Eleanor Merritt [Darlington] Collection

Overview

Repository
Archives
The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art
5401 Bay Shore Road,
Sarasota, Florida 34243
archives@ringling.org

Creator
Eleanor Merritt Darlington

Title
Eleanor Merritt [Darlington] Collection

Dates
1950-2019, bulk dates 1990-2009

Physical Description
17 boxes
5.3 linear feet

Language
English

Arrangement
Subject, Chronological

Summary
The Eleanor Merritt Collection holds printed materials, lectures, records, news clippings, audio-visual materials, and correspondence related to Eleanor Merritt’s life-long career as an artist, teacher, and advocate for community arts organizations. Materials focus on Merritt’s life in Long Island, New York and Sarasota, Florida. Her formative years are captured in essays while a college student, planning notebooks as an art history teacher, and printed materials documenting her early artistic career.
Her involvement with the arts community primarily pertains to her work with the Women’s Caucus of Art (WCA), Women of Color (WOCA), the Petticoat Painters, Community Art in Public Places (CAPP), Florida Artists Group, Pierian Spring Academy, and as a docent and board member of The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art. There are a significant number of art history lecture outlines and source materials on African American, Feminist, and minority artists.

**Administrative Information**

**Provenance**
Dr. Lisa Merritt donated this collection to The Ringling and all rights. Gift, 2022. Accessioned as A2022.0004.

**Information about Access**
The Eleanor Merritt Collection can be accessed on site at The Ringling Archives.

**Ownership and Copyright**
Copyright of this work is held by The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art. It is provided here for scholarship, research, and private study. Further use or copying of the work beyond Fair Use may require permission from The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art (http://rightsstatements.org/vocab/InC/1.0/).

**Cite As**

**Processing Note**
The material is arranged by subject in chronological order. Eleanor Merritt’s folder titles have been retained unless otherwise indicated with brackets. Original order has been retained with the exception of grouping together like-materials if found in multiple locations within Merritt’s original files. Binders were disassembled and newspaper clippings were photocopied. Processed by Katie Margerison, 2022.

**Biographical Note**

Artist Eleanor Merritt was born in Harlem, New York on August 17, 1933, and is a first generation Jamaican-American. Her father, Wilbert Lipsett Sr. was a leather goods artist,
Eleanor Merritt was a cobbler, member of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, United Negro Improvement Association, and African Communities League (UNIA-ACL). Merritt’s mother, Lynette Hyman-Lipsett, was the daughter of a jewelry maker of Syrian-Jewish descent and an Afro-Portuguese mother. Both Merritt’s parents lived in Harlem, NY during the Harlem Renaissance.

Merritt attended the prestigious High School for Music and Art in New York and then attended Brooklyn College where she received her B.A. in Art in 1955 and her M.A. in Fine Arts and Education in 1958. While at Brooklyn College, Merritt studied alongside the noted Abstract Expressionists Mark Rothko, Ad Rhinehart, Kurt Seligmann, Burgoyne Diller, and Jimmy Ernst.


Merritt worked on her doctorate in Arts Education at Hofstra University. She became the first African American art teacher for the Nassau County New York School District and the first African American to serve as Chair of their Art Department, a position she held for twenty-seven years. She was an original member of the Long Island Black Artist Association (LIBAA).

Merritt was an advocate within local and national art organizations when she came to Sarasota. Here she focused on creating more equitable opportunities for women artists of color. She was the program manager for the Women’s Caucus for Arts’ Women of Color (WOCA) Slide Project, The Ringling’s first African American female board member, a long-standing member of the Florida Artists Group, a Petticoat Painter, and founded the Women Contemporary Artists group.

Merritt worked within the local community as chairman of the Sarasota Art in Public Places Committee, was a board member of the Arts & Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County, Arts Council and Art Center, Sarasota, and a board member and former President of the Venice Art Center. She served as a docent for 25 years at The Ringling and was involved with the National Museum of Women in the Arts.


