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Mae Upperman Collection

1929-2024
9 boxes (13 linear feet)
Call no.: MS 1194



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Born in 1937, Mae Upperman grew up Asbury Park, New Jersey, a town segregated by race and wealth. She was educated at Tufts University, receiving a B.A. in adult education and physical therapy, and Boston University, receiving a Master's degree in education. Her career features work in several fields, each one with a focus on improving lives of vulnerable individuals in society. These contributions include: working as a physical therapist for the Visiting Nurses Association of Boston; working at the Action for Boston Community Development, a non-profit dedicated to helping Boston residents out of poverty; researching new initiatives in Head Start; and developing and managing a center-based early intervention program for children with developmental disabilities. Alongside Upperman's professional achievements, she is also an artist, poet, and book collector.

The Mae Upperman Collection consists of more than 200 books by Black women authors and Upperman's artwork, much of which depicts abstract Black figures. An article about Upperman and her collection appeared in the Massachusetts Daily Collegian in 2023.

Background on Mae Upperman

Born in 1937, Mae Upperman grew up Asbury Park, New Jersey, a town segregated by race and wealth. She was educated at Tufts University, receiving a B.A. in adult education and physical therapy, and Boston University, receiving a Master's degree in education. Her career features work in several fields, each one with a focus on improving lives of vulnerable individuals in society. These contributions include: working as a physical therapist for the Visiting Nurses Association of Boston; working at the Action for Boston Community Development, a non-profit dedicated to helping Boston residents out of poverty; researching new initiatives in Head Start; and developing and managing a center-based early intervention program for children with developmental disabilities. Alongside Upperman's professional achievements, she is also an artist, poet, and book collector.

Scope of collection

The Mae Upperman Collection consists Upperman’s artwork, much of which depicts abstract Black figures; correspondence; printed materials, and photographs.

Inventory

Artwork
ca.c. 2000s
Box 1: 1
Artwork
ca.2000s
Box 1: 2
Artwork
ca.1990s
Box 1: 3
Artwork
ca.2010s
Box 1: 4
Artwork
ca.2010s
Box 1: 5
Artwork
undated
Box 1: 6
Artwork
undated
Box 1: 7
Artwork
undated
Box 1: 8
Artwork
undated
Box 1: 9
Artwork
undated
Box 1: 10
Artwork
undated
Box 1: 11
Artwork
ca.2010s
Box 1: 12
Artwork
ca.2010s
Box 1: 13
Artwork
ca.2010s
Box 1: 14
Artwork
ca.2010s
Box 1: 15
Artwork
ca.1990s-2000s
Box 1: 16
Artwork
ca.2000s-2020s
Box 1: 17
Artwork
ca.2000s-2020s
Box 1: 18
Artwork
ca.2004
Box 1: 19
Artwork
ca.2000s
Box 1: 20
Artwork
2006
Box 1: 21
Artwork
ca.2000s-2020s
Box 1: 22
Artwork
ca.2010s-2020s
Box 1: 23
Artwork
ca.1990s-2020s
Box 1: 24
Artwork
ca.2010s-2020s
Box 1: 25
Artwork
ca.1990s-2020s
Box 1: 26
Artwork
ca.1990s-2020s
Box 1: 27
Artwork
ca.1980s-2020s
Box 1: 28
Artwork
ca.1990s-2010s
Box 1: 29
Artwork
undated
Box 4

Tiles and magnets.

Artwork
undated
Box 5

Tiles and magnets.

Artwork
undated
Box 6

Painted styrofoam.

Artwork
c. 2000s
Box 8

An assortment of sketchbooks.

Bank and Insurance Correspondence
ca.2010s
Box 2: 1
Certificates and Diplomas
ca.1950s
Box 2: 2
Collage Material
ca.2010s
Box 2: 3
Craft Materials
ca.1990s-2010s
Box 2: 4
Diplomas
ca.1950s
Box 2: 5
Diplomas
ca.1960s
Box 2: 6
Greeting Cards
ca.1970s-2010s
Box 2: 7
Greeting Cards (Holiday)
ca.1970s-2010s
Box 2: 8
Letters
ca.1960s-2020s
Box 2: 9
Letters
ca.1980s-2010s
Box 2: 10
Magazine Clippings
ca.1990s
Box 2: 11

Excerpts from one magazine.

Magazine Clippings
ca.1990s-2010s
Box 2: 12
Maps and Travel Material
ca.1960s-1990s
Box 2: 13
Mementos
ca.2010s
Box 2: 14
Mementos

Box 9

Includes figurines, trinkets, a jewelry box, and more mementos.

Memorial Pamphlets
1971-2024
Box 2: 15
Negatives
1989
Box 2: 16
Newspaper Clippings
ca.1960s-2000s
Box 2: 17

Includes an assortment of photos of George W. Bush.

Notebooks
ca.1990s-2010s
Box 2: 18
Photographs
ca.1880s
Box 2: 19

Photos from Barbados.

Photographs
ca.1940s-1960s
Box 2: 20
Photographs
1963-1964
Box 2: 21
Photographs
ca.1970s
Box 2: 22
Photographs
1976-1977
Box 2: 23
Photographs
ca.1980s
Box 2: 24
Photographs
ca.1990s
Box 2: 25

Photographs
ca.1990s
Box 2: 26
Photographs
ca.2000s
Box 2: 27
Photographs
2010
Box 2: 28
Photographs
ca.2010s
Box 2: 29
Photographs (Slides)
ca.1970s
Box 2: 30
Postcards
ca.1978-2003
Box 3: 1
Postcards (Blank)
ca.1970s-2010s
Box 3: 2
Printed Material
ca.2009
Box 3: 3
Promotional Material
ca.2000s-2020s
Box 3: 4
School Material
1929-1956
Box 3: 5

Includes report cards, playbooks, and commencement announcements, among other material.

Sketchbook
1995
Box 3: 6
Sketchbook
2003
Box 3: 7
Writing
ca.2010s
Box 3: 8

Miscellaneous writing.

Yearbook
1955
Box 3: 9

Driftwood High School yearbook, annotated.

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Gift of Mae Upperman, 2023.

Processing Information

Processed by Sophia Polyn, 2025.

Separated Material

Books were removed from the collection and will be cataloged separately.

Language:

English

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Search terms

Subjects

- African American women artists
- African American women authors

Genres and formats

- Paintings
- Works of art



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