Nancy Leitch, 1915-2008

Papers, ca. 1931-1994
9 linear ft.

Acquisition Number: 2007-04
Acquisition: Items were given to the Archives in June 2007 by Ms. Leitch’s daughter, Valerie Armini.
Access: Access to the collection is unrestricted
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Preferred Citation: Nancy Leitch Papers, Cranbrook Archives, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan
Photographs: Boxes 13-15 (Oversized) and in the Photograph Special File
Processing: Candi Wilson, 2008
Biography

Nancy Leitch was born 19 Jan 1915 in Pittsburgh, PA, to Robert L. and Anna C. (Miller) Leitch. At the age of twelve, Leitch began her formal study of fine art under Christian Walter, President of the Associated Artists of Pittsburgh. As a high school student she won many awards in local and national competitions for her paintings and sculpture, including a scholarship to attend the Carnegie Institute of Technology. During her time there she befriended Eliza Miller and Janet de Coux with whom she would maintain lifelong friendships. In 1936, she graduated with a bachelor’s degree in sculpture from Carnegie Institute of Technology, College of Fine Arts. After graduation Leitch continued to live in the Pittsburgh area and maintain a sculpture studio. Her favorite subjects were animals of all kinds, but particularly horses and dogs. She continued to exhibit energetically and won many awards including a Tuition Grant to attend the Cranbrook Academy of Art.

In 1943, Leitch attended Cranbrook to study sculpture with Carl Milles, and was also a student of Maija Grotell, Howard Dearstyne, and Ernest Scheyer. She counted Jon Johnson, Margueritte Kimball, Signe Midelfars, Ruth Robinson, George Koren, Frances Ericsson, and Bob Lohman among her friends during this time. After finishing her first year in the program she was asked to return as Maija Grotell’s studio assistant, a position that she treasured and reflected upon often in her later years. Two large pieces that she created during those years, Rocky Mountain Goat and Rhinoceros, were purchased by Carl Milles for permanent addition to his home at Millesgarden. Several letters from her correspondence with Milles can be found at Millesgarden as well. Leitch left Cranbrook in 1945 to return to her family in Pittsburgh. She received her MFA in Ceramic Sculpture from Cranbrook in 1946.

In 1948, Leitch married Urban Hoffman in Pittsburgh and a year later gave birth to a daughter, Valerie. The marriage did not last very long and Leitch soon began teaching art courses at the Carnegie Institute of Technology. In 1952, she moved with her immediate family to Newport News, Virginia and took a position in the Warwick High School art department where she developed an interest in weaving. During her eight years there she continued to work on her art and exhibit, in addition to pursuing courses in education and art at the College of William & Mary, University of Virginia, and the Hampton Institute.

Leitch became the assistant art professor at Longwood College in Farmville, Virginia in 1961. Her courses focused on art history and she received a Ford Foundation fellowship in 1964 for the study of Asian art, which allowed her to attend several courses and exhibitions on the subject. During her years at Longwood, she had numerous exhibitions, commissions, and several one-woman shows. She retired with the title of professor in 1977.
Even in her retirement, Leitch remained active in her professional work exhibiting and taking commissions and she continued to pursue her educational interests by auditing geology and archaeology courses at Longwood. In 1988, Nancy Leitch was diagnosed with cancer and later, Alzheimer’s. She passed away 24 Mar 2008 at the age of 93.

**Scope and Content of Collection**

The collection documents Nancy Leitch’s life as a student, artist, and art instructor and are organized into the following six series: BIOGRAPHICAL; PROFESSIONAL; RESEARCH; OVERSIZED; IMAGES; and REALIA. The folders are arranged chronologically and/or alphabetically within each series; the documents within the folders are arranged chronologically and/or alphabetically where appropriate.

