

CRANBROOK

ARCHIVES

Marianne Strengell (1909 - 1998)

Papers, 1620-1998 (Bulk 1928-1995)
9.21 linear ft.

Acquisition Number:	1991-07
Acquisition:	The collection was donated to the Archives in three lots – one in 1991, one in 1995, and the third in 1996. These were merged into a single collection in 1996 by Ethel McNaughton. A fourth set of records was donated in June 2003 from the estate of Olav Hammarstrom.
Access:	Access to the collection is unrestricted.
Copyright:	Copyright to this collection is held by the Cranbrook Educational Community.
Preferred Citation:	Marianne Strengell Papers, Cranbrook Archives, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan.
Photographs:	In Series IV: Photographs and in Photograph Special File.
Audio/Visual:	16mm films in Series IV: Photographs.
Index:	See end of finding aid.
Processing:	Initial processing was done in 1996 by Ethel McNaughton, final processing done in 2011 by Cheri Y. Gay.



History

Marianne Strengell was born in Helsingfors, Finland on 24 May 1909, daughter of Finnish architect Gustaf Strengell and interior designer Anna Wegelius. She graduated from the Central School of Industrial Design in Helsingfors in 1929, then went to Stockholm where she assisted in the preparations for the 1930 Stockholm Exposition. Prior to coming to the United States in 1936, Strengell held several positions in Scandinavia, designing rugs, textiles and interiors. One of her earliest positions was as a designer at Hemflit-Kotiahkeruus where her mother, Anna, was director and responsible for starting a cottage industry in weaving for the farmers' wives.

As early as 1931, Strengell was invited by family friend Eliel Saarinen to work at the Cranbrook Academy of Art, however it wasn't until 1937 that she began there as an instructor. In 1942, when Loja Saarinen retired, Strengell replaced her as head of the Department of Weaving and Textile Design. She developed a curriculum that emphasized weave structure, versus the more pictorial imagery used by Saarinen. In her 25 years at Cranbrook, she trained many fine textile artists, including Jack Lenor Larsen, Robert Sailors and Ed Rossbach. Her circle of friends and colleagues included Harry Bertoina, Ben Baldwin, Ray and Charles Eames, and Florence Knoll. She retired from Cranbrook in 1961.

While teaching at Cranbrook, Strengell also held a number of outside consulting positions and worked on commissions for architects, such as the interior fabrics for Eero Saarinen's General Motors Tech Center and work for Skidmore, Owings and Merrill. She was a pioneer in the use of synthetic fibers, and her emphasis on texture rather than pattern influenced the American market in automotive and interior design. Her versatility in the development of new yarns and fabrics contributed toward the use of textiles as architectural elements. Strengell created original textile designs for automotive interiors for Ford Motor Company, General Motors Corporation, Chrysler and American Motors, as well as for United Airlines. Her upholstery design "Taj Mahal" for the 1959 Lincoln Continental is iconic. She sometimes worked in conjunction with her husband, architect Olav Hammarstrom, designing interiors and textiles for his projects. Their home in Wellfleet, Mass. was an amalgam of his architectural and furniture design, and her textiles and rugs.

In 1951, Strengell was sent by the International Cooperation Administration to Japan and the Philippines as a weaving and textile adviser to help establish cottage industries. Simultaneously she acted as a consultant there on weaving and textile production, for the U.N. Technical Assistance Administration. With her husband she developed a new loom to accommodate wider widths of fabric, and she incorporated native fibers, such as coconut and grass, into the textiles. Her efforts helped raise the standard of living in both countries.

Strengell and Hammarstrom traveled the world, working, lecturing, and studying developments in architecture, arts and crafts, and the use of indigenous materials. In India, Strengell was approached by a young Indian woman determined to be a weaver, for

whom Strengell helped obtain a Cranbrook scholarship. She called Nelly Mehta her “number one great Indian student.”

