

# Collection of research materials for American Originals Vivian O. and Meyer P. Potamkin-Collectors of American Art

MS.057

Finding Aid prepared by Hoang Tran

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PENNSYLVANIA ACADEMY  
OF THE FINE ARTS

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Updated by Hoang Tran, August 2016

## **Summary Information**

<b>Repository</b>	The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Dorothy and Kenneth Woodcock Archives
<b>Creator</b>	Cheryl Leibold
<b>Title</b>	Collection of research materials for American Originals Vivian O. and Meyer P. Potamkin-Collectors of American Art
<b>Date [bulk]</b>	
<b>Date [inclusive]</b>	1970-2004
<b>Extent</b>	1 document box
<b>Location note</b>	
<b>Language</b>	
<b>Language of Materials note</b>	English
<b>Abstract</b>	The Potamkin papers include materials about the couple and their collecting, mostly amassed at the time of the preparation of the publication noted above. There is no autograph material or photographs of the couple other than the ones used in the book.

### **Preferred Citation note**

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

## **Historical note**

Meyer P. (1909-2001) and Vivian O. (1915-2003) Potamkin were among the foremost collectors of art in twentieth century Philadelphia. Both natives of the city, they began collecting in the early 1940s, soon after their marriage. They initially collected widely, including examples of European and American fine art, as well as works of Native American, African, and pre-Columbian cultures, ancient art, and folk art. In the mid-1950s they made a conscious decision to concentrate exclusively on American art and eventually amassed a superb group of over 250 works in that field.

Meyer P. Potamkin, an investment banker, served on the board of the Philadelphia Museum of Art from 1964 to 1974. Vivian O. Potamkin served on the board of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts from 1974 to 2002. Individually or together, they were long-term supporters of, or board members at, numerous Philadelphia cultural or philanthropic organizations.

Their interest in and generosity toward the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts was of long standing. In 2003 their gift to the Academy of ten masterpieces of American art was the culmination of a series of gifts totaling twenty-one works up to that point. In 2004 the Academy published a tribute volume *American Originals: Vivian O. and Meyer P. Potamkin — Collectors of American Art*. This limited edition book presented the 2003 gift and included essays and other texts by scholars who were close to the Potamkins.

## **Scope and Contents note**

The Potamkin papers include materials about the couple and their collecting, mostly amassed at the time of the preparation of the publication noted above. There is no autograph material or photographs of the couple other than the ones used in the book.

### ***Related materials in the Academy archives.***

- Correspondence with Academy administrators
- File on Vivian Potamkin in miscellaneous biographical information on board members
- Gifts and Bequests
- Clippings re the Academy's 1968 and 1989 exhibitions of works from the Potamkin collection.
- Photographs of special events, exhibitions, and individuals
- Printed matter from special events, including the 1996 Founders' Day event

### **Audiotapes:**

- Interview with Meyer P. and Vivian O. Potamkin, conducted by Avis Berman for the Archives of American Art, 2001; tapes courtesy of the AAA; Pennsylvania Academy has no reproduction rights. (4 tapes). Not transcribed.

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- Interview with Vivian O. Potamkin, conducted by Cheryl Leibold and Nicolai Cikovsky for the Pennsylvania Academy, 2002. 5 tapes. Transcribed
- Vivian O. Potamkin Memorial Service, Jan. 22, 2003 [partially transcribed]

**Videotapes:**

- *Collectors' Love Story*, a feature on Meyer and Vivian Potamkin in conjunction with PAFA exhibition, 1989. WHYY-TV. 30 min. 1/2 inch tape.
- Meyer C. Potamkin Memorial Service, July 26, 2001. 40 minutes. 2 copies, and 1 master tape. Transcribed, from the videotape.
- Vivian O. Potamkin Memorial Service, Jan. 22, 2003. See description of the audiotape. 50 minutes.

**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**

These materials were gathered by Cheryl Leibold, the Academy archivist, who was the editorial supervisor of the publication.

**Processing Information note**

Processed by Cheryl Leibold, circa 2004.

## 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
Transcript of interview with the Potamkins, conducted by the Archives of American Art, 1974, 144 pp.	1974	1	1
Transcript of five-hour interview with Vivian Potamkin, 2002, 51 pp.	2002	1	2
Remarks delivered at the memorial services for Meyer and Vivian Potamkin, 11 pp.		1	3
Checklists of all works of American art in the Potamkin collection as of 2002, 60 pp.	2002	1	4
Photographs of the Potamkin home with their collection in place, by Will Brown, 2002, 11 photographs.	2002	1	5
Catalogue sheets, A-L, (photocopies of originals retained by the Potamkin estate) maintained by Vivian Potamkin on works of art in the Potamkins' collection.		1	6
Catalogue sheets, M-Z, (photocopies of originals retained by the Potamkin estate) maintained by Vivian Potamkin on works of art in the Potamkins' collection.		1	7
Correspondence and photographs re the publication of <i>American Originals: Vivian O. and Meyer P. Potamkin — Collectors of American Art</i> .		1	8
Publications relating to the Potamkins' art collection, 1970-2001, and two copies of <i>American Originals</i> .		1	9