

Virginia Banks papers, 1881-1980

Overview of the Collection

Creator	Banks, Virginia, 1920-1985
Title	Virginia Banks papers
Dates	1881-1980 (inclusive) 1881 1980
Quantity	9.34 cubic feet (10 boxes, 1 oversize folder, and 1 folder)
Collection Number	2602
Summary	Northwest painter and art teacher.
Repository	University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections Special Collections University of Washington Libraries Box 352900 Seattle, WA 98195-2900 Telephone: 206-543-1929 Fax: 206-543-1931 speccoll@uw.edu
Access Restrictions	The papers are open to all users.
Languages	English
Sponsor	Funding for encoding this finding aid was partially provided through a grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Biographical Note

Virginia Banks (1920 – 1985) was a well-known Northwest artist based in Seattle. Born in Norwood, Massachusetts, she received her bachelors degree from Smith College in 1941, and a master of arts from the University of Iowa in 1944. Banks married psychiatrist Arthur W. Freidinger in January 1946 and moved with him to Seattle in 1948. She resided in various North American states in the period 1952-1958, including Massachusetts, Iowa, Virginia and Connecticut. She held major exhibitions at galleries in New York City, including the Grand Central Moderns during this time.

Virginia Banks returned to Seattle in 1958, and became part of the art scene which included artist Mark Tobey and gallery owners Otto Seligman and Zoe Dusanne. Banks held shows of her work in Seattle at museums and galleries including the Seattle Art Museum and the Foster/White Gallery, while continuing to exhibit on the East coast. She created paintings in watercolor and oils, and also worked with graphic media and collage. Her influences included Northwest Indian and Near Eastern art, as well as the work of contemporary figures such as Mark Tobey.

Banks taught art for much of her career, working at schools including the State University of Iowa (1942-47), the University of Buffalo, New York (1947-48), and the Cornish Art School in Seattle, Washington (1951-52). Virginia Banks died at her home in Seattle on February 7, 1985.

Content Description

Biographical information, correspondence, exhibition catalogs, guestbooks, artwork, transcript, photographs, slides, scrapbooks, film, and a 1974 tape-recorded oral history interview with Banks (1 sound tape reel, approximately 120 minutes, with transcript) about her career. Individuals discussed in the interview include: Mark Tobey, Pehr Hallsten, Guy Anderson, Morris Graves, Zoe Dusanne, Richard E. Fuller, Kenneth Callahan, Patricia K. Nicholson, Otto Seligman, Walter Isaacs, Paul Brach, Leo Kenney, and James W. Washington.

Use of the Collection

Restrictions on Use

The creator's literary rights have been transferred to the University of Washington Libraries.

Administrative Information

Arrangement

Organized into 3 accessions:

Accession No. 2602-001, Oral history interview with Virginia Banks, 1974

Accession No. 2602-002, Virginia Banks papers, 1934-1981

Accession No. 2602-003, Virginia Banks papers, 1881-1980

Acquisition Information

Received from various donors in 3 separate accessions in 1974, 1988, and 2005.

Processing Note

Portions of the papers are minimally processed. Contact Special Collections, University of Washington Libraries for details.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Accession No. 2602-001: Oral history interview with Virginia Banks, 1974

0.03 cubic foot, including 1 sound tape reel and 1 transcript

Scope and Content: Tape recorded oral history interview conducted by William Hoppe on 21 May 1974; includes a transcript of the interview.

The interview chronicles Banks's entire career as a painter and includes her memoirs of the relationships of various artists, museums, and galleries of the Northwest; technical information; discussions of aesthetics; and myriad subjects in the art milieu. Individuals discussed in the interview include: Mark Tobey, Pehr Hallsten, Guy Anderson, Morris Graves, Zoe Dusanne, Richard E. Fuller, Kenneth Callahan, Patricia K. Nicholson, Otto Seligman, Walter Isaacs, Paul Brach, Leo Kenney, and James W. Washington.

Restrictions on Access: The papers are open to all users.

Acquisition Info: Received from the Henry Art Gallery, January 1, 1974.

Processing Info: Processed in 1999.

Accession No. 2602-002: Virginia Banks papers, 1934-1981

7 cubic feet (7 boxes)

Scope and Content: The Virginia Banks Papers comprise 7 cubic feet of records, spanning the period 1934-1981. The papers reflect Banks' work as an artist, and also her relations with family and friends and colleagues in the art world.

