

FOCUS archives

002

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Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives

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Summary Information

Repository	Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives
Creator	FOCUS. Philadelphia Focuses on Women in the Visual Arts.
Title	FOCUS archives
Call number	002
Date [inclusive]	1972-1975
Extent	2 linear feet (2 containers)
Language	English
Abstract	<p>"FOCUS: Philadelphia Focuses on Women in the Visual Arts" was a city-wide arts program that occurred in April and May of 1974 and featured mostly East Coast artists and scholars. Initiated by Philadelphia painter Diane Burko, the two month program included art exhibitions, juried shows, panels, lectures, workshops, demonstrations and film viewings, all organized by Philadelphia-area women who were involved with the arts. The central event of the FOCUS program was "Women's Work: American Art, 1974," a contemporary art exhibit financed by and held in the Museum of the Philadelphia Civic Center. Other FOCUS events focused on topics such as race, history, and the realities of being a female artist. The records in the FOCUS collection date from 1972 to 1975 and include meeting minutes from various FOCUS committees, outreach and advertising documents, correspondence, and records of the grant application process. Despite the relatively brief existence of the initiative, the deliberate documentation of FOCUS programs by internal committees makes this collection an especially comprehensive representation of the group's activities.</p>

Cite as:

[Item identification and date], [Series info.], FOCUS Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives.

Biography/History

"FOCUS: Philadelphia Focuses on Women in the Visual Arts" was a city-wide arts program that occurred in April and May of 1974. Initiated by Philadelphia painter Diane Burko, the two-month program included art exhibitions, juried shows, panels, lectures, workshops, demonstrations and film viewings, all organized by Philadelphia-area women who were involved with the arts. Most of the women were employed as artists, historians, teachers and museum staff, and volunteered their time on FOCUS committees. The running of FOCUS programs was divided among several internal groups: the Advisory Board, Documentation Committee, Finance Committee, Institutional Alliance Committee, Program Committee, Public Relations Committee, Social Committee and Steering Committee. The events were funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts and the Fels Fund, as well as participating institutions and private donations. Speakers and artists were mostly from the Philadelphia area, although a few outside experts and scholars were invited to participate. Lectures, panels and workshops ranged in topic from race ("The Black Woman as Mother and Artist") to history ("The Homemaker as Artmaker: The Colonial Woman") to the realities of being a female artist ("Survival in the Marketplace").

[Sources: PACSCL survey historical note and "FOCUS: A Brief History" (Box 1, Folder 20)]

Scope and Contents

This collection documents the activities of FOCUS: Philadelphia Focuses on Women in the Visual Arts, a city-wide arts program that occurred in April and May of 1974. The records date from 1972 to 1975, and include meeting minutes from various FOCUS committees, outreach and advertising documents, correspondence, and records of the grant application process. Despite the relatively brief existence of the initiative, the deliberate documentation of FOCUS programs by internal committees makes this collection an especially comprehensive representation of the group's activities. Of particular interest are the meeting

minutes which document internal debates about which artists should be invited to exhibit their work and who to ask to serve on the Advisory Board and other committees. Researchers may also be interested in the records which document the grant application process and the Document Committee files that provide a look into how the FOCUS volunteers chose to preserve and represent their endeavors.

The records are arranged into three series: “I. General files,” “II. Committee records,” and “III. Photographs and audio/visual materials.”

The “I. General files” series comprises the majority of the collection and includes correspondence, some financial records such as budgets, fundraising materials, exhibition planning materials and event documentation, as well as some clippings mentioning FOCUS activities and interests. Additionally, the grant writing and application processes with the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts are particularly well represented in this series: materials include various notes, drafts, correspondence, grant applications, grant award packages and follow-up grant applications and proposals. Also of interest are the records related to the feminist exhibition held at the Philadelphia Civic Center Museum in 1974, which include extensive information about participating artists’ biographies and artwork, marketing posters and flyers, and written communication between the Civic Center and FOCUS committees. Many of the Philadelphia Civic Center Museum files contain information about the Civic Center’s banning and censorship of artist Judith Bernstein from the exhibition and the subsequent protest and backlash from FOCUS and the local art community. The series dates from 1972 to 1975 and is arranged in alphabetical order by subject.

