CONSTANCE E. FORSYTH COLLECTION, CA. 1900–2002

Collection Information

Biographical Sketch

Scope and Content Note

Series Contents

Processed by

Janet Schmidt and Dorothy A. Nicholson
June 2012
revised August 2017

Manuscript and Visual Collections Department
William Henry Smith Memorial Library
Indiana Historical Society
450 West Ohio Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

www.indianahistory.org
COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: Manuscript Materials: 10 document cases

Visual Materials: 1 box of photographs, 5 boxes of graphics, 1 OVA graphics box, 1 OVB graphics box, 1 OVC graphics box, 3 unframed paintings in flat file storage, 1 framed painting

COLLECTION DATES: Ca. 1900–2002

PROVENANCE: Susan Forsyth Selby, Austin, Texas

RESTRICTIONS: The framed painting may be viewed, library staff must consult the Paintings Database for the storage location

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS: William Forsyth Papers, 1863–1985 (M 0691)

Evelyn Forsyth Selby Memoirs (SC 2208)

Robert Selby and Forsyth Family Collection (M 0985)


NOTES:
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Constance E. Forsyth (Aug. 18, 1903–Jan. 22, 1987) was the second daughter of William and Alice Forsyth. Like her parents, Constance possessed a strong interest in art from a young age and is most noted for her lithographs and etchings. She also painted in watercolors and oils. A member of several arts organizations, she exhibited widely and her work won recognition in Indiana and throughout the country.

Constance attended Butler and graduated with a B.A. degree in Chemistry in 1925. Afterwards she studied art at the John Herron Art Institute and received a diploma in 1929. While at Herron she won a scholarship to attend the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in the late 1920s. It was there that her enthusiasm for printmaking began. Her summers of 1932 and 1934 were spent at the Broadmoor Art Academy in Colorado where she perfected her lithographic skills.

She taught art at the John Herron Art Institute from 1931 to 1935 and took education courses at Butler University in 1937. After this she taught art at Western College in Oxford, Ohio. In 1940 she was the first woman hired in the art department at the University of Texas in Austin. She established a print making program there and taught until she retired as Professor Emeritus of Art in 1973. While at the University of Texas she supervised graduate students and served on committees, gave lectures and demonstrations on printmaking outside the university, and served on art juries.

Her style is characterized by semiabstract forms found in nature such as waves, mountains, and clouds. Her watercolors were painted with bright earthy colors. Early on her prints were primarily lithographs but by the 1940s she combined aquatint, dry point, and lithographic processes to achieve a variety in the textures and tones. In her later work she experimented with collage using torn, colored paper, combined with paint.

Always close to her family she spent vacations with them in Irvington. After the death of her mother Alice and sister Dorothy she vacationed with her sister Evelyn and Robert Selby at their home in New Jersey. After Robert Selby retired in 1975 the couple and Constance built a home together in Austin, Texas.

Sources:

Materials in the collection

Internet Resources: The Handbook of Texas Online: Forsyth, Constance
General Collection: N6530.16 N5 2004
SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The materials in the collection focus on the art career of Constance Forsyth and pertain mostly to her career while at the University of Texas. There are few photographs in the collection.

**Series 1:** Education and Teaching Career, 1925–2002 begins with her formative years as a student and teacher in Indiana and concludes with her retirement at the University of Texas. It includes professional correspondence, U. of T. faculty meetings, and clippings.

**Series 2:** Art Career and Exhibits, 1926–1988 includes portrait lists, exhibitions she participated in, art supplies, and clippings.

**Series 3:** Professional Organizations, 1941–1987 includes some correspondence.

**Series 4:** Indiana Arts Organizations, 1935–1991 includes programs and catalogs.

**Series 5:** Personal Items and Ephemera, ca. 1905–1985 includes some of her early childhood drawings, paper dolls, and valentines. There are some college textbooks with her sketches and doodles in the margins, address books, a few recipes, and clippings about friends.

**Series 6:** Artists, Galleries, and Museums, 1929–1986 contains correspondence and printed materials on artists who were friends and acquaintances of Constance. There are also printed invitations to different art shows that Constance was invited to and perhaps knew the artists.

**Series 7:** Sketchbooks, 1933–1984 begins with drawings from her Broadmoor Art Academy days, includes figure studies at the University of Texas, and landscape sketches done on various trips. Many of her cloud sketches were drawn during airplane flights.

**Series 8:** Watercolors and Paintings: most have titles but none are dated. They show clouds, mountains, and landscapes.
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Series 1: Education and Teaching Career, 1925–2002

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Biographical information, University of Texas, 1940–1978

Constance Forsyth and University of Texas Art Department faculty, ca. 1940, ca. 1960

Constance Forsyth with friends, 1963

John Herron Art Institute transcript, 1925–1929


Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts Catalogues, Annual Water Color Exhibitions, 1936, 1948, 1959

Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts correspondence, 1976, 1983

The Broadmoor Art Academy, Colorado Springs, Summer School catalog 1932

The Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, 1936 Summer School catalog, 3 postcards, clipping

Butler University Transcript, High School License to Teach, 1937

Texas Western College (El Paso) bulletins 1950, 51, 53, class schedules 1950

University of Texas appointment letters, 1940–1986

University of Texas retirement, 1973

CONTAINER

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Box 1, Folder 2

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Box 1, Folder 1

Photographs:

