

SFMOMA Library & Archives
151 Third Street
San Francisco, CA 94103

Finding Aid to the Film Department Records, 1970-1980, bulk 1972-1978

Collection Number: ARCH.ADM.010

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Finding Aid written by: Dayna Holz

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COLLECTION SUMMARY

Collection Title

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Film Department records, 1970-1980, bulk 1972-1978

Collection number

ARCH.ADM.010

Creator

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

Extent

4 linear feet (4 cartons, 2 card file boxes)

Repository

SFMOMA Library & Archives
151 Third Street
San Francisco, CA 94103

Abstract

The collection consists of records of the Film Department of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art dating from 1970-1980, the majority of which are published materials from external film organizations. The department was responsible for curating and screening film series of particular interest to art museum audiences. Experimental and short films were often shown, with series based primarily on topical themes. The department was dissolved in 1978 amidst museum-wide financial struggles. The collection is divided into four series: Curated Film Series, Department Administration, Public Relations, and External Film Organizations.

Language

Records are in English.

Physical location

Collection is housed in the SFMOMA Archives.

INFORMATION FOR RESEARCHERS

Access and use restrictions

Collection is available for use. Some materials are restricted for confidentiality or condition. Contact SFMOMA Archives.

Publication information

All requests for permission to publish should be directed to the SFMOMA Archives.

Preferred citation

[Identification of item], [box year and folder title], Film Department, 1970-1980, Administrative Records, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art Archives.

Access points

Topical Subjects

Art appreciation—Study and teaching—California—San Francisco
Art museums and community—California—San Francisco
Art museums—Educational aspects
Museums and motion pictures

Corporate and Personal Names

San Francisco Museum of Art
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art—Archives
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art—History—Sources
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art—Records and correspondence
War Memorial Veterans Building (San Francisco, Calif.)

DeRoux, Kenneth
Kramer, Edith
Novikoff, Melvin

Related materials

SFMOMA Archives Film Department Records, 1944-1965
SFMOMA Archives Office of the Director Records, 1966-1972
SFMOMA Archives Women's Board Records

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Acquisition

Institutional records generated by SFMOMA or collected by SFMOMA staff in the performance of work duties.

Level of description

Records are described at the carton level. Some records are described at the folder or item level.

Processed by

Steve Polta, 2008.

ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY

Though the Film Department was founded in the 1970s, the San Francisco Museum of Art had been screening films since its opening in 1935. The start of the Art in Cinema series in 1946 represented the museum's support of non-commercial filmmaking, with a particular interest in films about art and artists. The Film Library had been established in the early 1950s to rent and distribute films in the West, though financial difficulties forced the service to dissolve in the mid-1960s. With its local reputation of supporting independent film, the museum recommitted itself in the early 1970s to the medium by establishing a Film Department and hiring a Film Curator to regularly organize film screenings in the museum.

The program consistently struggled financially, despite strong attendance and moderate ticket prices. Staff and patrons continually complained about the inadequate screening facilities – the museum's auditorium which had bad acoustics, the inability to fully darken the room, and level seating – and the program was unable to expand without improving the theater. Several expansion prospects were explored over the years, including renovating and taking over the Veterans Auditorium (later Herbst Theater) as a regular venue and collaborating with the Pacific Film Archive to produce regular San Francisco programs, but were ultimately deemed too costly. The Film Department was dissolved in 1978 amidst a museum-wide budget crisis caused by San Francisco's redistribution of the hotel tax, which had supported much of the museum's regular programming in the preceding years.

Several Film Curators headed the department during its appearance in the 1970s, including (in chronological order) Edith Kramer, Melvin (Mel) Novikoff, Kenneth (Ken) DeRoux, and Shelley Diekman, who acted as Film Curator for a mere month before it was announced that the department would be shut down.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Film Department records document the group's brief but active existence in the 1970s with correspondence, program notes, press releases, clippings, research materials, and financial records. The bulk of the records date from 1972-1978. More than half of the records consist of materials published by external film-related organizations, and document the field of non-commercial film and the museum's relationship to it at the time. Though the department was dissolved in 1978, some correspondence and materials from outside film organizations continues through 1980.

