

## **Eleanor Merritt [Darlington] Collection**

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### **Overview**

Repository	Archives The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art 5401 Bay Shore Road, Sarasota, Florida 34243 archives@ringling.org
Creator	Eleanor Merritt Darlington
Title	Eleanor Merritt [Darlington] Collection
Dates	1950-2019, bulk dates 1990-2009
Physical Description	17 boxes 5.3 linear feet
Language	English
Arrangement	Subject, Chronological
Summary	The Eleanor Merritt Collection holds printed materials, lectures, records, news clippings, audio-visual materials, and correspondence related to Eleanor Merritt's life-long career as an artist, teacher, and advocate for community arts organizations. Materials focus on Merritt's life in Long Island, New York and Sarasota, Florida. Her formative years are captured in essays while a college student, planning notebooks as an art history teacher, and printed materials documenting her early artistic career.

Her involvement with the arts community primarily pertains to her work with the Women's Caucus of Art (WCA), Women of Color (WOCA), the Petticoat Painters, Community Art in Public Places (CAPP), Florida Artists Group, Pierian Spring Academy, and as a docent and board member of The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art. There are a significant number of art history lecture outlines and source materials on African American, Feminist, and minority artists.

### **Administrative Information**

Provenance	Dr. Lisa Merritt donated this collection to The Ringling and all rights. Gift, 2022. Accessioned as A2022.0004.
Information about Access	The Eleanor Merritt Collection can be accessed on site at The Ringling Archives.
Ownership and Copyright	Copyright of this work is held by The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art. It is provided here for scholarship, research, and private study. Further use or copying of the work beyond Fair Use may require permission from The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art ( <a href="http://rightsstatements.org/vocab/InC/1.0/">http://rightsstatements.org/vocab/InC/1.0/</a> ).
Cite As	The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Eleanor Merritt [Darlington] Collection, 1950-2019.
Processing Note	The material is arranged by subject in chronological order. Eleanor Merritt's folder titles have been retained unless otherwise indicated with brackets. Original order has been retained with the exception of grouping together like-materials if found in multiple locations within Merritt's original files. Binders were disassembled and newspaper clippings were photocopied. Processed by Katie Margerison, 2022.

### **Biographical Note**

Artist Eleanor Merritt was born in Harlem, New York on August 17, 1933, and is a first generation Jamaican-American. Her father, Wilbert Lipsett Sr. was a leather goods artist,

cobbler, member of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, United Negro Improvement Association, and African Communities League (UNIA-ACL). Merritt's mother, Lynette Hyman-Lipsett, was the daughter of a jewelry maker of Syrian-Jewish descent and an Afro-Portuguese mother. Both Merritt's parents lived in Harlem, NY during the Harlem Renaissance.

Merritt attended the prestigious High School for Music and Art in New York and then attended Brooklyn College where she received her B.A. in Art in 1955 and her M.A. in Fine Arts and Education in 1958. While at Brooklyn College, Merritt studied alongside the noted Abstract Expressionists Mark Rothko, Ad Rhinehart, Kurt Seligmann, Burgoyne Diller, and Jimmy Ernst.

While attending Brooklyn College, Eleanor married Lorenzo Merritt and they had two daughters: Lori, in 1958, and Lisa, in 1960. The family traveled often: attending the World's Fair in Seattle in 1962, taking a road trip from New York to Acapulco, Mexico in 1965, traveling across Europe in 1967 to Spain and North Africa, visiting Ghana in 1970, and making multiple trips to Jamaica and the Caribbean.

Merritt worked on her doctorate in Arts Education at Hofstra University. She became the first African American art teacher for the Nassau County New York School District and the first African American to serve as Chair of their Art Department, a position she held for twenty-seven years. She was an original member of the Long Island Black Artist Association (LIBAA).

Merritt was an advocate within local and national art organizations when she came to Sarasota. Here she focused on creating more equitable opportunities for women artists of color. She was the program manager for the Women's Caucus for Arts' Women of Color (WOCA) Slide Project, The Ringling's first African American female board member, a long-standing member of the Florida Artists Group, a Petticoat Painter, and founded the Women Contemporary Artists group.

Merritt worked within the local community as chairman of the Sarasota Art in Public Places Committee, was a board member of the Arts & Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County, Arts Council and Art Center, Sarasota, and a board member and former President of the Venice Art Center. She served as a docent for 25 years at The Ringling and was involved with the National Museum of Women in the Arts.

Eleanor Merritt was married to Lorenzo Merritt from 1954 -1976, and to Chris Darlington from 1980 to his passing in 2017. Eleanor Merritt died January 16th, 2019.

Merritt exhibited at the University of Florida, the University of Connecticut, American International College, the Carnegie Endowment Institute in NYC, the Contemporary Art Museum in Jacksonville, Florida, the Polk Museum in Lakeland, the Houston Museum of African American Culture, and the Florida Museum of Art and in galleries in California, Colorado, the U.K., and Shimonoseki, Japan. She had 25 one woman shows.

