits to France. From about 1930 until his disabling accident in 1941 he continued his deep interest in color with a series of semi-abstract and daringly expressionist paintings.

Carles counted many modern figures among his friends, such as Alfred Stieglitz, Leopold Stokowski, Carroll Tyson, and Earl Horter. He is also remembered for co-organizing three important exhibitions of modern painting at the Academy in 1920, 1921, and 1923. He was the subject of one-man exhibitions at the Pennsylvania Academy in 1982, and at the Woodmere Art Museum in 2001.

In 1909 Carles married Mercedes de Cordoba, a Spanish-born designer and illustrator. Their daughter Mercedes was born in December of 1913. During much of their married years they lived apart, Mercedes in New York and Carles in Philadelphia. The marriage ended in divorce in 1926. Their daughter, whose married name was Mercedes Matter, became an important figure in the New York art world, and an active supporter of the Arts Students League and the Studio School of Art. In 1927 Carles married Caroline Robinson, a woman some 15 years his junior. Their daughter, also called Caroline, was born in December of 1927.

Scope and Contents note

The collection is composed of the following types and amounts of material:

1) Dated correspondence to and from Carles: primarily letters received between 1900 and 1941, comprising 6 document boxes, approximately 1400 items. For each year there is a file of correspondence exchanged between Carles and various persons. For the years from 1911 to

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1923 there is a separate file of letters from Mercedes Carles. For 1924 and 1925 there is a separate file of letters exchanged between ABC and Caroline Robinson. Overall there are relatively few letters written by Carles. These are presumably drafts or never-mailed letters.

Some of the more well known or frequently occurring correspondents are: Carles' parents, his sister Sara and brother Roy, his first wife Mercedes De Cordoba Carles, his daughter Mercedes Jeune Carles, and his second wife Caroline Robinson Carles. Others include Albert C. Barnes, Adolph Borie, Hugh H. Breckenridge, Margaretta Hinchman, Hans Hoffman (1933), Hans Kindler, Henry McCarter, Earl Horter, George Howe, George Oberteuffer, Katherine Rhoades, Caroline Robinson, Leopold and Helen Seyffert, Edward Steichen, Alfred Stieglitz, Leopold Stokowski, Carroll Tyson, Charles Yarrow.

2) Undated letters written by Carles, either never mailed or drafts, approximately 75 items.

3) Undated correspondence from Mercedes de Cordoba Carles to ABC, approximately 100 items (Hundreds of letters, dated via their postmarked envelopes, from Mercedes to ABC, are in the boxes of dated correspondence.)

4) Undated writings and notes, including passages on color interaction, artists, humorous verse, lists of paintings and art supplies. There are several small notebooks. A few items of Carles' writings were retained by the donor. These may enter the collection at a later date. 1 document case.

5) Photographs of Carles, Mercedes De Cordoba Carles, and others. 1 document box.

6) Printed matter, including exhibition announcements, programs, brochures, receipts, bills, financial statements, cancelled checks, and advertisements.

At the end of 2008 an inventory of every dated letter, and of most of the undated writings, was completed.

A separate box contains the files for the following materials created during the cataloguing: finding aid; transcription log; cataloguing notes and procedures; miscellaneous research on ABC.

Another box contains correspondence with donor Dr. Perry Ottenberg, and files of background information provided by Carles scholar Barbara Wolanin. Dr. Wolanin began researching Arthur B. Carles in the early 1980s. She consulted on the Academy's cataloguing project by sharing her transcriptions and cataloguing records, and by answering numerous queries. She made many notes re individual manuscript items and signed each either BAW or baw.

[Related materials in the Academy archives include:](#)

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Two draft letters, dated to about 1911, one to Alfred Stieglitz and the other to Mrs. Agnes Ernst Meyer. **(MS.0035 - Arthur B. Carles correspondence)** The draft letter to Stieglitz concerns Carles' show at Stieglitz's gallery in New York. On the same sheet there is a draft of a letter to Mrs. Agnes Ernst Meyer, conveying Carles' thanks for a visit to her home to see the Edward Steichen murals there. These letters were donated to the Academy archives by Professor William Innes Homer in about 1980. Both items are oversize, and are stored separately from the much larger collection of Carles' papers donated by Dr. Perry Ottenberg in 2002. (See the box for very small collections of artists' papers.)