The collection is divided into four series: Curated Film Series, which documents film programs shown in the museum; Department Administration, relating to management of the department; Public Relations, including press releases, program notes, and newspaper clippings; and External Film Organizations. The External Film Organizations series is divided into four subseries, each representing a different function of the documentation of film activities: Distributors; Festivals; Newsletters; and Venues.

SERIES DESCRIPTION

SERIES 1: CURATED FILM SERIES, 1972-1978

Carton 1, folders 1-11

Arranged alphabetically.

The records document film programs organized by the Film Curator and shown in the museum, and include contextual records about similar film programs shown elsewhere as well as catalogs from distributors specializing in the topical areas of specific film series. The “Free Films and Theatre” program was a regularly scheduled series of films for children. Though researched, the series of films about Brazil and Berlin were not shown. The SECA film program was not curated by the Film Department, but was screened in the museum.

SERIES 2: DEPARTMENT ADMINISTRATION, 1972-1980

Carton 1, folders 12-28; Card File Box 1

Arranged alphabetically.

Files document the management of the Film Department and maintenance of the film program. The Theater and Program Expansion files document the multiple efforts during the 1970s to enhance the film program, through either collaborating with other Bay Area film organizations to create a more active program or by improving the physical film-screening environment through updating existing facilities or taking over the Veterans Auditorium (Herbst Theater). These files include several folded drawings (Diaz prints) of theater and seating renovation plans that were never actualized.

Department correspondence from 1978 includes internal letters to Director Henry Hopkins about the elimination of the Film Department for financial reasons, and a “Final Descriptive Report” about the state of the department. The Film Publications Index file and cards represent an in-house effort to topically index film-related journals.

SERIES 3: PUBLIC RELATIONS, 1970-1978

Carton 1, folders 29-35; Carton 2, folders 1-18; Card File Box 2

Arranged alphabetically.

Includes monthly screening schedules used to announce upcoming film programs in the museum; press clippings (arranged chronologically by year) which document films shown in the museum and other film-related news; press releases produced by the museum about the film programs; and program notes which describe individual films and provide curatorial statements about specific film series. Also includes mailing lists used to publicize the program and specific film series, some of which are recorded on IBM Magnetic Cards (readable through an IBM Selectric typewriter of the era).

SERIES 4: EXTERNAL FILM ORGANIZATIONS, 1970-1980

Cartons 2-4

Subseries are arranged alphabetically.

The series documents the department's collection of film-related material generated by outside institutions, including catalogs published by distributors of independent films; programs of film festivals, primarily within the United States; newsletters about independent film; and screening schedules published by theaters and venues from around the country that focused on showing independent film.

SUBSERIES 4.1 Distributors, 1972-1980

Carton 2, folders 19-28; Carton 3, folder 1-8

Individual distributors are organized alphabetically, followed by Miscellaneous, and the Distribution Index to Films on 20th Century Artists.

Includes catalogs, announcements, and some correspondence from film distributors. Organizations documented in the files include those dedicated to the distribution of film/video as well as organizations which distributed film/video as part of a larger mission, such as art exhibition or cultural preservation. Most dates for distribution catalogs are estimated.

The Distribution Index to Films on 20th Century Artists, compiled by the Film Department in the mid-1970s, was an alphabetical list of films about artists and art movements, indicating which distributors carried the films. Files include copies of the index, blank order forms, and correspondence about and orders for the index.

SUBSERIES 4.2 Festivals, 1970-1978

Carton 3, folders 9-18

Arranged alphabetically, followed by Miscellaneous.

Files document screenings and activities surrounding film festivals, some of which were circulated. The San Francisco International Film Festival files document the festival from 1971 through 1977, and contain primarily newspaper clippings about the festival, programs, and schedules.

SUBSERIES 4.3 Newsletters, 1972-1980

Carton 3, folders 19-26

Arranged alphabetically, followed by Miscellaneous.

Includes small publications about film and film exhibition. The Association of Specialized Film Exhibitors (ASFE) Newsletter file includes correspondence about membership in the ASFE.

SUBSERIES 4.4 Venues, 1971-1978

Carton 3, folders 27-29; Carton 4, folders 1-19

Arranged alphabetically, followed by Miscellaneous.

