Finding aid for the
Oliver Gagliani papers, circa 1940s-2000s
AG 240

Finding aid updated by Tai Huesgen, 2019
Oliver Gagliani papers, circa 1940s-2000s

AG 240

Creator

Gagliani, Oliver, 1916-2002

Abstract

Materials related to professional photography career and teaching of Oliver Gagliani (1917-2002), San Francisco area photographer and educator. Majority of collection is photographic materials. The collection contains thousands of negatives in various formats and hundreds of work prints both in b & w and color. Papers are not personal, but related to his career. Fine art prints are housed separately.

Collection contains photographic negatives, prints, and papers from the 1940’s to 1990’s, with the bulk dating from the 1950’s- 2000’s and consists of b&w and color negatives in a variety of film formats, color positives, Polaroids, contact sheets, b&w prints and color prints. The papers include a small amount of personal and business correspondence, but consist chiefly of biographical material, interviews, and reviews, as well as zone system development logs, exposure testing aids, teaching materials and publications. Hundreds of Gagliani’s master prints are held in the Center’s fine art print collection.

Quantity/ Extent

61.5 linear feet

Language of Materials

English

Biographical/ Historical Note

Oliver Lewis Gagliani (1917-2002)) was a San Francisco area fine art photographer and teacher, known for his technical mastery of large format black and white, although he worked in color later in life. His work consists of landscapes, portraits and abstracted close-up details that convey mood and feeling. Major influences on his work were Paul Strand, Ansel Adams and Minor White.

Born in Placerville, California, February 11, 1917, his family moved to South San Francisco In 1919 where he attended school 1928-1937. He attends college in San Francisco during the 1940’s, studying music. As a young man he studied violin for almost ten years, intending to become a professional musician. While serving in the
U.S. Army from 1942-1945 he made his first photograph. A hearing loss sustained during the war prevented him from continuing a music career. After his discharge and return to San Francisco in 1946, he viewed a Paul Strand show and was inspired to turn his artistic talent to photography.

In 1948 he married Laura Frugoli and began working as an independent photographer. In 1949 he became ill with tuberculosis and spent periods of time in a sanitarium until 1958. During the early 1950’s he attended engineering college in San Francisco and worked as a draftsman, while continuing to photograph. He co-founded the cooperative Bay Street Photographers Gallery in San Francisco, in 1954. In 1955 he was the first photographer to produce color prints from Kodak’s then proprietary Type C Process, for which he had to design his own enlarger head. In the early 1960’s he began teaching at various workshops and colleges. In the late 1960’s he and a group of San Francisco Bay Area artists founded the Visual Dialogue Foundation a group which was an important influence on the direction of fine art photography on the West Coast. In 1971 he earned an MFA from the California College of Arts and Crafts. He was awarded an NEA grant in 1976 and a Fisher Grant from the University of Arizona. From 1978 through the mid-1990’s he took three month work/travel trips to Italy and Sardinia. He was a popular teacher who conducted annual Oliver Gagliani Zone System and Fine Print Photography Workshops in Virginia City Nevada, 1973 to 1995, teaching his interpretation of Ansel Adam's Zone System. In 1981 he married Gayle Anderson. During the 1980’s he began experimenting with whole roll, double exposed images which he titled “strip images”.

Gagliani had numerous one-person and group shows in the United States and Italy. His work is in the permanent collections of major museums in the United States. He died November 20, 2002, at age 85 in Burlingame, California.