The “II. Committee records” series contains documentation of the major committees involved in FOCUS’s activities and initiatives, including the Advisory Board, the Finance Committee, the Public Relations Committee and the Program Committee. In particular, the Documentation Committee, created to document the activities of FOCUS through reports and publications, exemplifies the value placed on the self-documentation of its activities by the organization. As such, this series, along with the rest of the collection, would appeal to those interested in grassroots community initiatives, feminist art movements, non-profit collaborative activities and local Philadelphia history. Also of particular interest are the minutes for planning meetings held by several committees; these document the lively internal debates and discussions concerning matters such as selection of artists for involvement in exhibitions and events, funding sources and recruiting others to fulfill leadership roles within the organization. The series is arranged in alphabetical order by committee name and dates from 1973 to 1975.

The “III. Photographs and audio/visual materials” is a small series containing some photographs, contact sheets and slides as well as a few audio recordings on 33mm tapes and reel to reel magnetic tape. The photographs contain images of committee meetings, award ceremonies, panel events and exhibitions, while the audio recordings are of public service announcements produced by FOCUS as well as recordings of the various events sponsored by the FOCUS initiative. Researchers should note that the Philadelphia Civic Center Museum files in series “I. General files” also contain photographs, mostly of exhibitions and various artists and their work. The series dates from 1973 to circa 1974 and is arranged in alphabetical order by subject or media type.

Administrative Information

Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives

2011.06.08

Finding aid prepared by Christiana Dobrzynski Grippe and Sarah Newhouse.

Sponsor

The processing of this collection was made possible through generous funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, administered through the Council on Library and Information Resources' "Cataloging Hidden Special Collections and Archives" Project.

Access Restrictions

This collection is open for research use.

Use Restrictions

Copyright restrictions may apply. Please contact the Archives with requests for copying and for authorization to publish, quote or reproduce the material.

Processing Information note

The processing of this collection was made possible through generous funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, administered through the Council on Library and Information Resources' "Cataloging Hidden Special Collections and Archives" Project.

This collection was *minimally processed* in 2009-2011, as part of an experimental project conducted under the auspices of the Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries to help eliminate processing backlog in Philadelphia repositories. A minimally processed collection is one processed at a less intensive rate than traditionally thought necessary to make a collection ready for use by researchers. When citing sources from this collection, researchers are advised to defer to folder titles provided in the finding aid rather than those provided on the physical folder.

Employing processing strategies outlined in Mark Greene's and Dennis Meissner's 2005 article, *More Product, Less Process: Revamping Traditional Processing Approaches to Deal With Late 20th-Century Collections*, the project team tested the limits of minimal processing on collections of all types and ages, in 23 Philadelphia area repositories. A primary goal of the project, the team processed at an average rate of 2-3 hours per linear foot of records, a fraction of the time ordinarily reserved for the arrangement and description of collections. Among other time saving strategies, the project team did not extensively review the content of the collections, replace acidic folders or complete any preservation work.

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- FOCUS. Philadelphia Focuses on Women in the Visual Arts.
- Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Form/Genre(s)

- Catalogs
- Clippings
- Correspondence

Subject(s)

- Arts
- Biographies
- Women artists

Series I. General files

Collection Inventory

Series I. General files, 1972-1975.

