

Finding Aids to Personal Papers and Special Collections in the VMFA Archives



Special Collection 03 (SC-03) Records of Virginia Arts Organizations, 1888-1942

1 box; 113 items

Processed by
Courtney C. Yevich, VMFA Archivist
August 2004, November 2005

CONTACT INFORMATION

VMFA Archives
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts
200 N. Boulevard
Richmond, VA 23220-4007
Phone: 804-340-1495
E-mail: library@vmfa.museum

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Provenance

The collection is comprised of archival materials found in the VMFA Library's holdings. The collection was accessioned into the VMFA Archives' collection in August 2004.

Abstract

The collection documents the rich history of Richmond's artistic culture and community in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Drawing upon the legacy of the first Academy of Fine Arts in the United States, founded in Richmond in 1786, the Richmond Academy of Arts was revived in 1930, and records created throughout the organization's history comprise the majority of the collection. The Academy provided the most cohesive and active arts organization in Richmond before the founding of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. Even after the museum's opening in 1936, the relationship between the Academy and the museum is notable; from the correspondence between Thomas C. Colt, the museum's first Director, and two Presidents of the Academy, to the creation of Richmond's first "Salon des Refuses," and to the repeated overlapping of artist and patron names within the organizations.

Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions on the use of the collection. For permission to publish materials from the collection, please contact the VMFA Archives.

Processing Note

The collection was initially processed in August 2004. A large accretion was processed in November 2005. During processing, original newspaper clippings were photocopied, with identifiers transferred, and incorporated into the vertical files in the Library collection.

Historical Note

On May 8, 1786, the Academy of Sciences and Fine Arts of the United States of America was founded in Richmond, Virginia, the first institution of its kind formed in the States. The establishment of the Academy was the result of a zealous young French soldier and scholar, the Chevalier Alexander Marie Quesnay de Beaurepaire, who landed in Portsmouth, Virginia in early March 1777. Quesnay lobbied for over ten years to see his Academy built and was finally rewarded on June 24, 1786 when the cornerstone for a gallery, museum, theater and school was laid at Academy Square by Richmond's Masonic Lodge No. 13. After the completion of the building later that year, and the opening of the Academy strictly for theatrical purposes on October 10, the Academy quickly started experiencing financial problems. Within months of the opening, Quesnay quietly slipped out of the country to return to France on a quest to secure further funding, and he spent the next two and a half years trying to enlist the support of members of Paris' learned societies. With the fall of the Bastille in July 1789 however, Quesnay was called upon to serve as a commander in the Parisian militia, surviving the revolution, but never to return to his Academy or even to America's shores. The Academy continued to serve as a center for drama until the building was destroyed by a catastrophic fire on January 23, 1798.

After one hundred and thirty years elapsed, it was Quesnay's Academy that many noted Richmond artists sought to revive in the early 1930s, when the Academy was resurrected in Richmond. Decades earlier, members of another Richmond art organization, the Art Club of Richmond, directed their attention towards this task and created an Academy Committee within the Club to promote interest in its revival. In the spring of 1917, the Committee began a fund-raising effort by selling subscriptions for a sum invested in Liberty Bonds, to be paid towards an Academy Fund. The continuing war effort stalled the project however and the Art Club passed out of existence. In 1919, the Virginia League of Fine Arts and Handicrafts was organized by Adele Clark and Nora Houston, and one of its main objectives was to restore the Academy, a movement which didn't gain real strength until 1924-1925, but finally resulted in the chartering of the Richmond Academy of Arts in 1930 "to resume and promote the cultural activities and purposes of the Academy of Sciences and Fine Arts of the United States of America." While all the while remaining true to the goals of fostering and preserving the artistic culture of Richmond, the new Academy was re-chartered in 1936 as the Academy of Sciences and Fine Arts, although it was known by both names until its charter was revoked and the organization went out of business in 1948, largely due to the Academy's failure to gain enough support to build an adequate facility, and its purpose was eventually subsumed into the mission of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

(The above information was taken from [*The Academy of Sciences and Fine Arts of the United States of American: Being an Outline of the History of the Academy of Sciences and Fine Arts*](#), and “Poet, Patriot and Pedagogue,” by John G. Roberts, [*Arts in Virginia*](#), Winter 1966.)