Chronology

1917 Born February 11 in Placerville, California
1919 Family moves to South San Francisco
1928-1937 Studies the violin
1928-1940 Attends school in South San Francisco. Plays first violin in special Western State Symphony Orchestra
1940-1942 Attends San Francisco State College, majors in music
1942-1945 Joins the Army, trains as an aircraft mechanic
1945 Discharged from the Army and returns to San Francisco
1946 Inspired by a Paul Strand retrospective at the San Francisco Museum of Art to pursue photography
1946 Attends California School of Fine Arts
1946 Studies with Ansel Adams and Minor White at the California School of Fine Arts.
1948 Marries Laura Frugoli, with whom he will have two children, Laurence and Olivia.
1948 Begins working as independent photographer
1949-1958  Ill with tuberculosis
1951-1953  Attends Heald College of Engineering, San Francisco
1951-1959  Series of trips to photograph California State Parks
1954  First one-man show at the Peninsula Art Association in San Mateo, California
1954  Co-founds Bay Street Photographers Gallery, San Francisco, CA
1955  First photographer to produce color prints from Kodak’s Type C process
1957  Employed as a draftsman at naval shipyard
1957  Begins photographing in color
1960  *Color Portfolio Number One* published
1964  Attends Minor White seminar which influences the direction of his work
1965-1971  Teaches private photography workshops
1967-1969  Photography instructor, South San Francisco High School
1969  Co-founds Visual Dialogue Foundation, San Francisco, CA, with 12 other photographers
1969  Teaches at University of California Extension, San Francisco, CA
1970-1971  Teaches at Image Circle, Berkeley, CA
1971  MFA, California College of Arts and Crafts, Oakland, CA
1973-1995  Held annual *Oliver Gagliani Zone System and Fine Print Photography Workshops*, Virginia City, Nevada
1974  Graduate Instructor of Photography, California State University at San Francisco
1974-1975  Zone System Workshop, Ansel Adams Gallery, Yosemite, CA
1974-1976  Teaches at San Francisco State University, San Francisco, CA
1974-1976  Advisory Trustee, Friends of Photography, Carmel, California
1975  Teaches at California College of Arts and Crafts, Oakland, CA
1975  Monograph *Oliver Gagliani*, introductions by Van Deren Coke and Leland Rice and afterward by Jack Welpott
1976  Awarded National Endowment for the Arts grant
1978  Awarded Fisher Grant, University of Arizona
1978-1979  Biographical entry in *Who’s Who in the West*
1980’s  Begins taking “strip photographs” using whole rolls of 35mm film as the image
1981  Marriage to Gayle Anderson
1984  Exhibition: *Oliver Gagliani: A Retrospective, 1937-84*. Fresno Arts Center, CA
1987  Exhibition: *Oliver Gagliani: Past and Present*, Museo Italo Americano, San Francisco, CA
1988  Exhibition: *Ill Fotografo Sconosciuto*, Lightwork Gallery, Sacramento, CA
1989  Exhibition: Legacy: *Northern California’s Photographic Heritage*, Friends of Photography, San Francisco, CA
1989  Exhibition: *Past and Present*, Witkin Gallery, NYC
1992  Group exhibition: *The Crucifixion Through the Modern Eye*, Hearst Art Gallery, Saint Mary’s College of California, Moraga, CA
1993 Group exhibition: *California Photography From a Seventies Perspective, Part I*, Joseph E. Seagram & Sons, NYC
1993 Exhibition: *Taking Images Home: Oliver Gagliani’s Life Work in Photographs*, University of Oregon Museum of Art, Eugene, OR
1994 Group exhibition: *Flowers*, Witkin Gallery, NYC
1996-1997 Exhibition: *Oliver Gagliani: Photographs of Italy*, Cecile Moochnek Gallery, Berkeley, CA
2002 Exhibition: *Oliver Gagliani, Master Prints*, Debra Heimerdinger Gallery, San Francisco, CA
2002 Dies November 20 in Burlingame, CA at age 85
2006 Exhibition: *Scores of Abstraction*, with published catalog, Center for Photographic Art, Carmel, CA
2007 Exhibition: *The Visual Dialogue Foundation*, Michael Dawson Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
2007-2008 Exhibition: *Scores of Abstraction*, Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, CA
2012 Archive acquired by Center for Creative Photography

**Scope and Content Note**

Series one, biographical materials, contains biographical information, interviews, resumes, and an obituary.

Series two, correspondence, includes mostly business correspondence and some personal correspondence, dating between the 1950s and early 2000s. Exhibition files also contain correspondence.

Series three, activity files, contains grants, notebooks, writings, portfolios, ephemera, financial records, and other miscellaneous materials relating to his photographic career.

Series four, exhibition files, correspondence, brochures, announcements, reviews, loan agreements, shipping lists from exhibitions throughout his career. Also included is a mounted (from an exhibition?) statement on Gagliani’s work by Van Deren Coke.