Documents organizations exhibiting film on a continual or seasonal basis. Includes calendars, programs, announcements, and some correspondence. File titles include venue name and location. Some files contain small publications created by the exhibiting organization.

CONTAINER LIST

SERIES 1: CURATED FILM SERIES, 1972-1978

Container	Folder	Contents	Date
Carton 1	1	Berlin Films 1977 (Goethe Institute)	1977
Carton 1	2	Brazilian Films Series	1977
Carton 1	3	Films by Women	1972-1977
Carton 1	4-5	Films from the People's Republic of China	1975-1978
Carton 1	6	Free Films and Theatre Program (Films for Children)	1973-1977
Carton 1	7	Independent Black Cinema: Program Notes	1977
Carton 1	7	Independent Black Cinema: Press Releases	1977
Carton 1	8	Independent Black Cinema: Publicity	1977
Carton 1	8	Independent Black Cinema: Audience Feedback	1977
Carton 1	8-9	Independent Black Cinema: Film Research and Series Planning	1977
Carton 1	10	SECA Film as Art Awards	1974-1975
Carton 1	11	Silent Films with Piano Accompaniment	1973-1975

SERIES 2: DEPARTMENT ADMINISTRATION, 1972-1980

Carton 1	12	Attendance Reports	1975-1978
Carton 1	13	Correspondence	1972-1974
Carton 1	14	Correspondence	1975
Carton 1	15	Correspondence	1976
Carton 1	16	Correspondence	1977
Carton 1	17	Correspondence	1978
Carton 1	18	Correspondence	1979-1980
Carton 1	19	Department Budget	1972-1978
Carton 1	20	Film Committee	1973, 1977
Card File Box 1			
Carton 1	21	Film Publications Index	ca. 1975
Carton 1	22	Grant Funding: National Endowment for the Arts	1974-1978
Carton 1	12	Job Descriptions	1977
Carton 1	23	Receipts and Invoices	1974-1978
Carton 1	24	Screening Equipment	1973-1978
Carton 1	25	Staff Calendars	1975-1978
Carton 1	26	Theater and Program Expansion	1972-1973
Carton 1	27	Theater and Program Expansion	1975-1976
Carton 1	28	Theater and Program Expansion	1977-1978

SERIES 3: PUBLIC RELATIONS, 1970-1978

Carton 1	29	Monthly Screening Schedules	1973-1974
Carton 1	30	Monthly Screening Schedules	1975-1976
Carton 1	31	Monthly Screening Schedules (Removed from Binder)	1975-1976

Container	Folder	Contents	Date
Carton 1	32	Monthly Screening Schedules	1977-1978
Carton 1	33	Press Clippings	1973-1974
Carton 1	34	Press Clippings	1975
Carton 1	35	Press Clippings	1976
Carton 2	1	Press Clippings	1977
Carton 2	2	Press Clippings	1978
Carton 2	3	Press Releases/Program Notes: 1970-1973	1970-1973
Carton 2	4-5	Press Releases/Program Notes: September 1973-December 1974	1973-1974
Carton 2	6-7	Press Releases/Program Notes: January-June 1975	1975
Carton 2	8	Press Releases/Program Notes: July-December 1975	1975
Carton 2	9-10	Press Releases/Program Notes: January-June 1976	1976
Carton 2	11-12	Press Releases/Program Notes: July-December 1976	1976
Carton 2	13-14	Press Releases/Program Notes: January-June 1977	1977
Carton 2	15	Press Releases/Program Notes: August-December 1977	1977
Carton 2	16-17	Press Releases/Program Notes: 1978	1978
Carton 2	18	Publicity and Mailing Lists	ca. 1973-1977
Card File Box 2		Screening Schedule Index Cards	1971-1978