In 2022 the Estate of Eleanor Merritt donated three works by Merritt to The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art: *Here Comes the Sun*, *Afua's Father*, and *Remembrance*. This same year, The Ringling established the Eleanor Merritt Fellowship, a one-year paid position designed

to support underrepresented graduate students who have an interest in arts and museum professions.

### **Scope and Content Note**

The Eleanor Merritt collection holds printed materials, lectures, records, news clippings, audio visual materials, and correspondence which capture Eleanor Merritt's life-long career as an artist, teacher, and leader of community arts organizations. This collection documents how Merritt organized and recorded her substantial involvement with the Sarasota County arts community and the growth of her career as an artist and teacher overtime. The collection reflects Merritt's life-long advocacy for women and women of color in the arts. This interest is apparent in the types of organizations she was involved with, the themes of her artwork, and teaching materials, all highlighting the history of minority artists.

The collection is arranged by subject in chronological order spanning from 1950 – 2019, with the majority of the collection dating after 2000. Material from prior to 1980 pertains to Merritt's life in New York. Notable in these files are illustrated high school reports of art from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, an art lesson planning book she illustrated while at Westbury High School, and her numerous essays on pedagogical theory while at Hofstra University.

Merritt documented her career, involvement with community art organizations, and her art within the binders in this collection. The binders hold numerous photographs of her artworks, exhibition pamphlets, and related newspaper and magazine clippings, with many arranged in a scrap-book style. Especially present within these files are printed materials relating to the Women Contemporary Artists (WCA). From Merritt's late career teaching art history, there are a large number of lecture outlines and reference materials on minority artists.

### **Related Materials**

Governing Boards  
Printed Materials

### **Subject Headings**

African American women artists  
Public Art  
Feminism  
Womanism  
Women—History  
Women Artists  
Feminism and the arts  
Art--Study and teaching  
Minority artists  
Minority Women Artists  
Artists  
Art—History

Painting  
Acrylic Painting  
Jamaican Americans  
Jamaican American Women

## Contents of the Collection

### Box Listing

Box no. Box Title Folder no. Folder Title Description

#### Box 1 Photographs

Folder 1 Photographs by E. Merritt, Brooklyn College, 1950s

#### Box 2 Merritt's Student Work

Folder 1 High School Reports: Art History. 1950.

Folder 2 Educational Certificates and Report Cards, 1947-1954

Folder 3 Hofstra University EDD Program Essays, 1954-1979, 1 of 3

Folder 4 Hofstra University EDD Program Essays, 1954-1979, 2 of 3

Folder 5 Hofstra University EDD Program Essays, 1954-1979, 3 of 3

Folder 6 *Landscape*, Brooklyn College literary-art magazine, vol.1 no.2, 1955

#### Box 3 Diplomas 1951, 1955

Object 1 High School of Music and Art Diploma, June 1951

Object 2 Brooklyn College Diploma, February 1, 1955

Folder 1 Brooklyn College, Landscapes, spring 1954

#### Box 4 Early Teaching Materials

Folder 1 Yearbooks: David Marcus Junior High, 1957, 1959.

Folder 2 Westbury Public Schools Department Report, 1972-1978.

Folder 3 University of New York: A Comprehensive Foundation Course, 1972.

Folder 4 Westbury Public Schools Art Department Curriculum 1973-1974

Folder 5 University of New York Curriculum Booklets: Design, Sculpture, Ceramics, Jewelry Making, 1974.

Folder 6 Art History Course Outline and Plan book, no date.

Folder 7 Westbury School District, Notebook Cover Art, no date.

Folder 8 Teacher's Daily Plan Book, Westbury High School, no date.

#### Box 5 Artifacts

Object 1 Second Prize Ribbon, Friends of Lakeview Library, 1974

Object 2 Florida State University President's Club Nametag, no date.

Object 3 Mini Notebook with Lecture Reminder Notes

#### Box 6 Personal Materials

Folder 1 Personal Business Cards, Artist Statements, no date.