Series five, publications, contains publications about and by Gagliani as well as reviews and correspondence.

Series six, photographic materials, includes development logs, technical files, negatives, contact sheets, transparencies, Polaroids, and prints.

**Arrangement**

The collection is arranged in the following series:

Series 1: Biographical Materials, 1 box
Series 2: Correspondence, circa 1950s-2000s, 1 box
Series 3: Activity Files, 2 boxes  
Series 4: Exhibition Files, 1 box  
Series 5: Publications, 2 boxes  
Series 6: Photographic Materials, 94 boxes

Names and Subject Terms

Gagliani, Oliver, 1917-2002 [http://id.loc.gov/authorities/names/nr90001969]

Restrictions

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

Conditions Governing Use
©Heirs of Oliver Gagliani

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 the Gagliani family in 2012.

Related Materials
Gagliani fine print photographs are held in the Center’s Fine Print Collection.

Preferred Citation
Oliver Gagliani papers, circa 1940s-2000s. AG 240. Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ.

Processing Information
This collection was processed by Ann Richwine in 2013. The finding aid was updated by Alexis Pereygo in 2016. Collection was worked on by Tai Huesgen in 2019, and the finding aid has been updated to reflect the changes.
Container List

Series 1: Biographical Materials
Quantity: 0.5 linear foot.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box</th>
<th>Folder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Biographical information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Chronology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Obituary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Resumes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Series 2: Correspondence
Quantity: 1 linear foot.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Addresses, miscellaneous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Undated correspondence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>General correspondence, arranged by decade:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1970's</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1980's</td>
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<td>1990's</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2000's</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Adams, Ansel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Amon Carter Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Cage, John</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Caponigro, Paul</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Center for Creative Photography</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Coleman, A. D.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Heimerdinger, Debra</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Los Angeles County Museum of Art</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Marable, Darwin</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Smith, Henry Holmes</td>
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</table>

Series 3: Activity Files
Quantity: 2 linear feet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box</th>
<th>Folder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Gagliani's file list with corresponding numbers assigned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Articles Collected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bay Street Gallery</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Grants
Grants: Flintridge
Grants: NEA
Notebooks
Portfolios
Portfolios: Ghost Town
Workshops by Gagliani: Folder includes student lists, formulas, technical instructions, group photographs, student development logs, correspondence, and publicity for years 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1992
Workshop Photographs: Group shots from various workshops

Business cards, stationery
Ephemera
Interviews
Italy: letters of passage, copy of passport and international driver’s license
Mailing list: colleges
Mailing list: photo galleries
Video: announcement for “The Life and Works of Oliver Gagliani”
Writings by Gagliani:
“Film Tank Roller diagram”
“Poetry”
“Statement”
“Biographical comment”
Writings about Gagliani
Henry Holmes Smith
Writings: Contents of binder titled “Papers”, written by Gagliani and others
Financial
Financial: Gifts
Financial: Price lists, 1982

Series 3: Exhibition Files, circa 1950s-2000s
Quantity: 1 linear foot.
2 Chronological Listings
3 Correspondence (Contains contents of binder Gagliani titled “Exhibitions”. Includes letters, clippings, reviews, receipts, writings, exhibition, grants, and teaching materials. Notable correspondents (regarding portfolios and exhibitions) include Helen Gee, Nathan Lyons, Beaumont Newhall, Henry Holmes Smith, and Minor White).
4 Italy 1979
5 Exhibition poster, Italy
6 Retrospective, 1984
7 “San Francesco and Venice”
8 “Photographs of Italy”, 1997
9 “Past and Present”, Museo Italo American, San Francisco, CA, 1987
10 Oliver Gagliani: Master Prints
11 Van Deren Coke Statement

Series 4: Publications
Quantity: 1 linear foot.

Box Folder
6 1 Publications, correspondence
2 Publications about Gagliani
3 Publications by Gagliani
4 Publications, not Gagliani
5 Oversize exhibition reviews

6a Scores of Abstraction, two copies

Series 5: Photographic Materials, circa 1940s – 2000
Quantity: 56 linear feet. There is an item inventory list included in the processing notes that is available upon request.