The institutional archives of the Pennsylvania Academy includes three letters from Carles' student years; administrative correspondence with Carles regarding his teaching duties, submission of work to the Academy annual exhibitions, and jury service; photographs of Carles; and miscellaneous clippings (both in the archives and the Academy library). In addition there are copies of photographs and artwork owned by the descendants of Carles' sister Sara (see the separate finding aid for Sara Carles Johns).

Abbreviations used in this finding aid:

ABC: Arthur B. Carles

MdC: Mercedes de Cordoba Carles, often signing her name as "Mercy." (Carles' daughter Mercedes is usually referred to as "Mercy" or "Little Mercy.")

The Arthur B. Carles papers were microfilmed by the Archives of American Art while the collection was in the possession of Dr. Ottenberg. See reels 4270-4273. The Archives of American Art collection includes several smaller groups of Carles papers.

The Academy's museum collection houses a significant body of artwork by Arthur B. Carles.

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

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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

Gift of Dr. and Mrs. B. Perry Ottenberg, September 2002.

See Box 13 for background information on Dr. Ottenberg and his collection.

Processing Information note

Collection processing and finding aid: Cheryl Leibold, 2008. Data entry and transcriptions: Judith Thomas.

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
Dated correspondence to and from ABC	1900-1912	1	
Dated correspondence to and from ABC	1913-1916	2	
Dated correspondence to and from ABC	1917-1921	3	
Dated correspondence to and from ABC	1922-1924	4	
Dated correspondence to and from ABC	1925-1930	5	
Dated correspondence to and from ABC; undated correspondence of various persons to ABC, and undated	1931-1941	6	

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Folder title	Date	Box	Folder
correspondence to various persons from ABC (never sent?), arranged by name of sender, including many undated letters from ABC to MdC.			
Undated correspondence from MdC to ABC (ca. 100 items; letters and drawings from ABC's daughter Mercedes ("Little Mercy") to ABC, n.d., and 1924-40; undated greeting cards; Mercedes Carles' correspondence to and from others; correspondence of other persons such as Caroline Carles and Sara Carles. Material in this box was not catalogued.	1924-1940	7	
Undated writings: miscellaneous notes, writings, lists and jottings; verse and creative writing; lists of names and diagrams re exhibitions co-organized by ABC in 1920 and 1921; notes and diagrams re an undated ABC exhibition; five small notebooks and a blank notebook; printed matter re two ABC exhibitions, 1912 and 1944; printed matter re art and exhibitions of other artists (ca. 100 items); printed matter re art supplies (orders, invoices and receipts (ca. 100 items).	1912, 1920-1921, 1944	8	
Photographs of ABC and other persons; small sketches by ABC; sketches by MdC; photographs of places; photographs of works of art by ABC and others.		9	
Printed matter and notes unrelated to art, including receipts and invoices for utilities, banking, hotels, travel, food, and medical expenses; various names and addresses saved by ABC. Material in this box was not catalogued.		10	
ABC's birth certificate and passport; a small quantity of clippings; wedding announcement for ABC's two marriages; blank postcards; music-related printed matter; Pennsylvania Academy class schedules and forms; accounts ledger kept by ABC's nurse in 1934; financial and banking papers; blank ABC stationery; typed list of names and addresses; cancelled checks; unmatched envelopes. Material in this box was not catalogued.	1934	11	
Collection Finding Aid; Deed of Gift; transcription log; cataloguing notes and format guides; collection appraisal		12	

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Folder title	Date	Box	Folder
and descriptions; notes and research on ABC; conservation information; Archives of American Art cataloging for its Carles collections.			
Information on and correspondence with donor Dr. Perry Ottenberg; notes, lists and background information on Carles and on his papers provided by Barbara Wolanin; correspondence with Wolanin.		13	