Incoming letters are arranged alphabetically by correspondent, and contain evidence of Banks' contacts and dealings with art galleries and museums both in Seattle and on the East coast. These include the Grand Central Art Gallery in New York City, the Foster/White Gallery in Seattle and the Seattle Art Museum. Many letters contain specific details regarding exhibit arrangement for Banks' work, and often contain details of the titles and cost of pieces displayed at different exhibitions. A significant number relate to her 'one-man' shows in New York during the 1950s. A 1953 letter from gallery owner Zoe Dusanne discusses sales of Banks' work, and one from Otto Seligman concerns arrangements for an exhibition in 1959. Letters reflect also Banks' association with the Foster/White Gallery between 1977 and 1983.

A large amount of correspondence is personal or social in nature. Banks' sister, Otilie Mildred. Banks, and friends Mary Almart, Zella May Case, Betty Lou Dingwall, Bill Hancock and Erna S. Tilley are major correspondents. Incoming letters spanning the period 1960-81 reflect Banks' close friendship with the artist Windsor Utley and his wife Josephine. Some of these contain evidence of 'Windsor's Castle', constructed in 1964-65 on Salt Spring Island, British Columbia, and designed by Utley and architect John Di Casti.

Correspondence from artist colleagues including Mark Tobey, Guy Anderson and Windsor Utley, together with poet Theodore Roethke, consists of a few scattered items only. Letters from higher education institutes including the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy and the State University of Iowa reflect also Banks' work as an art instructor from ca. 1948-1958.

Outgoing correspondence is arranged chronologically. Although the majority of letters are to family members and friends, some of the early letters document Banks' applications for college and for teaching positions. A great many of the letters from the 1950s are addressed to Elena Serton and Colette Roberts at the Grand Central Gallery in New York, and concern arrangements for Banks' exhibitions, including lists of titles, and prices. These include some of Banks' commentary on specific works. Letters to Lynn Lagerstrom at the Grand Central Moderns in 1950 contain commentary on Banks work, and discuss Tobey's reactions to her work. A large amount of correspondence from the 1960s and 1970s documents Bank's relations with family members, including her sister Otilie Banks. Her involvement with the Seattle art scene during this period is reflected also in letters documenting the Seattle art community, and individuals such as gallery owner Zoe Dusanne.

'Lists, Exhibits and Exhibitions' include lists of artworks exhibited at galleries including the Grand Central Moderns (1952) in New York, and the Foster/White Gallery (1980) and the Zoe Dusanne Gallery in Seattle.

The accession contains ephemera relating to a broad range of exhibitions displaying Banks' work. This includes programs, brochures and listings of artwork for shows at the Grand Central Moderns (1950s

and 1962), the Foster/White Gallery (1952) and the Seattle Art Museum (1983). The series includes biographical information for Virginia Banks, and various reviews of her art exhibitions in New York.

Two Studio Books document sales of Banks' artwork, listing title of work sold, name of collector, agent, and some prices during the period 1958-1981. Financial records dated 1952-1980 include sales receipts, also with some prices for Banks' work.

Speeches and writings include Banks' college and teaching notes, and also some writings about art composition and history. The series includes a paper entitled, 'Reflections of Mark Tobey's teachings' (1978), describing some aspects of the Seattle art scene from her arrival onwards, and Tobey's influence on her work. Reviews of Banks' work in the 1950s are also included.

The accession contains photographs of Banks' work spanning the period ca. 1937-63, the majority of which are dated and titled. Scrapbooks contain clippings, programs and some photographs reflecting Banks' work through the period ca. 1940-1980. Clippings contain also various art-related articles and also reviews of Banks' work, spanning the period ca. 1945-1982. There are also three folders containing sketches and drawings by Banks (1960-62) and a folder of her Christmas card designs (1936-1965).

Both incoming correspondence and art-related ephemera contain material relating to the World's Fair held in Seattle in 1962. Letters contain evidence of the loan of Banks' work, 'Shadows of Folding Postcards' for inclusion in an exhibition of Northwestern art at the 21st Century Exposition. Papers in ephemera also indicate Banks' role as chairman of the Exhibit Programs Committee for the American Association for the United Nations Exhibit (Seattle Chapter).

The accession contains three subject-related series. The first contains papers regarding the Seattle Chapter of the Artists' Equity Association, of which Banks and artists including Mark Tobey were members. These reflect the founding of the chapter in 1950 and the aims of the organization. The second subject series contains various reviews and biographical information sent by Banks to Gloria B. Peck for incorporation in G.G. Albi and Gloria B. Peck. The Artists of the Puget Sound (1962). A third subject series reflects community-related meetings and social events in the 'Laurelhurst Neighborhood', where Banks was resident with her husband Arthur Freidinger from 1958 onwards.