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General Faculty Meeting, 1946  
Standing Committees 1948–1949  
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University of Texas, Staff Directory, 1961–1962  
U.T. Component Institutions  
U.T. Record, Summer & Fall, 1958  
Plan of Auditorium and Main Building  
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University of Texas Cultural Arts programs  
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University of Texas: “Watercolors”  
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University of Texas, Department of Art courses  
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“Alcalde” University of Texas alumni magazine 1973  
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University of Texas, correspondence received,  
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University of Texas, Department of Art, Faculty Minutes, 1940, 1941  
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University of Texas, Department of Art, Faculty Minutes, n.d.  
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University of Texas, Department of Art, 1963–1984  
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University of Texas, Department of Art Faculty Exhibits, 1948–1979  
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University of Texas, Art Faculty Shows, 1956–2002  
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University of Texas Department of Art, Graduate Students, 1961–1973  
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*Celtic Art* by George Bain, prepared for use in schools and for art students, artists, craftsmen, etc., 1945 [pamphlets on lettering, zoomorphics, and key patterns]

Fort Dix 4th annual national Armed Forces Occupational Therapy and Hobby Competition at Philmont, Pa. photographs and clipping, ca. 1950


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- Art Exhibits: 1943, 1944, 1945
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Children’s Book: *The Friends*, by Esther Buffler,
illustrated by Constance Forsyth, 1951
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Pamphlets:
*Wood for Artists and Engravers*, J. Johnson & Co.,
N.Y. ca. 1930

*Price List of Tools for Photo and Wood Engravers*,
Edward C. Muller, N.Y., ca. 1930
[also notes on metal plate and stone lithography, lists
of supplies, orders for supplies, receipts, and
correspondence 1940–1965]

Newspaper clippings: 1926–1960s, n.d.
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Life Magazine, February 24, 1947
Saturday Evening Post February 15, 1947 and other magazine articles saved by Constance


Ephemera:
“Betty Wales Dresses” [catalog from H.P. Wasson & Co., ca. 1920]
“Curtis Marine Trophy Race” program, 1928 [Sterling silver pattern brochures]

A Practical Spanish Grammar...1918
[Constance Forsyth’s textbook while at Butler filled with drawings]

The Complete Poetical Works of Robert Browning...1921 [Constance Forsyth’s textbook while at Butler filled with drawings]

General Chemistry for Colleges...1921
[Constance Forsyth’s textbook while at Butler filled with drawings]

Handbook of Chemistry and Physics...1922
[Constance Forsyth’s textbook while at Butler filled with drawings]

Rudyard Kipling's Verse: Definitive Edition
Doubleday, Doran and Co., Inc. New York, 1940

Outlines of Historical Geology
by Charles Schuchert and Carl O. Dunbar, 1946

An Outline of First Year College Chemistry
John R. Lewis, 1945

The American College Dictionary
Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1953
The Frontiers Ahead
E.K. Gaylord [guest lecturer at the Colorado College Summer Science Seminar, 1956]


Still Quiet on the Western Front: Fifty Years Later
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Tish Disposes of a Body, n.d.
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Charles Umlauf, American sculptor: artist’s statement, clippings, shows, and correspondence with Constance, 1963–1985

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Series 8: Constance Forsyth Watercolors and Paintings

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“Bare Trees” 22 ½ x 15 ½ inches

CONTAINER

“Bare Trees” 22 ½ x 15 ½ inches

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“Landscape (Wash)” 15 ½ x 22 ½ inches

OVC Graphics:

Box 1, Folder 2

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OVC Graphics:

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“Mountain” 15 ½ x 22 inches

OVC Graphics:

Box 1, Folder 4

“Black Hill” 13 ¾ x 22 ½ inches

OVC Graphics:

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[2 untitled cloud studies]

“Gray Skyline”

OVB Graphics:

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“Cloud Outline”

“Gray Haze”

11 x 15 inches

“Orange Mountain”

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“Distant Mountains”

“Lavender Peak”

“Yellow Hills”

12 x 16 inches

“Yellow and Black Hill” 13 ¾ x 18 ½ inches

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OVB Graphics:

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OVC Graphics:

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“Moving Clouds” 15 ½ x 22 inches

OVC Graphics:

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OVC Graphics:  
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OVC Graphics:  
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OVC Graphics:  
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“Rolling Clouds” 13 ¼ x 22 ¼ inches  
OVC Graphics:  
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*Lilies: Facet of Summer*, ca. 1950s  
Watercolor on paper  
19 x 25 in., 35 in. x 40 ½ in. (framed)  
Painting given in memory of Dorothy Forsyth and Constance Forsyth by Susan Forsyth Selby Sklar and Rachel and Benjamin Sklar  
Hanging Storage: Consult Paintings Database for location

*Portrait of Forrest F. Stark*  
Gouache portrait painting on illustration board  
22 x 18 in.  
Oil painting portrait on illustration board  
28 ½ x 23 ¾ in.  
[possible portrait of Thomas Hart Benton, unfinished, according to donor Constance worked with him when he painted the I.U. mural]  
Oversize Graphics:  
Folder 1  
Flat File 28-o

[still life]  
Oil painting on Masonite  
29 ¾ x 23 ¾ in.  
Oversize Graphics:  
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Flat File 28-o