

Indian Art Department Records

IND

Finding aid prepared by Bertha Adams.

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Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives

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Summary Information

Repository	Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives
Creator	Brown, W. Norman (William Norman), 1892-1975
Creator	Kramrisch, Stella, 1898-1993
Source	Philadelphia Museum of Art
Title	Indian Art Department Records
Call number	IND
Date [inclusive]	circa 1896-1999, undated
Extent	36.75 linear feet
Language	English
Abstract	None available.

Cite as:

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Biography/History

In 1931 the Museum appointed W. Norman Brown (1892-1975) as its first curator of Indian art. Brown, who would establish the first academic department of South Asian Studies in the United States in 1947, was at this time also serving as chair of Sanskrit at the University of Pennsylvania. At the time of his curatorial appointment, the Indian Art office was part of the Division of Eastern Art. In 1954, Museum Director Fiske Kimball persuaded Dr. Stella Kramrisch (1896-1993) to join the Museum and assume the curatorial position. Like her predecessor, Kramrisch was a faculty member of South Asian Studies at Penn. Both scholars also lived and taught in India before assuming their stateside academic and curatorial positions. Kramrisch greatly expanded the Museum's holdings in Indian and Himalayan art. In addition to her many scholarly writings, she also curated some of the most significant exhibitions in her field, such as the 1968 "Unknown India," which was the first scholarly survey of Indian folk and tribal art to be presented in the western world. During Kramrisch's tenure, the formal designation of her department was also modified. In 1956 the Museum renamed the division "Oriental Art," with curators in Indian and Far Eastern art. In 1972, it dropped the divisional title, and separately recognized the two curatorial offices. The following year, Kramrisch, who by then was also teaching at the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University, became Curator Emeritus and Research Fellow at the Museum. She continued to serve solely as Curator Emeritus from 1978 until her death in 1993. In addition to bequeathing her personal art collection to the Museum, Kramrisch also endowed the curatorial chair of the department to which she had devoted nearly 40 years of scholarship and service. In the Museum's 1995 annual report, the department was listed for the first time as Indian and Himalayan Art, which remains its current title, and Kramrisch's former position became the Stella Kramrisch Curator. Darielle Mason was the first to receive that appointment in 1997 and continues to serve as curator.

Works Consulted

Annual Report (Philadelphia Museum of Art) (1994):5. "Dr. Stella Kramrisch."

University Archives and Records Center, University of Pennsylvania, Sept. 1992. University of Pennsylvania Archives. 10 May 2007. Guide to the W. Norman (William Norman) Brown, 1892-1975, Papers, 1912-1975.

Scope and Contents

This record group consists primarily of general correspondence and exhibition records that document the department's activities during most of Stella Kramrisch's curatorial tenure. Correspondence is alphabetically arranged by name of individual or institution, as well as a few files identified by subjects, such as scroll painting, lectures, and projects. Institutional correspondents include museums, galleries, universities, publishers and organizations dedicated to the promotion of Asian studies. Examples of

the latter include the non-profit American Council of Southern Asia Art (ACSAA) and the American Institute of Indian Studies (AIIS), which is a consortium of universities and colleges that promotes teaching and research about India. The most extensively documented exhibition is "Manifestations of Shiva," which was mounted in 1981. The 13 linear feet of records include a subseries of general files, which are topically arranged and document issues such as budget, travel, openings, publicity, and related symposium. The many "history" files that are a subgroup to the general files appear to pertain to the initial work, research and contacts made in preparing for the exhibition. The second subseries consists of lender files, which are grouped by location, namely American, European and Indian, and within each geographic division, by type of lender, either private or institution. The exhibition catalogue is the third subseries, and documentation consists primarily of catalogue entries and photographs of each object, as well as research material.

Most of the material comprising the "Other subjects" series pertains to a biographical project about Kramrisch undertaken after her death by the department's curatorial and administrative assistant. There are also sets of files regarding the return of incoming loans, refused exhibition loan requests, and general research and reference material, as well as a small amount of insurance requests, Museum publications and information to certain gallery installations. One of the items in regard to the latter is also a piece of memorabilia--sheet music of the song played at the dedication of the Museum's Indian Temple in 1920. Langdon Warner, the Museum's director at that time, wrote the lyrics.

Inventories identifying file topics are available in the Archives.

Early records of the department are part of the Far Eastern Art Department Records. Departmental records generated after Kramrisch's tenure to the present are the Indian and Himalayan Art Department Records. For related documentation, see also Stella Kramrisch Personal Papers.

Administrative Information

Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives
Finding aid prepared by Bertha Adams.

Sponsor

Funded by a grant from The Institute of Museum and Library Services

Access Restrictions

The collection is open for research. Access to institutional records less than 10 years old is at the discretion of the Archivist.

Use Restrictions

The Indian Art Department Records are the physical property of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives. The Museum holds literary rights only for material created by Museum personnel or given to the Museum with such rights specifically assigned. For all other material, literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. Researchers are responsible for obtaining permission from rights holders for publication and for other purposes where stated.

Processing Information

These materials were arranged and described by Bertha Adams. Funded by a grant from The Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Related Materials

Related Material

Includes records of W. Norman Brown, curator of Indian Art from 1931-1954, when it was under Eastern Art. Far Eastern Art Department Records.

Separated Material

Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives. This material was transferred in 2006 from the departmental records accessioned previously. Stella Kramrisch Personal Papers.

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- Philadelphia Museum of Art

Personal Name(s)

- Brown, W. Norman (William Norman), 1892-1975

- Kramrisch, Stella, 1898-1993

General correspondence

Collection Inventory

General correspondence, 1960-1993, undated. 13.5 linear feet.

Exhibition records, 1960-1995, undated. 16 linear feet.

Unknown India: ritual art in tribe and village, circa 1968, undated.

Scope and Content Note

Exhibition dates Jan. 20--Feb. 26, 1968

Himalayan art, circa 1978, undated.

Scope and Content Note

Exhibition dates June 3--July 30, 1978

Manifestations of Shiva, 1970-1982, undated.

Scope and Content Note

Exhibition dates Mar. 29--June 7, 1981

General

General, 1970-1982, undated.

Lenders, circa 1980, undated.

Exhibition catalogue, 1980-1982, undated.

Painted delight: Indian paintings from Philadelphia collections, circa 1986, undated.

Scope and Content Note

Exhibition dates Jan. 26--Apr. 20, 1986

Himalayn paintings for Buddhist meditation..., 1960, 1983-1995, undated.

Scope and Content Note

Exhibition dates Mar. 25--May 28, 1995

Other subjects, circa 1896-1999, undated. 7.25 linear feet.

Exhibition loans, refused, 1993-2000.

Incoming loans, returned, 1930-1993, undated.

Kramrisch biographical research, circa 1896-1999, undated.

Reference and research material, circa 1980-1997.

Various, circa 1903-1989.