Merritt exhibited at the University of Florida, the University of Connecticut, American International College, the Carnegie Endowment Institute in NYC, the Contemporary Art Museum in Jacksonville, Florida, the Polk Museum in Lakeland, the Houston Museum of African American Culture, and the Florida Museum of Art and in galleries in California, Colorado, the U.K., and Shimonoseki, Japan. She had 25 one woman shows.

In 2022 the Estate of Eleanor Merritt donated three works by Merritt to The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art: Here Comes the Sun, Afua’s Father, and Remembrance. This same year, The Ringling established the Eleanor Merritt Fellowship, a one-year paid position designed
to support underrepresented graduate students who have an interest in arts and museum professions.

**Scope and Content Note**
The Eleanor Merritt collection holds printed materials, lectures, records, news clippings, audio visual materials, and correspondence which capture Eleanor Merritt’s life-long career as an artist, teacher, and leader of community arts organizations. This collection documents how Merritt organized and recorded her substantial involvement with the Sarasota County arts community and the growth of her career as an artist and teacher overtime. The collection reflects Merritt’s life-long advocacy for women and women of color in the arts. This interest is apparent in the types of organizations she was involved with, the themes of her artwork, and teaching materials, all highlighting the history of minority artists.

The collection is arranged by subject in chronological order spanning from 1950 – 2019, with the majority of the collection dating after 2000. Material from prior to 1980 pertains to Merritt’s life in New York. Notable in these files are illustrated high school reports of art from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, an art lesson planning book she illustrated while at Westbury High School, and her numerous essays on pedagogical theory while at Hofstra University.

Merritt documented her career, involvement with community art organizations, and her art within the binders in this collection. The binders hold numerous photographs of her artworks, exhibition pamphlets, and related newspaper and magazine clippings, with many arranged in a scrap-book style. Especially present within these files are printed materials relating to the Women Contemporary Artists (WCA). From Merritt’s late career teaching art history, there are a large number of lecture outlines and reference materials on minority artists.

**Related Materials**
- Governing Boards
- Printed Materials

**Subject Headings**
- African American women artists
- Public Art
- Feminism
- Womanism
- Women—History
- Women Artists
- Feminism and the arts
- Art--Study and teaching
- Minority artists
- Minority Women Artists
- Artists
- Art—History
Painting
Acrylic Painting
Jamaican Americans
Jamaican American Women

Contents of the Collection

Box Listing
Box no. Box Title Folder no. Folder Title Description

Box 1 Photographs
Folder 1 Photographs by E. Merritt, Brooklyn College, 1950s

Box 2 Merritt’s Student Work
Folder 1 High School Reports: Art History. 1950.
Folder 2 Educational Certificates and Report Cards, 1947-1954
Folder 3 Hofstra University EDD Program Essays, 1954-1979, 1 of 3
Folder 4 Hofstra University EDD Program Essays, 1954-1979, 2 of 3
Folder 5 Hofstra University EDD Program Essays, 1954-1979, 3 of 3
Folder 6 Landscape, Brooklyn College literary-art magazine, vol.1 no.2, 1955

Box 3 Diplomas 1951, 1955
Object 1 High School of Music and Art Diploma, June 1951
Object 2 Brooklyn College Diploma, February 1, 1955
Folder 1 Brooklyn College, Landscapes, spring 1954

Box 4 Early Teaching Materials
Folder 1 Yearbooks: David Marcus Junior High, 1957, 1959.
Folder 2 Westbury Public Schools Department Report, 1972-1978.
Folder 4 Westbury Public Schools Art Department Curriculum 1973-1974
Folder 6 Art History Course Outline and Plan book, no date.
Folder 7 Westbury School District, Notebook Cover Art, no date.
Folder 8 Teacher’s Daily Plan Book, Westbury High School, no date.