Scope and Content Note

The collection’s inclusive dates are 1888-1942, with the bulk of the material dating from 1931 and 1938. The collection is comprised of exhibition catalogs, correspondence, invitations, tickets, newsletters, bulletins and other ephemeral material.

Arrangement

The collection is organized into five series, and items are arranged chronologically within each series. Items with no date are placed at the end of a series:

[Series 1: Early Arts Organizations, 1888-1928](#)

[Series 2: Richmond Academy of Arts/Academy of Sciences and Fine Arts, 1917-1942](#)

[Series 3: Correspondence, 1931-1942](#)

[Series 4: Sallie Leigh Cole, Correspondence and Notes, 1931-1932, n.d.](#)

[Series 5: Southern States Art League Newsletter, 1941-1942](#)

Controlled Access Points

Academy of Sciences and Fine Arts
Art Club of Richmond
Richmond Academy of Arts
Southern States Art League
Tournament of Arts and Crafts
Virginia League of Fine Arts and Handicrafts
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts
Woman’s Club (Richmond, Va.)
Art, American – Virginia – 20th Century – Exhibitions
Artists – Virginia – Exhibitions
Richmond (Va.) – History
Bayliss, W. M. F. (William Murray Forbes), 1896-
Branch, Blythe
Clark, Adele, 1882-1983
Cole, Sallie Leigh
Colt, Thomas C., 1905-1985
Payne, John Barton, 1855-1935
Singleton, Thomas
Weddell, Alexander Wilbourne, 1876-1948

Related Materials

See further information in the VMFA Library:

Book:

- [*The Academy of Sciences and Fine Arts of the United States of America: Being an Outline of the History of the Academy of Sciences and Fine Arts of the U.S.A. Established at Richmond, Virginia on May 8th, in the year 1786, 1931*](#)

Catalogs:

- [*Richmond, Virginia, in Old Prints 1737-1887, 1932*](#)
- [*The Twenty-Seventh Annual Exhibition of the Southern States Art League, 1947*](#)

Exhibition File:

- [*27th Annual Exhibition of the Southern States Art League, 1947*](#)

Subject File:

- [*Art Organizations and Foundations: Virginia: Private: Richmond Academy of Sciences and Fine Arts \(2 folders\)*](#)

See related archival records in the following institutions:

Library of Virginia:

- [*Julia Sully Papers \(Coll. No. 26567\)*](#)
- [*Statuts & reglemens de l'Academie des Sciences & Beaux Arts des Etats-Unis de l'Amerique, etablie a Richemond, capitale de la Virginie, 1786 \(Coll No. 23617\)*](#)

University of Virginia:

- [*Edmund S. Campbell Papers \(Coll. No. 3505\)*](#)

Virginia Commonwealth University:

- [*Adele Goodman Clark Papers \(Coll. No. M9\)*](#)

Virginia Historical Society:

- [*Adele Clark Papers \(Coll. No. Mss1 C5472 a FA2\)*](#)

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS / ITEM LISTS

Series 1: Early Arts Organizations' Exhibitions, 1888-1928

Box 1 (Folder 1)

This series is comprised of exhibition catalogs from various shows presented in Richmond and sponsored by different arts organizations from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, in the decades before the revival of the Richmond Academy of Arts in 1930. In 1888, the statewide "Virginia Exposition" was held at the fairgrounds in Richmond and mainly showcased artifacts of historical significance. Judge John Barton Payne donated his entire painting collection to the

state of Virginia in 1919, which formed the core of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts' collection when it was founded. The Virginia League of Fine Arts was the successor to the Virginia League of Fine Arts and Handicrafts, and merged with the Academy just two years after their "First Municipal Art Exhibition of Richmond" in 1928.