SERIES 4: EXTERNAL FILM ORGANIZATIONS, 1970-1980

SUBSERIES 4.1 Distributors, 1972-1980

Carton 2	19	Appalshop (Whitesburg, KY)	1977
Carton 2	19	Audio Brandon Films (Mt. Vernon, NY)	1974-1976
Carton 2	20	Center for Southern Folklore (Memphis, TN)	1975-1977
Carton 2	20	Cinema 5 (New York, NY)	ca. 1975
Carton 2	21	Contemporary Films / McGraw Hill (New York, NY)	ca. 1975
Carton 2	22	Film Images (New York, NY)	ca. 1975
Carton 2	22	Films Incorporated (Wilmette, IL)	ca. 1975
Carton 2	22	Hurlock Cine-World (Old Greenwich, CT)	ca. 1975
Carton 2	23-25	Janus Films (New York, NY; Denver, CO)	ca. 1975
Carton 2	26	Leacock-Pennebaker (New York, NY)	ca. 1975
Carton 2	26	Monument Film Corporation (New York, NY)	1974
Carton 2	27	New Line Cinema (New York, NY)	ca. 1975
Carton 2	28	New Yorker Films (New York, NY)	ca. 1975
Carton 2	28	Sigma III (New York, NY)	ca. 1975
Carton 3	1	Pyramid Films (Santa Monica, CA)	1974--1975
Carton 3	2	Serious Business Company (Berkeley, CA)	ca. 1975
Carton 3	2	Shochiko Films of North America (Los Angeles, CA)	ca. 1975
Carton 3	2	Swank Motion Pictures (St. Louis, MO)	ca. 1975
Carton 3	3	Transworld Films (Chicago, IL)	ca. 1975
Carton 3	3	Universal 16 / United World Films (Los Angeles, CA)	1972
Carton 3	4	Walter Reade 16 (New York, NY)	ca. 1975
Carton 3	5	Miscellaneous Distributors	ca. 1975

Container	Folder	Contents	Date
Carton 3	6	Miscellaneous Individual Artists and Films	1975-1980
Carton 3	7-8	Distribution Index to Films on 20 th Century Artists	1976-1979

SUBSERIES 4.2 Festivals, 1970-1978

Carton 3	9	American Film Festival (New York, NY)	1975-1977
Carton 3	9	Ann Arbor Film Festival (Ann Arbor, MI)	1973-1977
Carton 3	9	Athens International Film Festival (Athens, OH)	1975-1977
Carton 3	10	Belleview Film Festival (Belleview, WA)	1972-1977
Carton 3	10	Chicago International Film Festival (Chicago, IL)	1976
Carton 3	11	Filmex: The Los Angeles International Film Exposition (Los Angeles, CA)	1975-1976
Carton 3	12	Independent Filmmakers Exhibition (New York, NY)	1975-1978
Carton 3	12	Independent Film-makers Festival – Foothill College (Los Altos, CA)	1973
Carton 3	12	International Experimental Film Competition (Knokke-Heist, Belgium)	1974-1975
Carton 3	13	New York Film Festival (New York, NY)	1970-1976
Carton 3	13	Northwest Film and Video Festival (Portland, OR)	1976-1977
Carton 3	13	Poetry Film Festival (San Francisco, CA)	1978
Carton 3	14-16	San Francisco International Film Festival (San Francisco, CA)	1971-1977
Carton 3	17	Soviet Film Festival (San Francisco, CA)	1973
Carton 3	17	Telluride Film Festival (Telluride, CO)	1975-1976
Carton 3	17	UCLA African Film Festival (Los Angeles, CA)	1970
Carton 3	18	Miscellaneous Film Festivals	1971-1978

SUBSERIES 4.3 Newsletters, 1972-1980

Carton 3	19	Association of Specialized Film Exhibitors Newsletter	1975-1977
Carton 3	20	Bulletin for Film and Video Information (Anthology Film Archives, New York)	1974-1975
Carton 3	20	Canyon Cinemanews (Sausalito, CA)	1972-1974
Carton 3	21	Film and Video Makers Travel Sheet (Carnegie Institute - Film Section, Pittsburgh, PA)	1975-1980
Carton 3	22	Filmcalendar (A Monthly Listing of the Film Events in the Bay Area)	1972-1978
Carton 3	23	The Magazine (News from the Film and Television Study Center, Hollywood)	1975-1976
Carton 3	23	Marble (Film News and Comment, New York)	1975
Carton 3	23	Ohio Media (Contemporary Media Study Center, Dayton, OH)	1977
Carton 3	23	Rushes (Berkeley Film House)	1972
Carton 3	23	Vanguard (Vancouver Art Gallery)	1975
Carton 3	24-25	University Film Studies Center Newsletter (Cambridge, MA)	1972-1978
Carton 3	26	Miscellaneous Newsletters	1973-1980
Carton 3	27	And/Or (Seattle, WA)	1977