Box 5 Artifacts
Object 1 Second Prize Ribbon, Friends of Lakeview Library, 1974
Object 2 Florida State University President’s Club Nametag, no date.
Object 3 Mini Notebook with Lecture Reminder Notes

Box 6 Personal Materials
Folder 1 Personal Business Cards, Artist Statements, no date.
Folder 2  Artists of Color Invitational, 1950, 2000
Folder 3  Congratulatory Correspondence, 1987-2000
Folder 4  Binder: List of Paintings Sold, 1991-2017
Folder 5  Artist of the Year Award: Publicity, Printed Materials, Congratulatory Correspondence. 1995.
Folder 7  Congratulatory Correspondence, 1996.
Folder 8  Autobiographical Speech, Correspondence, Lecture Outlines for Long Boat Key Art Center, 1997-1998.
Folder 10  Photos of Merritt’s Joint Exhibition at Manatee Community College, Venice, no date.
Folder 11  Slide Film: Artwork of Eleanor Merritt
Folder 13  Obituary News Clipping, 2019.

Box 7  Binder: Exhibition Publicity
Folder 1  Exhibition Publicity: Articles and Reviews 1975-2007
Folder 2  Exhibition Publicity: Articles and Reviews 1992-2007
Folder 3  Exhibition Publicity: Articles and Reviews 2002-2008

Box 8  Binder: Art Exhibitions [of Eleanor Merritt]
Folder 1  Art Exhibitions [of Eleanor Merritt] 1974-2007, 1 of 2

Box 9  Binder: Women Contemporary Artists (WCA) Postcards and Publicity
Folder 1  WCA Postcards and Publicity 2005, 1 of 2
Folder 2  WCA Postcards and Publicity 2005, 2 of 2
Folder 3  WCA Postcards and Publicity 2006, 1 of 3
Folder 4  WCA Postcards and Publicity 2006, 2 of 3
Folder 5  WCA Postcards and Publicity 2006, 3 of 3
Folder 6  WCA Postcards and Publicity 2007, 1 of 3
Folder 7  WCA Postcards and Publicity 2007, 2 of 3
Folder 8  WCA Postcards and Publicity 2007, 3 of 3
Folder 9  WCA Postcards and Publicity 2008

Box 10  Arts Community 1
Folder 1  WCA Informative Essays, Project Descriptions, Correspondence, 1992-2008
Folder 2  WCA Printed Materials, 1989- 1997
Folder 3  WCA Retreat Photos and Pamphlets, 1996, 2008
Folder 4  Universal Slide Company, December 12, 1998-2005
Folder 5  WCA Invitational Exhibition, Printed Materials, 2002-2011
Folder 7  WCA National Florida Chapter, March 1-7, 2007
Folder 8  WCA Exhibition Publicity and Related Materials, 2010-2013

Box 11  Arts Community 2
Folder 1  CAPP Guidelines and Related Papers, 1994, 2000
Folder 2  CAPP Meeting Memorandums and Related Papers, 1995, 1999
Folder 4  First Project at Judicial Center: Richard Haass, May 9, 1997-June 23, 1998
Folder 6  Arts Council: Tim Prentice, Selby Library, August 23, 1998
Folder 7  Press, Media, Public Art, July 4, 1999-March 15, 2000
Folder 8  Art in Public Places, Library Project, Selby Community Foundation, 2000, 1 of 2
Folder 9  Art in Public Places, Library Project, Selby Community Foundation, 2000 2 of 2
Folder 10  Selby Library Project: Bruno Lucchesi, November 14, 2000
Folder 12  CAPP Guidelines and Related Papers, 2002-2004
Folder 13  CAPP Budgets and Agendas, March 26, 2003- January 23, 2006

Box 12  Arts Community 3
Folder 1  Black History Museum Nassau County, 1970, 1971
Folder 2  Project Back Cinema
Folder 3  Manatee County African American Festival of the Arts Program, 1998
Folder 4  Many Faces…Masks Show, Venice Art Center, March 18, 1997- September 16, 1998
Folder 5  Petticoat Painters, 2000-2018, 1 of 4
Folder 6  Petticoat Painters, 2000-2018, 2 of 4
Folder 7  Petticoat Painters, 2000-2018, 3 of 4
Folder 8  Petticoat Painters, 2000-2018, 4 of 4
Folder 9  Multicultural Heritage Group, Spring 2012
Folder 10  Florida Artists Group INC. 2012, 2015