| <i>Folder</i> | <i>Item</i> |
|----------------------|---|
| 1 | "Catalogue of Works of Art at the Virginia Exposition," 1888 (includes photocopy of catalogue) "Catalogue of the Exhibit of Relics and Antiquities at the Virginia Exposition," Catalog, Oct. 3-Nov. 21, 1888 "The John Barton Payne Collection of Paintings," Catalog, 1926 (annotated) "First Municipal Art Exhibition of Richmond, VA," The Virginia League of Fine Arts, Catalog, Apr. 29-May 8, 1927 "Exhibition of Paintings by G. Thompson Pritchard," Woman's Club, Catalog, Oct. 15-20, 1928 |

Series 2: Richmond Academy of Arts / Academy of Sciences and Fine Arts, 1917-1942

Box 1 (Folders 2-6)

The series is comprised mainly of exhibition catalogues from various shows sponsored by or shown at the Academy. Much of the material relates to the two Tournaments of Arts and Crafts, held in April of 1931 and 1932, and which proved to be wildly popular month-long programs of juried exhibitions and competitions in drama, music, literature, elocution and dancing. Several of the items in the series have been cut out of a scrapbook created by Sallie Leigh Cole sometime in 1931 (see Series 4 for Cole's notes). It is not known when or by whom the items were removed.

The series is divided into four subseries:

- Series 2.1:** "Tournament of Arts and Crafts," 1931
- Series 2.2:** Exhibitions, 1936-1942, n.d.
- Series 2.3:** *Academy News*, 1932-1933
- Series 2.4:** Other, 1917-1938

Series 2.1: "Tournament of Arts and Crafts," 1931-1932

| <i>Folder</i> | <i>Item</i> |
|----------------------|--|
| 2 | Program, Apr. 8-21, 1931 Program / Invitation, Apr. 8-21, 1931 "First Annual Art Exhibition of Richmond Artists," Exhibition Catalog, Apr. 8-21, 1931 (3 copies) "First Annual Student Art Exhibition," Typescript Catalog, Apr. 8-21, 1931 Exhibits and Final Contests, Ticket, Apr. 6-21, 1931 Artists Ball, Ticket, Apr. 21, 1931 Artists Ball, Student Ticket, Apr. 21, 1931 Awards and Artists Ball, Program, Apr. 21, 1931 (2 copies) |

| Folder | Item |
|---------------|---|
| 2 | <p>Typescript of the Pageant Presented at the Artists Ball, Apr. 21, 1931</p> <p>“Artists’ Ball,” Annotated Typescript, 1931</p> <p>Typescript Synopsis, [1931]</p> <p>Typescript Synopsis Copy, [1931]</p> <p>Entry Blank, [1931?]</p> <p>Program, Apr. 10-May 1, 1932</p> <p>“Second Annual Student Sculpture Exhibition, The Tournament of Arts and Crafts,” Catalog, Apr. 10-23, 1932 (2 copies)</p> <p>“Second Annual Student Art Exhibition, The Tournament of Arts and Crafts,” Catalog, Apr. 10-23, 1932 (2 copies)</p> <p>“Second Annual Exhibition of True Arts and Crafts,” Typescript Catalog, Apr. 10-23, 1932</p> |

Series 2.2: Exhibitions, 1932-1942, n.d.