The original order of Leitch’s papers reflected her intense interest in representing her past. In the 1980s and 1990s she began to regularly review her papers and reorganized them by subjects, adding notations, dates and making multiple photocopies. The large amount of duplicate of materials within this collection necessitated the weeding of multiple photocopies in favor of retaining the original materials. Some of the materials in the collection arrived in file folders with original headings by Leitch. However, since she had rearranged the papers so many times while in failing health, the folder label often did not reflect the nature of the materials inside the folder. Any folder headings used here that were originally assigned to the materials by Leitch are designated by quotations.

**Series I. Biographical (Boxes 1-4):** This series contains materials related to the personal life of Nancy Leitch and includes the sub-series Correspondence and Education. Among the materials represented here are diaries and notebooks, correspondence, coursework, and clippings. Leitch’s experience at Cranbrook is documented within the Education sub-series. Her years at Cranbrook left a deep impression on her and she often reflected in her writings on her time at the school during WWII and the impact her instructors, Carl Milles and Maija Grotell, left upon her life. The notebooks and writings within this series provide detailed and personal descriptions of life at Cranbrook Academy of Art during those years.

**Series II. Professional (Boxes 4-7):** This series contains materials relating to Nancy Leitch’s career as a professional artist and art teacher. Two sub-series, Correspondence and Longwood, contain correspondence directly relating to her professional work and materials from her long tenure at Longwood College. Other materials in this series include clippings, commission details, exhibition inventories, announcements, programs, and resumes.

**Series III. Research (Boxes 7-10):** This series contains materials collected by Nancy Leitch from her childhood up through the late eighties and includes various clippings, photocopies, sketches, notebooks, writings, publications, and ephemera primarily relating to her interests in art and wildlife. The majority of the material in this series fell into three different sub-series relating to Art, Dogs, and Horses. Leitch drew on these collected
materials for developing ideas for her own artwork, commissions and lectures. She accumulated a large amount of clippings over the years and it was necessary to weed the collection to obtain a representative sample of the clippings. Many of the sketchbooks within this series have notes and drawings left by Leitch in between the pages. These items were left in place within the notebooks in order to maintain their context. Several headings originally designated by Leitch have been used in the Horses sub-series and are written in quotations.

Series IV. Images (Boxes 11-12 and Photograph Special File): The albums, photographs and slides pertain to Nancy Leitch’s personal life, Cranbrook, artwork, and animals. Although many of the materials in the albums and scrapbooks have notes and/or correspondence on the back, the albums were left intact in order to illustrate Leitch’s unique arrangement of the materials. The images, negatives and slides are housed within the Photograph Special Collection (Envelopes 1-7 and NL1-23).

Series X. Oversized (Boxes 13-15): This series contains matted photographs and drawings in addition to clippings and a scrapbook.

Series XI. Realia (Box 14): This series contains some original sculptural works by Leitch in wood, metal, and plaster.
SERIES I. BIOGRAPHICAL

Box 1

1. Diary, c. 1940
2. Ephemera
3. Financial Records
4. Notebook, c. 1990s
6. Planner, 1988

Subseries: Correspondence
7. Family, 1938, 1941-1945
9. Undated
10. 1940-1947

Box 2

2. 1970-1974
3. 1980-1989
4. 1991-1995

Subseries: Education
5. Peabody High School - Clippings
6. Peabody High School - The Civitan
7. Peabody High School – Ephemera
8. Peabody High School - The Peabody
9. Carnegie Institute of Technology - Clippings, 1933-1936
11. Carnegie Institute of Technology – Coursework - History of Architecture, Ancient Greece
13. Carnegie Institute of Technology – Coursework - History of Art, Egypt
14. Carnegie Institute of Technology- Coursework - History of Art, Ornament

Box 3

3. Carnegie Institute of Technology - Ephemera
4. Carnegie Institute of Technology - Publications
5. Carnegie Institute of Technology - Yearbook
6. Cranbrook – Clippings, 1943-1945
7. Cranbrook - Ephemera - Carl Milles
8. Cranbrook - Ephemera - General
9. Cranbrook - Notes- Glaze Formulas - Maija Grotell
11. Cranbrook – Notebook