Box Folder
7 Development logs
8 1 “Color strips”
2 “Developing Formulas-Pyro”
3 Interview including formulas, 1979
5 Zone System exposure tests
6 Miscellaneous photographic information

9 Tube, containing 5 sheets of zone system charts for film
Note: box 10 includes the “Oliver Film Test Assemblies” and contains negatives, test logs, transparencies, printing masks used for testing Zone System exposures. Titles in Gagliani’s hand.

10  
1 Small box containing 10 testing pieces approximately 6”x6”
2 Folder: “Plus-X FG-7”
3 Folder: “Range Negatives FG-7 & Pyro Verspan”
4 Folder: “2 ¼ Pyro Metol”
5 Folder: “Polaroid”
6 Folder: “Paper Test Neg, OK 50”
7 Folder: “Versapan Test Negative, Pyro Metol”
8 Folder: “2 ¼ Pyro Metol Cross”
9 Folder: [Untitled] matboard testing strip
10 Folder: [Untitled] matboard testing pieces
11 Sleeved testing piece with notation: “7” Dagom 23 ¼ from # 06R of filter ring ER 10 .2X”

11 Portfolio, [1978], 15 x 18, titled Oliver Gagliani, containing four matted prints signed by Gagliani on the mat.

Note: Boxes 12-22 are former contents of vinyl binders (negatives, positives, slides, contact sheets) rehoused into manuscript boxes. Folder headings in quotes taken from Gagliani’s original binder titles, groupings are Gagliani’s original order.

12 “Italy 1978-1982”, negatives, various sizes
13 “Italy 1979-1985”, contact sheets
14 “Italy 1979-1987”, negatives, color
16 “Italy 1985-1995”, contact sheets, positives
17 “Italy 1987-1989”, negatives
18 “Italy 1990s”, negatives
20 “Arizona 1986”; contact sheets, negatives, b/w, color, various sizes
21 “New Mexico 1988”, contact sheets, negatives, b/w, color, various sizes
22 Miscellaneous negatives and contact sheets, some undated and untitled, others titled “X”, “Tents”; b/w, color
23 Negatives, 8 x 10, b&w
24 Negatives, 8 x 10, b&w
25 Negatives, 8 x 10, b&w
Negatives, multiple sizes, b&w and some color includes some other sizes

“35mm #9 negative strips” Box contains 168 uncut rolls of 35 mm b&w negative film (unless otherwise noted)

“X2-11” contains 11 strip prints; one metal film canister labeled “X-2 to X-11” containing eleven uncut rolls of 35mm color negative film; one business card for Phelps/Schaefer with name and address of Bruce Hasson written on back and one small Italian transportation ticket with poem written in Gagliani’s hand on back

“Italy 1992”, contains four uncut color 2 ¼ film rolls
“Arizona”, color positive
“Italy 1992”, color negative
“Italy 1992”, color negative
“Italy 1992, color negative

“Strip negs mostly”
Uncut b&w negative rolls
1 uncut negative roll, 35mm, b&w

Untitled box containing three metal film canisters and uncut film rolls

“Negative Strips” contains fifty-three sleeved, uncut rolls of various sizes of color negative and positive film, 1985-1989

“Strips” one metal film canister containing five uncut 35mm color negative rolls and five color strip prints

“Strips, Italy 1992” eight color strip prints

“Strips Retrieved from Library” two color strip prints and two metal film canisters containing seventeen uncut 35mm rolls of b&w, color negative and positive film

“Arizona, 5x7 B&W, Some strips, Proof” contains rolled color strip prints and metal film canister of rolled 35mm film

“New Mexico, Some strips, Proof” contains 16 bundled flat b&w strip prints and four rolled color strip prints, a metal film canister containing uncut rolled 35mm film, and an Ilford box containing four uncut film rolls and four color strip prints

“Strips, Proof” box contains metal canisters of uncut rolls of color film, a packet of flat color prints, contact sheets, and rolls of strip prints