Strengell had more than 70 solo exhibitions throughout the United States and the world. In 1983, she began donating her textiles to museums, including the American Museum of Arts and Crafts, the Museum of Modern Art, the Cooper-Hewitt Museum, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Musée des Arts Decoratifs in Montreal, and the Museum of Applied Art in Helsinki, Finland.

She was first married to Cranbrook artist, Charles Yerkes Dusenbury, and had two children, Sandra, and Chris. She later married Olav Hammarstrom. She passed away at their home in Wellfleet, Massachusetts on 8 May 1998.

Scope and Content of Collection

The collection consists chiefly of correspondence, photographs, early writings of Strengell and published works of her father, Gustaf Strengell, textile samples and her work in the Philippines. It is divided into five series: PERSONAL; PROFESSIONAL; REALIA; OVERSIZE AND PHOTOGRAPHS that document Strengell's life as a weaver, teacher, photographer, artist, mother and wife.

Series I: Personal contains materials relating to Strengell's family, specifically several works by her father, Gustaf Strengell, in Finnish. In addition there are notebooks of her early drawings and writings, and an illustrated story written by daughter Sandra Dusenbury at age 15.

Series II: Professional contains her artistic statement, clippings, some writings and notably, her two works documenting her experience in the Philippines helping to establish a cottage industry in weaving and textiles. Also there are a number of textile samples, some identified. It has a **Subseries: Correspondence** which is chiefly letters to and from art institutions regarding the acquisition of her works. However, of particular note are two letters from Eliel Saarinen (translated from the Finnish) urging Strengell to come to Cranbrook, and describing his work, particularly on Kingswood School. Correspondence to Cranbrook Director of Archives Mark Coir sheds light on Strengell's time at Cranbrook and on Eliel Saarinen's feelings toward Nazi Germany. In addition, former student Jack Lenor Larsen's correspondence includes discussion on weaving processes and weaving/textiles at Cranbrook. His essay, "A Case for Pluralism" is also in the collection.

Series III: Realia contains two medals awarded to Strengell, and one to her father Gustaf.

Series IV: Photographs consists of two boxes of photographic prints, two boxes of larger, mounted prints, and two boxes containing approximately 1500 slides. The unmounted prints, chiefly black and white, include photographs of Marianne and Olav, many snapshots of family, some of Wellfleet, and a number of prints her textiles and rugs. In 1996, a collection of 21 black and white prints (and negatives) of nature photo panels that Strengell produced in her later years were transferred from the Cranbrook Art Museum to the Archives. These images, as well a collection of related oversize images, remain with the manuscript collection. Some individual images of Strengell, as well as images found in a portfolio of her work, have been removed to the photograph collection. The slides cover a variety of topics, from her many travels, to her textile and artistic work, to those used in her lectures. Slides of work by various artists include those of Cranbrook alumni such as Eames, Bertoia and Saarinen.

Series V: Oversize is two boxes, the first of which contains items related to others in the collection, such as an exhibit poster, some fabric samples and a book by Gustaf Strengell. The second box contains three framed collages of wood, cork and fabric, possibly by

Olav Hammarstrom, per a reference in the finding aid to his papers in the Archives of American Art.

Related Collections

- Audio Cassette Tape Collection, 1990-09, Tape 78
- CAA Records of the Administration, 1981-09
- Cranbrook Foundation Records, 1981-05
- Benjamin Baldwin Papers, 2006-05
- CAA Publications, 1998-05a
- Scrapbook Collection
- Cranbrook Archives Photograph Collection. See: CAA Faculty Photographs and CAA Faculty Work

Box Number--Description

SERIES I: PERSONAL

Box 1

1. Dusenbury, Sandra – “Sand in my Shoes,” 1956
2. Early writing and drawings – First drawings, n.d.
3. Early writing and drawings – Trip to Reval, Estonia, 1928
4. Early writing and drawings – Paris, 1935-1936
5. Ephemera, 1966-1991
6. Genealogy, 1620-1990
7. Health, 1979-1988
8. Horoscope, n.d.
9. Obituary, 1998
10. Strengell, Gustaf – Clippings, 1888-1918
11. Strengell, Gustaf – Correspondence, 1906
12. Strengell, Gustaf – Works – *Franzen*, 1898
13. Strengell, Gustaf – Works – Poems, 1901
14. Strengell, Gustaf – Works – *Den Nya Annonser*, 1924
15. Strengell, Gustaf – Works – Drawings, c1902
16. Strengell, Gustaf – Works – “Ett Sommarhem,” n.d.