Box 13  Ringling Museum
Folder 2  Ringling Museum Board Guide, 2002
Folder 3  Merritt, Ringling Board of Directors, April 2, 2002
Folder 4  Docent Materials: Koger Ceramics, circa 2003
Folder 5  Docent Materials: Margaret Bourke-White Photography, circa 2003
Folder 7  Ringling Board of Directors Book (annotated), February 2, 2007
Folder 8  Docent Materials: Jacob Lawrence, 2008, 1 of 3
Folder 9  Docent materials: Jacob Lawrence, 2008, 2 of 3
Folder 10 Docent materials: Jacob Lawrence, 2008, 3 of 3
Folder 11 Ringling Museum: Myths and Legends Student Tour Package, no date.
Folder 12 Selected Bibliography: Diversity and Multiculturalism From the Ringling Museum, no date.
Folder 13 Ringling Legacy Society Luncheon Invitation, 2017

Box 14 Late Teaching Materials 1
Folder 1  Black Artists: Catalogs Exhibitions, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, 1 of 2
Folder 2  Black Artists: Catalogs Exhibitions, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, 2 of 2
Folder 5  Black Artists Information: Exhibits, History, Documentation, 1988, 1990s.
Folder 6  Afro American Arts Curriculum, June 1, 1991.
Folder 7  Native American Art Lecture, 1992-1996
Folder 8  Art of West Africa, October 14, 1992- April 12, 1994
Folder 9  Kwanza, December 11, 1194 – 2013
Folder 10 Beacon: South African Newspaper, September 24, 1996
Folder 11 African American Artists Lecture, November 13, 2008- February 2, 2016, 1 of 2
Folder 12 African American Artists Lecture, November 13, 2008- February 2, 2016, 2 of 2

Box 15 Late Teaching Materials 2
Folder 1  Pierian Academy Course Lists, 2000, 2002, 2009
Folder 2  Pierian Academy Lecture 1: Elder Hostel, 2009
Folder 3  Pierian Academy Lecture 2: Post Impressionism, 2009
Folder 4  Pierian Academy Lecture 3, 2009
Folder 5  Pierian Academy Lecture 4, 2009
Folder 6  Pierian Academy Lecture 5, 2009
Folder 7  Feminist Art Lecture 1, 2010
Folder 8  Feminist Art Lecture 2, 2010
Folder 9  Feminist Art Lecture 3, 2010
Folder 10 Feminist Art Lecture 4, 2010
Folder 11 Minority Artists in the Mainstream Art World Lectures, Spring 2016
Folder 12 What is Art? 2019
Folder 13 Heritage Lecture, no date.
Folder 14 Latina Artists, no date.
Folder 15 Monoprint Workshop, no date
Folder 16 Spanish Artists: Velazquez-Picasso, no date
Folder 17 Janet Morgan Seminar, no date
Folder 18  Art History Slide Film, no date
Folder 19  Art History Slide Film, no date
Folder 20  Asian Women Artists, 20th Century, no date

Box 16 Publications and Printed Materials
Folder 1  *Art Seven Eight Nine Ten: Curriculum Bulletin Number 5*, The Board of Education of the City of New York, 1955
Folder 2  Printed Materials, 1982-2018
Folder 3  Arts Council of Great Britain, 1990-1992
Folder 4  A Brief History of the John and Mable Ringling Museum, 2003
Folder 5  Images of America: Sarasota 1940-2005, 2005
Folder 6  National Association of Women Artists Application, March 1, 2013
Folder 7  *Art Uptown Gallery 35th Anniversary*, Uptown Gallery Sarasota, 2015

Box 17 Oversized Printed Material
Folder 2  Clipping, *West Coast Woman*, May 1996