SUBSERIES 4.4 Venues, 1971-1978

Container	Folder	Contents	Date
Carton 3	27	Anthology Film Archives (New York, NY)	1972-1976
Carton 3	27	Avenue Film Society (San Francisco, CA)	1971-1973
Carton 3	28	Berks Filmmakers (Reading, PA)	ca. 1976
Carton 3	28	Biograph (Washington, DC)	1977
Carton 3	28	Boston Film/Video Foundation (Boston, MA)	1977
Carton 3	28	CAL Films (Berkeley, CA)	1976
Carton 3	28	Center Screen (Cambridge, MA)	1977-1978
Carton 3	28	Cento Cedar Cinema (San Francisco, CA)	1973-1977
Carton 3	29	Canyon Cinematheque (San Francisco, CA)	1974-1977
Carton 4	1	Chicago Filmmakers (Chicago, IL)	ca. 1977
Carton 4	1	Cinematheque (Coral Gables, FL)	1975-1976
Carton 4	1	Circle Theatre (Washington, DC)	1976-1977
Carton 4	1	Diablo Valley College (Pleasant Hill, CA)	1977
Carton 4	1	Evenings for New Cinema (Buffalo, NY)	1975-1978
Carton 4	1	Eye Music (San Francisco, CA)	1976-1978
Carton 4	2	Film Center - School of the Art Institute of Chicago (Chicago, IL)	1974-1978
Carton 4	3	Film Forum (New York, NY)	1975-1978
Carton 4	4	Goethe Institute (San Francisco, CA)	1972-1978
Carton 4	4	International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House (Rochester, NY)	1972, 1978
Carton 4	4	Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Los Angeles, CA)	1972-1977
Carton 4	5	Midnight Movies (San Francisco, CA)	1972-1976
Carton 4	6	Millennium Film Workshop (New York, NY)	1976-1977
Carton 4	6	Milwaukee Art Center (Milwaukee, WI)	1972-1973
Carton 4	6	Moving Image Makers (St. Paul, MN)	1976-1978
Carton 4	6	Museum of Fine Arts (Boston, MA)	1975-1977
Carton 4	7	National Film Theatre [London]	1972
Carton 4	8-9	Northwest Film Study Center (Portland, OR)	1973-1978
Carton 4	10	Nuart Theatre (West Los Angeles, CA)	1977
Carton 4	10	Oakland Museum (Oakland, CA)	1972-1977
Carton 4	10	Pacific Cinematheque (Vancouver, BC)	1974-1978
Carton 4	11	Pasadena Film Forum (Pasadena, CA)	1977-1978
Carton 4	11	Philadelphia Museum of Art (Philadelphia, PA)	1974
Carton 4	11	Port Washington Public Library (Port Washington, NY)	1976-1977
Carton 4	11	Rocky Mountain Film Center (Boulder, CO)	1976-1977
Carton 4	11	San Francisco Art Institute (San Francisco, CA)	1976-1977
Carton 4	12	Roxie Cinema (San Francisco CA)	1976-1978
Carton 4	13-14	San Francisco State University (San Francisco, CA)	1974-1978
Carton 4	15	Sheldon Film Theatre (Lincoln, NE)	1976
Carton 4	15	Sherman Theatre (Sherman Oaks, CA)	1977
Carton 4	15	Sonoma Film Institute (Rohnert Park, CA)	1976
Carton 4	16	Surf Theatres (Castro/Clay/Lumiere/Surf) (San Francisco, CA)	1971-1977
Carton 4	17	Theatre Vanguard (Los Angeles, CA)	1977

Container	Folder	Contents	Date
Carton 4	17	UC Theatre (Berkeley, CA)	1977
Carton 4	17	Unicorn Cinema (La Jolla, CA)	1975-1977
Carton 4	17	Walker Art Center (Minneapolis, MN)	1976-1978
Carton 4	18	Walnut Street Theatre (Philadelphia, PA)	1975-1976
Carton 4	18	Wedge (San Francisco, CA)	1977
Carton 4	18	Whitney Museum of American Art (New York, NY)	1977-1978
Carton 4	19	Miscellaneous Venues	1974-1978