Box 2

1. Strengell, Gustaf – Works – *Euterpe*, 1963
2. Travel, 1934-1985

SERIES II: PROFESSIONAL

3. Artistic statement, n.d.-1960
4. Clippings & PR, 1949-1993
5. Curriculum vitae, c1989
6. Ephemera – Awards, 1966-1993
7. Ephemera – Contemporaries, 1937-1993
8. Ephemera – Exhibitions, 1935-1988
9. Publications – Ossabaw Island, 1926-1990
10. Publications – “Handweaving in the Philippines,” 1953
11. Textiles – Drawings, n.d.
12. Textiles – Lists, n.d.-1993
13. Textiles – Loom blueprint, 1951

Box 3

1. Textiles – Samples – Identified, 1943-1958
2. Textiles – Samples – Unidentified, n.d. (1 of 2)
3. Textiles – Samples – Unidentified, n.d. (2 of 2)
4. Writings, n.d.
5. Writings – [Philippine Report #1], 1951
6. Writings – [Philippine Report #2], 1952

SERIES II: PROFESSIONAL (cont.)

Box 4

SubSeries: Correspondence

1. Archives of American Art, 1982-1989
2. Art Institute of Chicago, 1982-1990
3. Cooper Hewitt Museum, 1983-1993
4. Cranbrook Academy of Art, 1982-1984
5. Cranbrook Academy of Art, 1985-1988
6. Cranbrook Academy of Art, 1989-1992
7. Cranbrook Archives, 1990-1998
8. Detroit Institute of Arts, 1981-1984
9. General, 1943-1985
10. General, 1986-1993
11. Larsen, Jack Lenor, 1985-1993
12. Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1984-1992
13. Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 1984-1988
14. Musée des Arts Decoratifs de Montreal, 1985-1992
15. Museum of American Craft, 1982-1994
16. Museum of Applied Art, 1984-1989
17. Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1983-1988
18. Renwick Gallery(National Museum of American Art), 1983-1984
19. Saarinen, Eliel, 1931-1932

SERIES III: REALIA

Box 5

“The Gold Medal for Craftsmanship to Marianne Strengell, “American Craft Council, 1993

Founders Medal, Cranbrook Foundation, “Artist, Innovator, Mentor” 1995
Medal inscribed: “Gustaf Strengell, 1922”

SERIES IV: PHOTOGRAPHS

Box 6

1. Angove House, n.d.
2. Dusenbury, Chris & Dusenbury, Susan, c1960-1962
3. Dusenbury, Chris & Schuchard, Marilyn, Brooke & Wells, c1977-1985
4. Dusenbury, Susan & Hackett, Robert, Ian & Jason, 1966-1985
5. Exhibits
6. Exteriors & interiors
7. GM Tech Center
8. Miscellaneous
9. Strengell, Marianne, c1910-1950
10. Strengell, Marianne, c1955-1970
11. Strengell, Marianne – At loom, c1940-1956
12. Strengell, Marianne – Cranbrook Founder’s Award, 1995
13. Strengell, Marianne – Cranbrook residence, n.d.

SERIES IV: PHOTOGRAPHS (cont.)

Box 6 (cont.)

14. Strengell, Marianne – Friends & family, c1950-1990
15. Strengell, Marianne – Nature Through a Weaver's Eye, 1968
16. Strengell, Marianne – Ossabaw Island, n.d.
17. Strengell, Marianne – Paintings, n.d.