The accession reflects Banks' continuing association with the schools and colleges she attended, and includes correspondence and ephemera relating in particular to Dana Hall School in Wellesley, Massachusetts. A separate subgroup has been created for papers relating to the Smith College Club of Seattle. These reflect Banks' involvement in fundraising and social activities with Smith College alumni from the 1950s through the 1970s. The subgroup has been processed to the series level and includes correspondence, newsletters and publications.

Related materials held at the University of Washington Libraries include an oral history interview with Virginia Banks, conducted by Bill Hoppe in May 1974 (Accession Number 2602-001). This contains Banks' reflections on the art scene in Seattle during the 1950s, and discussion of the life and work of individuals including Mark Tobey, Otto Seligman and Zoe Dusanne.

[View inventory/container list for this accession](#)

Restrictions on Access: The papers are open to all users.

Acquisition Info: Received from the Estate of Virginia Banks, February 25, 1988.

Processing Info: Processed in 2000.

Accession No. 2602-003: Virginia Banks papers, 1881-1980

2.31 cubic feet (3 boxes and 1 oversize folder)

Arrangement: Organized into three series: Correspondence, Artwork, and Photographs.

Scope and Content: Consists of correspondence, artwork, and photographs, 1881-1980.

Includes letters from Banks's husband, Arthur Freidinger, to "Mouse" (Virginia Banks), incoming correspondence to Banks and her husband, Banks and Freidinger family photographs, a portfolio of Banks's childhood drawings, a Banks oil painting, and a Banks mixed media art work.

Restrictions on Access: The papers are open to all users.

Acquisition Info: Received from Dr. Arthur Freidinger c/o Sunna Kraushaar, November 3, 2005.

Processing Info: Minimally processed.

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Correspondence		
Box	Accession	
1	2602-003 Art Freidinger to Virginia Banks 2 folders	1945-1949
1	2602-003 Incoming letters to Art and Virginia Banks	1943-1955
Artwork		
Box	Accession	
1	2602-003 <i>Daydream</i> oil painting	1953
1	2602-003 Untitled oil painting	undated
Box:Oversize		
3	2602-003 ... <i>in the Field</i> Mixed Media Artwork	1959
3	2602-003 Banks childhood drawings, paintings, and Christmas cards	1928-1933
Folder:Oversize		
1	2602-003 Untitled painting on board	undated
Photographs		

Container(s)	Description	Dates
Box	Accession	
1	2602-003 Freidinger family photographs 2 folders <u>Scope and Content:</u> Several hundred portraits and group photos of members of the Freidinger family, including several visits to national parks in the 1930s and trips to Lebanon. Includes two volumes (1950, 1952) of <i>The Cedar Bough</i> , a publication issued by the Syria-Lebanon Mission of the Presbyterian Church.	1920-1969
1	2602-003 Banks family photographs 4 folders <u>Scope and Content:</u> Several hundred portraits and group photos of members of the Banks family and various family homes and cottages in Maine and Massachusetts. Includes a small number of photographs of Virginia Banks's work as a painter. Also includes several photocopies of forms demonstrating eligibility for membership in the Society of Mayflower Descendants and a genealogical chart for the Henry Lewis Banks family.	1881-1980
Box:Oversize		
2	2602-003 Virginia Banks photographs <u>Scope and Content:</u> Twenty-two black-and-white photographs of Virginia Banks at a campfire party, her studio in Buffalo, New York, and at work in her studio in Seattle. Also includes two portraits of Banks family members.	circa 1920s-1963
2	2602-003 Photograph album <u>Scope and Content:</u> Photographs of Virginia and Art Banks's wedding in Massachusetts and trips to Colorado, the University of Iowa, and Maine.	Summer 1945
2	2602-003 Banks family portrait album <u>Scope and Content:</u> Portraits of Virginia Banks and Henry Lewis Banks.	1936-1950

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Art--Collectors and collecting--Washington (State)

Painters--Washington (State)

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<http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv85170>

Painting, American--20th century
Women painters--Washington (State)
Women painters--Washington (State)--Archives

Personal Names :

Anderson, Guy, 1906-1998
Banks, Virginia, 1920-1985--Archives
Brach, Paul, 1924-2007
Callahan, Kenneth, 1905-1986
Dusanne, Zoe, 1884-1972
Fuller, Richard E. (Richard Eugene), 1897-1976
Graves, Morris, 1910-2001
Hallsten, Pehr, -1965
Isaacs, Walter
Kenney, Leo, 1925-2001
Nicholson, Patricia Kirkpatrick, 1893-1978
Seligman, Otto D., 1890-1966
Tobey, Mark
Washington, James W., 1911-2000

Form or Genre Terms :

correspondence
Exhibition catalogs
Motion picture film
Photographs
Scrapbooks
Slides (Photography)
Sound recordings
transcripts

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Personal Papers/Corporate Records (University of Washington)

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