“Nevada, strips” box contains metal canister of uncut rolls of 35mm film, rolls of strip prints and a sheet of numbers in Gagliani’s hand
“Italy 1985, strips, proof, roll” box contains twenty-one rolls of strip color prints and two metal canisters of uncut rolls of 35mm film

“Italy 1987, Strips, Proof” box contains nineteen rolls of strip color prints, two metal canisters of uncut rolls of 35mm, one box of 4x5 positives, a group of b&w polaroid prints and a sheet with numbers written in Gagliani’s hand

“Italy, 1989-A, Strips” box contains fifteen rolls of strip color prints, four metal canisters containing uncut rolls of 35mm color negative film and two rolls of 2 ¼ color negative film. [Note: rolls listed on outside of canister do not always accurately reflect contents.]

“Italy, 1989-B, strips” contains 25 rolls of strip color prints

“Italy 1992, strips” box contains six rolls of strip color prints, and a Kodak box containing uncut rolls of 35mm color negative film

“Italy, 1992, strips” contains twenty-eight rolls of color strip prints and two boxes of 35mm uncut color negative rolls

“Italy, 1995, strips” box contains twenty-six rolls of strip color prints, an Ilford box and three metal canisters containing uncut rolls of 35mm color negative film

“Italy, 1998, strips” box contains twenty-nine rolls of strip color prints and two metal canisters of uncut rolls of 35mm film

Note: Boxes 48-83 were formerly in file drawers, now rehoused into archival containers. Titles and groups established by Gagliani retained. Order established by Gagliani was according to negative size, date and project. Collection contains chiefly 4x5 and 5x7 b&w negatives, with a few color positives. Most negatives are inscribed by Gagliani with his numbering system. Groups are in chronological order within film format.

4x5 negatives, “42-52”
4x5 negatives, “52-54”
4x5 negatives, “54-56”
4x5 negatives, “58-60”
4x5 negatives, “60-62”
4x5 negatives, “62-64”
4x5 negatives, “64-65”
4x5 negatives, “66-67”
4x5 negatives, “67-72”

“1975-76”

“1980-81, 83-84, 86-88, 90”


Project, “Bodie” 1959-1963

Project, “Bodie” 1967


Project, “Italy 1989, 1995 OK”; “Italy 1987, Polaroid OK”; “Italy 1992” color positives

Project, “Italy 1992 OK”


5x7 negatives, “1970” [b&w negatives]; “From library, moved 10/10 L.G.”

[Group contains various dates, subjects, and formats including mounted b&w transparencies, 4x5 and 5x7 color positives and negatives and b&w negatives, and a list in Gagliani’s hand]

5x7 negatives, “1971, 1972”

5x7 negatives, “1972- 1974”

5x7 negatives, “1974-1976”

5x7 negatives, “1977-1979”; 5x7 negatives, “Book: The Present of the Past” [Group contains negatives in formats 6.45cm, 2 ¼, 4x5 and 5x7 of various projects and dates from the 1940’s to 1990’s]


76 Project, “N.E.A, Idaho 1977” [5x7]; Project, “Italy” 1979 [5x7]; Project, “Italy 1978” [5x7 color]
79 Project, “Italy 1978, Sardinia 1980” [5x7 color]; “Italy 1982”
80 “New Mexico 1988” [5x7]; “State Parks Color” [4x5 and 5x7 color positives]; Project, “COLOR NEG,” [5x7s]
81 Project, “COLOR NEG,” [5x7s]
84 Black-and-white Polaroid prints, undated; 1960-1961; 1964
86 Black-and-white Polaroid prints, 1972-1974
87 Black-and-white Polaroid prints, 1975
88 Black-and-white Polaroid prints, 1976
89 Black-and-white Polaroid prints, 1977
90 Black-and-white Polaroid prints, 1978-1979
92 Black-and-white Polaroid prints, 1982
93 Black-and-white Polaroid prints, 1983
94 Black-and-white Polaroid prints, 1986
95 Black-and-white Polaroid prints, 1990; 1995
96 Color Polaroid prints, 1974; 1981
97 Color Polaroid prints, undated; 1978
98 Color Polaroid prints, 1979
99 Color Polaroid prints, 1980
100 Color Polaroid prints, 1982