Box 7

1. Strengell, Marianne – Textiles, n.d.
2. Strengell, Marianne – Textiles – Fabrics, n.d.
3. Strengell, Marianne – Textiles – Rugs, n.d.
4. Strengell, Marianne – With colleagues, c1940-1965
5. Strengell, Marianne & Dusenbury, Charles, c1945
6. Strengell, Marianne & Hammarstrom, Olav, c1950-1970
7. Strengell, Marianne & Hammarstrom, Olav, c1980-1990
8. Wellfleet, Mass., c1981-1986
9. "8 mm movie reels: at Cape & beach c1951-1954; at Cranbrook, 1948-1949 (copied to DVD)

Box 8

1. Bohlin, Annie, n.d.
2. Croze, Harvey, n.d.
3. Hammarstrom, Olav, n.d.
4. Mitchell, Jill, n.d.
5. Nature, n.d. (1 of 2)

Box 9

1. Nature, n.d. (2 of 2)
2. Strengell, Marianne, n.d.
3. Strengell, Sara, n.d.
4. Unidentified, n.d.
5. West, Joy Griffith, c.1962
6. Winston, Lydia, c1944

Box 10

Slide Box 1

Fashions
Manmade designs (incl. abstract paintings)
Designs of nature

Slide Box 2

Far East, 1957-65
Spain? c1966
Venice, 1973
Yugoslavia, 1973
Mexico
France

SERIES IV: PHOTOGRAPHS (cont.)

Box 10 (cont.)

Slide Box 3

“Snow designs in Cambridge” (per MS)
African masks
Unidentified art work
MS paintings
African-American women weaving
Unidentified places
Unidentified people
Nature/Sailing
Cranbrook
Metropolitan Museum of Art
Textiles – MS?

Slide Box 4

(from box labeled “M. lecture material”)
Artist’s museum slides
Fabrics – Costumes, displays
Accessories
Annie – Girl w/hat
Ceramics – A. Kang
Rugs – Tai Ping
Rugs – Seconds
Rugs
(end: box labeled “M. lecture material”)
MS textile work
Yarns & samples

Slide Box 5

(from box labeled “M. lecture material”)
Tie dyed batik
Weavers
Fabrics
Student assorted fabrics
Sheer
Screens
Fashions
Jamaican ruins
Jamaican I.I.D. show
Decorated fabrics
The mystery of silk (made from 35 mm film)

SERIES IV: PHOTOGRAPHS (cont.)

Box 11

Slide Box 1

(from box labeled "M. lecture material")

Rugs – unknown designers

Slide Box 2

Interiors

Fabrics – Foreign (per MS)

Fabrics – Unknown designers

Slide Box 3

Fabrics – Unknown designers

Fabrics – Knoll/Larson

Fabrics – Jamaican

Slide Box 4

Susan/Chris Dusenbury

Olaf Hammarstrom

MS/OH/w/family

MS textiles

MS at work

GM Tech

Slide Box 5

Work of various artists, list in box, includes: Bertoia, Eames, Girard, Gropius, Hoffman, P. Johnson, Knoll (MS designs), Larson, Saarinen, van der Rohe

SERIES V: OVERSIZE

Box 12

Hand drawn birthday card to MS from students, n.d.

Unidentified lithograph, n.d.

Strengell, Gustaf – Works – *En Bok om Boken*, 1931

"Marianne Strengell at Cherry Stone Gallery" exhibit posters, 1974

2 unidentified woven textile samples

"Forecast: the Miracle of Metallic Yarns Made of Alcoa Aluminum"

Drawing on tissue in marker, mounted on cardboard ("Chatham?" written on back)

SERIES V: OVERSIZE (cont.)

Box 13

Wooden slat collage on cork, in wooden frame, 11.5" x 24"

Wooden slat collage on textile and paper, in wooden frame, 11" x 25"

Watercolor painting on foam core mounted on mat board, in wooden frame, 16.5"
x 21"

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