Box 4

1. Cranbrook- Thesis
2. Cranbrook- Writings
4. Hampton Institute Virginia, 1964
5. University of Virginia, 1964

SERIES II. PROFESSIONAL

6. Certification
7. Clippings, 1937-1942
8. Clippings, 1945-1952
12. Commission- Riverside Hospital
13. Conferences
14. Exhibitions

Box 5

1. Exhibitions - Announcements
2. Exhibitions - Inventories
3. Exhibitions - Programs
4. Exhibitions - Programs, Associated Artists of Pittsburgh, 1937, 1941-1944, 1946

Box 6

1. Photocopies – Sculpture Photos
2. Resumes

Subseries: Correspondence
3. Cranbrook, 1981
5. Grötell, Maija, Undated
6. Grötell, Maija, 1944-1959
9. Milles, Carl, 1945-1948
11. Undated
12. 1930-1939
13. 1941-1948
14. 1950-1956

Box 7

1. 1960-1969
2. 1970-1979
3. 1989-1993

Subseries: Longwood

5. Faculty Bulletins and Notes
6. Lecture notes
7. News Releases
8. Personnel Reports
9. Publications
10. Retirement, 1977

SERIES III. RESEARCH

11. Clippings – Animals

Box 8

1. Clippings - Birds
2. Photocopies - Fossils
3. Sketchbook
4. Sketchbook
5. Sketchbook
6. Sketchbook
7. Sketchbook
8. Sketchbook
9. Sketches

Box 9

1. Sketches

Subseries: Art

2. Clippings
3. Notes - General
4. Notes - Chinese Art
5. Notebooks, 1992
6. Postcards
7. Publications - Chinese Art
8. Thesis - Ann Curry
9. Writings
10. Writings – Art Education
11. Writings - William Leighton Leitch

Box 10
Subseries: Dogs
1. Clippings
2. Writings

Subseries: Horses
3. Clippings - General
4. Clippings - General
5. Clippings - Cowboys
6. Clippings - “Jumpers”
7. Clippings - “Lippizans”
8. Clippings - “Man O’ War”
9. Clippings - “Pittsburgh & Horses”
10. Clippings - “Secretariat and Riva Ridge”
11. Clippings - Representations in art
12. Ephemera
13. Writings - General
14. Writings - “Hoof Prints in the Sands of Time”

Box 11
SERIES IV. IMAGES
1. Album - General
2. Album - “The Horse”

Box 12
1. Scrapbook – Chinese Art

Envelopes, Photograph Special File (filed under 2007-04)
1. Artwork
2. Artwork – Cranbrook
3. Biographical
4. Biographical, cont.
5. Cranbrook
6. Research – Horses
7. Research – Various Subjects
SERIES IV. OVERSIZED

Box 13
1. Certificates, 1915-1935 (Non-inclusive)
2. Clippings – Animals
3. Clippings – “Great Men Heads”
4. Scrapbook, c.1930s

Box 14
1. Photographs – Sculpture
2. Photographs – Sculpture, cont.

Box 15
1. Drawings – Animals
2. Drawings – Animals, cont.
3. Drawings – Animals, cont.
4. Exhibit Announcement
5. Notes – Art

SERIES X. REALIA
Index

Dearstyne, Howard 3:11, 4:2, 6:4

De Coux, Janet 1:8, 1:10, 2:1, 3:10, 4:2
   Photograph Envelope 4

Grotell, Maija 1:8, 3:9-11, 4:2, 6:3, 6:5-7

Johnson, Jon 3:10

Kline, Svea 3:10

Miller, Eliza 1:8, 3:10, 4:2, 14:1
   Photograph Envelope 4, 5

Milles, Carl 3:7, 3:10, 4:2, 6:3, 6:9-10
   Photograph Envelope 5

Milles, Olga 3:10, 6:9

Scheyer, Ernest 3:11