| Folder | Item |
|---------------|---|
| 3 | <p>“Special Exhibition of Prominent Richmond Artists,” Signed Typescript Summary, Mar. 26-31, 1932</p> <p>Prospectus, First Annual Exhibition of Virginia Artists, Apr. 1932</p> <p>“Reminder!” First Annual Exhibition of Virginia Artists, Flyer, Apr. 1932</p> <p>“The First Exhibition of Virginia Artists,” Catalog, Apr. 17-May 2, 1932 (3 copies)</p> <p>“Exhibition, Contemporary Water Colorists,” Catalog, Sept. 19-Oct. 10, 1932 (4 copies)</p> <p>“Second Annual Exhibition, Richmond Artists,” Catalog, Nov. 21-Dec. 3, 1932</p> <p>“A Preliminary List of Traveling Exhibitions for the Season 1932-1933,” National Alliance of Art and Industry, Typescript, 1932</p> <p>“Paintings from the Thirteenth Biennial Exhibition of the Corcoran Gallery of Art,” Catalog, Jan. 28-Feb. 18, 1933 (2 copies)</p> <p>“Virginia Artists, Second Annual Exhibition,” Catalog, Apr. 22-May 22, 1933 (3 copies)</p> |
| 4 | <p>“One Man Exhibitions, Theo. Ballou White, Charles W. Smith, Dunn Carter,” Catalog, Oct. 1-15, 1933 (2 copies)</p> <p>“Camera Studies of North Carolina by Bayard Wootten,” Catalog, Oct. 15-Nov. 4, 1933</p> <p>“Exhibitions,” Catalog, Nov. 22-Dec. 9, 1933</p> <p>“Water Colors and Prints by Robert Franklin Gates, Margaret Casey Gates, Carson S. Davenport,” Catalog, Jan. 21-Feb. 10, 1934 (2 copies)</p> <p>“Third Annual Exhibition of Virginia Artists,” Catalog, Mar. 24-Apr. 22, 1934 (2 copies)</p> <p>“Exhibition of Contemporary American Paintings,” Catalog, Dec. 27, 1934-Jan. 20, 1935</p> <p>“Fourth Annual Exhibition of Virginia Artists,” Catalog, Apr. 27-May 27, 1935 (2 copies)</p> |

| Folder | Item |
|---------------|---|
| 4 | <p>“Bell Worsham,” Catalog, Jan. 4-18, 1936</p> <p>“Mordi Gassner,” Catalog, Feb. 1936</p> <p>“First Annual Spring Exhibition,” Typescript Announcement, May 29-June 22, 1936</p> <p>“Seventh Annual Exhibition of Richmond Artists,” Catalog, Oct. 5-31, 1937</p> <p>“An Exhibition of Paintings by Artist Members of the Academy at the Studio Guild, New York City,” Invitation / Catalog, Jan. 24-Feb. 5, 1938</p> <p>“Aline Livingstone, Exhibition of Paintings and Drawings,” Catalog, Mar. 2-12, 1938</p> <p>“Carson Davenport, Exhibition of Lithographs,” Catalog, Mar. 2-12, 1938</p> <p>“Eighth Annual of Exhibition Richmond Artists,” Catalog, Nov. 1-26, 1938</p> <p>“Artists of the Federal Art Project, Works Progress Administration of Virginia,” Catalog, June 23-July 8, 1939</p> <p>“Nathan Robinson, Exhibition of Paintings,” Catalog, Mar. 19-Apr. 1, 1940</p> <p>“Tenth Annual of Exhibition Richmond Artists,” Catalog, Nov. 24, 1940-Jan. 5, 1941</p> <p>“Thomas B. Gay, Jr., Jack Newberry, Tack Bonsack, Exhibition of Paintings,” Catalog, Mar. 5-17, 1941</p> <p>“The Annual Spring Exhibition, The Virginia Scene,” Catalog, June 4-28, 1941</p> <p>“One Man Exhibitions,” Catalog, Dec. 18-31, 1941</p> <p>“Salon des Refuses Exhibition,” Catalog, 1942</p> <p>“Exhibition of Sculpture by Americans,” Catalog, n.d.</p> |

Series 2.3: Academy News, 1932-1933

| Folder | Item |
|---------------|---|
| 5 | <p>Vol. I, No. 1, Oct. 1932</p> <p>Vol. I, No. 2, Nov. 1932</p> <p>Vol. II, No. 1, Jan. 1933</p> <p>Vol. II, No. 2, Dec. 1933</p> |

