

Center for Creative Photography

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Finding aid for the  
Barbara Morgan Miscellaneous Acquisitions collection circa  
1936-1941  
AG 206

**Barbara Morgan Miscellaneous Acquisitions collection, circa 1936-1941**

**AG 206**

**Creator**

Morgan, Barbara 1900-1992

**Quantity/ Extent**

1 linear foot

**Language of Materials**

English

**Biographical/ Historical Note**

Barbara Morgan born July 8, 1900 is an American photographer whose artistic inclinations also included drawings, watercolors and paintings. Morgan's work was primarily focused on photographs of modern dancers such as Martha Graham and Charles Weidman. Morgan grew up on a peach ranch in Southern California and attended UCLA from 1919 to 1923, her training at that institution was based on the principle of art synthesis made famous by Arthur Wesley Dow. In 1925 Morgan officially joined the UCLA faculty, shortly after that Morgan married Willard D. Morgan a writer and photographer.

Morgan worked primarily in the Southwestern United States and in New York City. Morgan's work in the Southwest focused on photographs of herself and Willard in various locations such as the Grand Canyon and the Hopi mesas and canyons, these photographs would later go on to appear alongside of Willard's articles as illustrations. In the summer of 1930 Morgan Willard moved to New York City in response to a job offer that Willard has received. The bustle of the city was very different than Morgan's experience in the Southwest and a more abstract bent can be seen in Morgan's work after her move to the East Coast. In 1931 Morgan began to experiment with the technical and dark room aspects of photography further refining her skill with help from Willard. Morgan became an early member of the Photo League in New York.

In 1935 Morgan began to focus her work and energies on the American Modern Dance Movement. A performance by the Martha Graham Dance Company showed Morgan just how important modern dance could be socially and politically. In 1941 Morgan published her book *Martha Graham: Sixteen Dances in Photographs*. Graham and Morgan struck up a friendship that lasted more than sixty years and was mutually

beneficial for both. In 1945 *La Danza Moderna Norte-Americana: Fotografias por Barbara Morgan*. The exhibition began at the Museum of Modern Art and then embarked on a South American tour.

Modern dance was not the only area of interest for Morgan and she desired to explore photography further and on a deeper level. Morgan felt that light energy was an essential component of dance and she sought to document such energy by creating gestural light drawings. Morgan also documented many children through her work in children's camps, schools, and colleges. These photos would eventually comprise her work titled *Summer's Children*. Morgan sought to document life and did not believe in restricting herself to the title of either painter or photographer. In addition to her work she was also on the faculty at Black Mountain College and lectured nationally for more than fifty years. Morgan was a co-founder of *Aperture Magazine*. Morgan passed away on August 17<sup>th</sup> 1992

### Scope and Content Note

Typed and handwritten manuscripts (ca. 1936-1941) consisting of working papers, research, and text for Morgan's book *Martha Graham: Sixteen Dances in Photographs* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1941). These manuscript pages are unnumbered, but they were arranged in labeled sections by Morgan. NOTE: The University of Arizona Library has a copy of the published book (GV1785.G7M6).

### Arrangement

Series 1: Miscellaneous Acquisitions, 1936-1941, 6 folders

### Names and Subject Terms

Morgan, Barbara <http://vocab.getty.edu/ulan/500023840>

Graham, Martha <http://vocab.getty.edu/ulan/500340742>

Photography

Dance

### Restrictions

#### Conditions Governing Access

Access to this collection requires an appointment with the Volkerding Study Center.

#### Conditions Governing Use

It is the responsibility of the user to obtain permission from the copyright owner (which could be the institution, the creator of the record, the author or his/her transferees,

heirs, legates or literary executors) prior to any copyright-protected uses of the collection.

The user agrees to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless the Arizona Board of Regents, the University of Arizona, Center of Creative Photography, including its officers, employees, and agents, from and against all claims made relating to copyright or other intellectual property infringement.

**Provenance**

Gift of Gelman Library, George Washington University, Washington, DC, 2005.

**Related Materials**

There are related materials in collections AG9, AG10, AG20, AG31, AG38, AG45, AG48, AG77, and AG95

**Preferred Citation**

Barbara Morgan Miscellaneous Acquisitions collection, 1936-1941. AG206. Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ.

**Processing Information**

The collection was processed circa 2005 by the Center's Archivists

## Container List

### Series 1: Barbara Morgan Miscellaneous Acquisitions, 1936-1941

Collection is 6 folders containing miscellaneous information pertaining to the life and work of Barbara Morgan.

Box Folder

- 1 1 Original bookplate and cover label from The Gelman Library. (1 page)
- 2 Introduction and other notes (53 pp.)
- 3 "Louis Horst, Dance Mag", "Trowbridge (dance drawings)", "Dance Mag. 1929",  
"Dance Observer." (41 pp.)
- 4 "Dance Magazine", "Dance Magazine 1953", "Dance Mag. 1954", "Atlantic 1950."  
(48 pp.)
- 5 "New Yorker 1947", "Ballet Annual", "Dance Encyclopedia", "Coronet", "Current  
Biography 1944", "Nation 9/3/38", "Accent on America Merle Armitage." (36 pp.)
- 6 "Merle Armitage: Martha Graham." (64 pp.)