

Center for Creative Photography

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Finding aid for the
Frederick Sommer Miscellaneous collection, circa 1960-1989

AG 36

Frederick Sommer Miscellaneous collection, circa 1960-1989

AG 36

Creator

Frederick Sommer

Abstract

Papers and audio-visual materials related to the career of Frederick Sommer (1905-1999), photographer. (0.25 linear feet)

Quantity/ Extent

0.25 linear feet

Language of Materials

English

Biographical/ Historical Note

Frederick Sommer was born in Italy on September 7, 1905, however, Sommer was raised in Brazil. In 1927 Sommer earned his Master's in Landscape Architecture from Cornell University. While studying at Cornell Sommer met Elisabeth Watson. The pair married in 1928. Sommer and Watson did not have children. In 1931 Sommer and Watson moved to Tucson, Arizona. The couple relocated again in 1935 this time to Prescott, Arizona. On November 18, 1939 Sommer became a naturalized citizen of the United States.

In 1930 Sommer was diagnosed with tuberculosis, it was a year after this diagnosis that Sommer first began to experiment with photography. Sommer began with works such as watercolor and ink drawings of musical scores. In 1938 Sommer came to possess an 8 X 10 Century Universal camera and began to seriously experiment with photography. Sommer's photography includes still lifes, jarred subjects, horizontal landscapes, cliché verre negatives, and nudes. Sommer had relationships with many other photographers including Edward Weston, Max Ernst, Aaron Siskind, Richard Nickel, and Minor White.

In addition to photography Sommer was also interested in musical scores. Sommer did not play music nor could he read music. While in Los Angeles in 1934 Sommer came across an art museum and was intrigued by the display of musical scores. Sommer would then go on to experiment with the correlation between the way a score was noted and the way the score was heard. Sommer would draw musical scores in order to better test this theory. Sommer did not play and thus would invite various musical acquaintances over to play the musical scores that he had drawn. The first public

musical performance of Sommer's music was performed in on May 9, 1968 at Prescott College where Sommer was on the faculty.

Sommer died on January 23, 1999.

Scope and Content Note

The collection is comprised of ten folders, contents of each collected from a separate source.

Arrangement

Series 1: Miscellaneous audio-visual materials documenting the career of Frederick Sommer, 1960-1989. .25 linear feet. (Nine folders)

Names and Subject Terms

Sommer, Frederick <https://lccn.loc.gov/n80010015>

Photography

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

File 1-2, Gift of Timothy Drucker, 1980

File 7, Gift of Miriam F. Mednick, 1977

File 8, Gift of Fred Kline, 1990

File 9, Gift of Charles Semonsky, 1990

Related Materials

There are related materials in collection AG28.

Preferred Citation

Frederick Sommer Miscellaneous collection, circa 1960-1980, AG36. Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ.

Processing Information

The collection was processed in January 1986 by A. Stark. Materials in Folder 6 were withdrawn from MISCELLANEOUS SMALL COLLECTIONS (AG 8, Subgroup 3) by Kristi Bradford, May 1990. The finding aid was updated by Phoenix Smithey in 2017.

Container List

Series 1: Frederick Sommer Miscellaneous collection, circa 1960-1989

Box Folder

- | | | |
|---|-----|---|
| 1 | 1-2 | Twelve sheets of slides (126 slides) from public lecture on Sommer given by Timothy Drucker in 1980 as part of his Polaroid Fellowship [<i>see also</i> CCP videotapes 80:019-24, 80:0 |
| | 3 | <i>Words/Images</i> (CCP, 1985), monograph and brochure |
| | 4 | Transcript of interview with Sommer, KAET, Channel 8, Arizona State University, |
| | 5 | Transcript of interview with James Enyeart about Sommer, KAET, Channel 8, Arizona State University, 1982 (<i>see also</i> CCP videotape 85:001) |
| | 6 | <i>Creative Camera</i> , No. 204 (Dec. 1981). Contains article "Frederick Sommer: a Goldmine in Arizona" by Mark Haworth-Booth |
| | 7 | Correspondence, memoranda, and inventory, 1967-1969, regarding an exhibition, "Frederick Sommer", Philadelphia College of Art, 1968 |
| | 8 | Nine color snapshots of four paintings and one drawing by Frederick Sommer |
| | 9 | Photocopy of an unpublished manuscript, "Frederick Sommer: A Critical Essay," by Charles Semonsky, 35 pages |
| | 10 | <i>Advanced Black-and-White Photography</i> , p. 15 contains image by Sommer |