Series 2.4: Other, 1917-1938, n.d.

| Folder | Item |
|---------------|---|
| 6 | <p>Liberty Bonds for the Academy Fund Subscription Ticket, 1917</p> <p>Medical College of Virginia, Bulletin, Vol. XXV, No.9, Nov. 1928</p> <p>“The Academy of Sciences and Fine Arts of the United States of America: Being an outline of the history of the Academy,” 1931 (4 copies)</p> <p>Richmond Academy of Arts, Brochure, [1931] (2 copies)</p> <p>“Trustees and Officers, Charter and By-Laws,” as of Jan. 1, 1932</p> <p>Clipping from “Art Digest,” Typescript, Mar. 1, 1932</p> <p>Beaux Arts Ball, Invitation / Program, Apr. 27, 1932</p> <p>Academy Schedule, Typescript, Feb. 1-June 1, 1936</p> <p>Report for the Year, 1936-1937 (2 copies)</p> <p>Outline of Aims and Programs, 1938</p> <p>Establishment of the Academy, Typescript, n.d. (2 copies)</p> <p>Quesnay de Beaurepaire, Typescript, n.d.</p> |

| <i>Folder</i> | <i>Item</i> |
|---------------|--|
| 6 | The Academy of the Arts and Sciences of the United States of America at Richmond, Virginia, Typescript, n.d. |

Series 3: Correspondence, 1931-1942

Box 1 (Folder 7)

The series is comprised of correspondence, chiefly between Thomas C. Colt, Director of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and Captain W.M.F. Bayliss, Secretary of the Board of Trustees and later President of the Academy, who discussed the possibilities for a new home for the Academy in 1938, including the consideration of housing the Academy at the museum. Eventually, Colt convinced Bayliss that the museum and the Academy needed to remain two separate entities, while still supporting the Academy's mission and purpose. In 1940, the discussion turned to the topic of a Salon des Refuses, which presented paintings that were denied entry into the Third Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting at the museum, an idea Colt strongly supported. Other correspondents include Thomas Singleton, Director of the Academy, Adele Clark, State Director of the W.P.A. Project, and Blythe Branch, Richmond resident and philanthropist.

| <i>Folder</i> | <i>Item</i> |
|---------------|---|
| 7 | Weddell to Cole, June 27, 1931 |
| | Singleton to Colt, Feb. 10, 1938 |
| | Colt to Singleton, Feb. 11, 1938 |
| | Bayliss to Colt, Mar. 10, 1938 |
| | Colt to Bayliss, Mar. 15, 1938 |
| | Singleton to Colt with Typescript Transcript of March 11 th Aline Livingstone Broadcast, Mar. 26, 1938 |
| | Colt to Singleton, Mar. 28, 1938 |
| | Singleton to Colt, Mar. 31, 1938 |
| | Colt to Singleton, Apr. 1, 1938 |
| | Clark to Colt, Apr. 6, 1938 |
| | Colt to Singleton, May 3, 1938 |
| | Bayliss to Branch, May 9, 1938 |
| | Bayliss to Branch, May 9, 1938 |
| | Bayliss to Branch, May 25, 1938 |
| | Colt to Bayliss, June 4, 1938 |
| | Colt to Singleton, June 5, 1940 |
| | Colt to Singleton, Feb. 17, 1942 |
| | Singleton to Colt, Feb. 20, 1942 |

Series 4: Sallie Leigh Cole, Correspondence and Notes, 1931-1932, n.d.