	Box	Folder
Balance sheets, circa 1974.	1	1
Budget: From committees and "first budget", 1973, undated.	1	2
Budget: National Endowment for the Arts Visual Arts and Pennsylvania Council, 1974.	1	3
Budget: "Second budget", circa 1973.	1	4
Clippings, 1974.	1	5
Contributors: Letters, circa 1974.	1	6
Correspondence: Foundations and businesses, 1973-1974.	1	7
Correspondence: Letters sent, 1973.	1	8
Exhibition documentation, circa 1974.	1	9-10
Finance report: Press party, interim reports, circa 1973.	1	11
Ford Foundation: Correspondence, 1973-1974.	1	12
Fundraising: Letter, first, 1973.	1	13
Fundraising: Letters, sample, circa 1974.	1	14
Fundraising: Possible sources, circa 1973.	1	15

Series I. General files

Grant proposal information, 1973.	1	16
Lists: Foundations and businesses approached for support, circa 1974.	1	17
Lists: Miscellaneous, 1973, undated.	1	18
National Endowment for the Arts: Correspondence, 1972-1974.	1	19
National Endowment for the Arts: Final report, 1974.	1	20
National Endowment for the Arts: Grant proposal documentation, 1973-1974.	1	21
News releases and policy statements, 1973-1974.	1	22
Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, 1973-1974.	1	23
Pennsylvania Council on the Arts: Grant proposal documentation, 1974.	1	24
Philadelphia Civic Center Museum, 1974-1975.	1	25
Philadelphia Civic Center Museum: Artists' correspondence, 1973-1974.	1	26
Philadelphia Civic Center Museum: Biographical information about artists, 1974.	1	27-29
Philadelphia Civic Center Museum: Show, 1974.	1	30
Program events documentation: Photographs, posters, graphic materials, circa 1974.	1	31
Shows: Checklists and invitations, circa 1974.	1	32
Tax exemption: Letter, 1973, 1975.	1	33

Series II. Committee records

Series II. Committee records, 1973-1975.

	Box	Folder
Advisory Board, 1973.	1	34
Advisory Board: Correspondence, 1973-1974.	1	35
Documentation Committee, 1974-1975.	1	36
Documentation Committee: Meeting minutes, 1973 September, 1974 May.	1	37
Documentation Committee: "New document", 1974.	1	38
Documentation Committee: "Old document", 1973-1974.	1	39
Documentation Committee: "Old document" notecards, circa 1974.	2	1
Finance Committee, 1973-1974, undated.	2	2
Finance Committee, 1974.	2	3-4
Finance Committee: Brodsky, Judith, 1973-1974.	2	5
Finance Committee: Correspondence, 1974, undated.	2	6
Finance Committee: Final report, circa 1974.	2	7
Finance Committee: Members, 1973, undated.	2	8
Finance Committee: "Old file", 1973-1974.	2	9
Finance Committee: Robinson, Tara, 1973-1974.	2	10
Finance Committee: Scholarship, circa 1974.	2	11

Series III. Photographs and audio/visual materials

Institutional Alliance Committee, 1973-1974.	2	12-13
Program Committee, 1973-1974.	2	14
Program Committee: Binder, 1973, undated.	2	15
Program Committee: Index cards, circa 1974.	2	16
Public Relations Committee, 1973-1974.	2	17-18
Public Relations Committee: Address lists, circa 1974.	2	19
Public Relations Committee: News releases and public service announcements, 1973-1974.	2	20
Public Relations Committee: Printed visual communication, 1973-1974.	2	21
Social Committee, 1974.	2	22-23
Steering Committee, 1973-1974.	2	24
Steering Committee: Meeting minutes, 1973 March-1974 April.	2	25

Series III. Photographs and audio/visual materials, 1973-circa 1974.

	Box	Folder
Bickley, Cynthia Ann: Exhibitions, 1973.	2	26
Negatives of panels, circa 1974.	2	27
Photographs and contact sheets, circa 1974.	2	28
Public service announcement audio recordings, circa 1974.	2	29

Series III. Photographs and audio/visual materials

Reel to reel magnetic recording tape: FOCUS events and panels, circa 1974.	2	30-31
Slides, circa 1974.	2	32