Box 1 (Folders 8-11)

The series consists of correspondence and notes relating to Sallie Leigh Cole, a local Richmond artist, and her relationship with the Academy in the early 1930s. In one letter she is invited to

submit her artwork (media unknown) to a traveling exhibition of paintings, drawings and prints. Another letter notifies Cole that she is to serve as a hostess for the opening tea of the second Tournament of Arts and Crafts in 1932. Cole's notes outline the contents of a scrapbook that documented the early history of the Academy; her handwritten Foreword reads, "This scrapbook was assembled by the Art Appreciation Class of Richmond Normal School in the spring of 1931. An attempt has been made to collect and compile data of the history of the Richmond Academy of Arts from its beginning in 1786 through its revival in 1931. The members of the art class working on this scrapbook were"; the Foreword stops there. The scrapbook is no longer extant, although several of the items once glued into the book can be found in Series 1 of the collection. Cole also compiled information on French artist Charles Hoffbauer, who painted the murals "The Four Seasons at the Confederacy" at Battle Abbey in Richmond, which were completed in 1921. The series also includes a few items of unknown origin or relevance to Cole and the Academy, but were kept with the collection as they were discovered along with the other items.

The series is divided into four subseries:

Series 4.1: Correspondence, 1932

Series 4.2: Scrapbook, 1931

Series 4.3: Hoffbauer Notes, 1931, n.d.

Series 4.4: Notes and Other, n.d.

Series 4.1: Correspondence, 1932

Folder Item

- 8 L.W. B[allou?], President, Art Center Club, to Cole, Mar. 10, 1932
- H.L. D[avidson?], Chairman, Sub-Committee on Sculpture, to Cole, Apr. 8, 1932
- Secretary to the Editor, "La Revue Moderne," to Cole, Jul. 19, 1932

Series 4.2: Scrapbook, 1931

Folder Item

- 9 Foreword, Manuscript, 1931
- Contents, Manuscript, 1931
- Contents, Manuscript, 1931
- References, Typescript, 1931

Series 4.3: Hoffbauer Notes, 1931, n.d.

Folder Item

- 10 D[ouglas] S[outhall] Freeman, Editor, *The News Leader*, to Cole, June 2, 1931
- Notes, Manuscript, n.d.
- Notes, Manuscript, n.d.
- An Interview Concerning Hoffbauer, Manuscript, n.d.

| Folder | Item |
|---------------|---|
| 10 | Painting of the Murals, Manuscript, n.d. Notes, Manuscript, n.d. |

Series 4.4: Notes and Other, [1931], n.d.

| Folder | Item |
|---------------|---|
| 11 | “The Richmond Academy of Arts,” Annotated Brochure, [1931] “Picture Study,” Notes, Manuscript, n.d. “A History of Painting” by Henry C. Van Dyke, Notes, Manuscript, n.d. Genealogical Table (mainly of the Jerdone family), Typescript, n.d. “Art for Life’s Sake,” <i>Virginia Journal of Education</i> , n.d. Toy Boat, Print, n.d. |

Series 5: *Southern States Art League Newsletter*, 1941-1942

Box 1 (Folder 12)

The series is comprised of issues of the *Southern States Art League Newsletter*, a prominent regionalist artist organization, headquartered in New Orleans and in operation from 1922-1950, dedicated to promoting the cause and interests of Southern artists and the South through art. Holding annual conventions and exhibitions for almost every year of its 28-year existence, members of the League hailed from thirteen Southern states and the District of Columbia. Active membership was based upon the artist having been born in the South or a resident for two years, and in active practice of an artistic profession. It is unknown how many Richmond artists were members, but the Virginia Museum was a Sustaining Member, and in 1947, the League’s annual exhibition of Southern artists was hung concurrently with the museum’s annual exhibition of Virginia Artists, suggesting a strong link between Richmond and the League.

| Folder | Item |
|---------------|--|
| 12 | Vol. XVII, No. 1, Apr./May 1941 Vol. XVII, No. 3, Sept./Oct./Nov. 1941 Vol. XVII, No. 4, Dec 1941-Jan./Feb. 1942 Vol. XVIII, No. 1, Apr./May 1942 Vol. XVIII, No. 2, June/July/Aug. 1942 |