- Folder 2 Artists of Color Invitational, 1950, 2000
- Folder 3 Congratulatory Correspondence, 1987-2000
- Folder 4 Binder: List of Paintings Sold, 1991-2017
- Folder 5 Artist of the Year Award: Publicity, Printed Materials, Congratulatory Correspondence. 1995.
- Folder 6 Eleanor Merritt Retrospective Show 1995. 1995-1996.
- Folder 7 Congratulatory Correspondence, 1996.
- Folder 8 Autobiographical Speech, Correspondence, Lecture Outlines for Long Boat Key Art Center, 1997-1998.
- Folder 9 Publicity: Articles Featuring Merritt. 1998, 2008, 2012.
- Folder 10 Photos of Merritt's Joint Exhibition at Manatee Community College, Venice, no date.
- Folder 11 Slide Film: Artwork of Eleanor Merritt
- Folder 12 Winston Art Group: Inventory Appraisal of Merritt's Artwork. December 28, 2018.
- Folder 13 Obituary News Clipping, 2019.
- Box 7 Binder: Exhibition Publicity
  - Folder 1 Exhibition Publicity: Articles and Reviews 1975-2007
  - Folder 2 Exhibition Publicity: Articles and Reviews 1992-2007
  - Folder 3 Exhibition Publicity: Articles and Reviews 2002-2008
- Box 8 Binder: Art Exhibitions [of Eleanor Merritt]
  - Folder 1 Art Exhibitions [of Eleanor Merritt] 1974-2007, 1 of 2
  - Folder 2 Art Exhibitions [of Eleanor Merritt] 1991-2000, 1 of 2
- Box 9 Binder: Women Contemporary Artists (WCA) Postcards and Publicity
  - Folder 1 WCA Postcards and Publicity 2005, 1 of 2
  - Folder 2 WCA Postcards and Publicity 2005, 2 of 2
  - Folder 3 WCA Postcards and Publicity 2006, 1 of 3
  - Folder 4 WCA Postcards and Publicity 2006, 2 of 3
  - Folder 5 WCA Postcards and Publicity 2006, 3 of 3
  - Folder 6 WCA Postcards and Publicity 2007, 1 of 3
  - Folder 7 WCA Postcards and Publicity 2007, 2 of 3
  - Folder 8 WCA Postcards and Publicity 2007, 3 of 3
  - Folder 9 WCA Postcards and Publicity 2008
- Box 10 Arts Community 1
  - Folder 1 WCA Informative Essays, Project Descriptions, Correspondence, 1992-2008
  - Folder 2 WCA Printed Materials, 1989- 1997
  - Folder 3 WCA Retreat Photos and Pamphlets, 1996, 2008
  - Folder 4 Universal Slide Company, December 12, 1998-2005
  - Folder 5 WCA Invitational Exhibition, Printed Materials, 2002-2011
  - Folder 6 WCA Job Descriptions, Bylaws Manual, Procedures, 2004-2012

- Folder 7 WCA National Florida Chapter, March 1-7, 2007
- Folder 8 WCA Exhibition Publicity and Related Materials, 2010-2013
- Box 11 Arts Community 2
  - Folder 1 CAPP Guidelines and Related Papers, 1994, 2000
  - Folder 2 CAPP Meeting Memorandums and Related Papers, 1995, 1999
  - Folder 3 CAPP: William Tarr Sculpture Proposal and Related Materials, 1997-1998
  - Folder 4 First Project at Judicial Center: Richard Haass, May 9, 1997-June 23, 1998
  - Folder 5 Certificates of Appreciation, 1997, 1998, 2008, 2014
  - Folder 6 Arts Council: Tim Prentice, Selby Library, August 23, 1998
  - Folder 7 Press, Media, Public Art, July 4, 1999-March 15, 2000
  - Folder 8 Art in Public Places, Library Project, Selby Community Foundation, 2000,  
1 of 2
  - Folder 9 Art in Public Places, Library Project, Selby Community Foundation, 2000  
2 of 2
  - Folder 10 Selby Library Project: Bruno Lucchesi, November 14, 2000
  - Folder 11 CAPP East Library Project Jury, May 14, 2001- July 9, 2003
  - Folder 12 CAPP Guidelines and Related Papers, 2002-2004
  - Folder 13 CAPP Budgets and Agendas, March 26, 2003- January 23, 2006
  - Folder 14 CAPP: John Medweff: Centripetal, 2003.
- Box 12 Arts Community 3
  - Folder 1 Black History Museum Nassau County, 1970, 1971
  - Folder 2 Project Back Cinema
  - Folder 3 Manatee County African American Festival of the Arts Program, 1998
  - Folder 4 Many Faces...Masks Show, Venice Art Center, March 18, 1997- September  
16, 1998
  - Folder 5 Petticoat Painters, 2000-2018, 1 of 4
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  - Folder 9 Multicultural Heritage Group, Spring 2012
  - Folder 10 Florida Artists Group INC. 2012, 2015
- Box 13 Ringling Museum
  - Folder 1 Ringling Lecturer: Chester Higgins Jr. "Feel the Spirit," circa 1994-1996
  - Folder 2 Ringling Museum Board Guide, 2002
  - Folder 3 Merritt, Ringling Board of Directors, April 2, 2002
  - Folder 4 Docent Materials: Koger Ceramics, circa 2003
  - Folder 5 Docent Materials: Margaret Bourke-White Photography, circa 2003
  - Folder 6 Docent Material: Resignation and Appreciation Certificates, 1989, 2001,  
2012, 2013.
  - Folder 7 Ringling Board of Directors Book (annotated), February 2, 2007
  - Folder 8 Docent Materials: Jacob Lawrence, 2008, 1 of 3

- Folder 9 Docent materials: Jacob Lawrence, 2008, 2 of 3
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  - Folder 11 Ringling Museum: Myths and Legends Student Tour Package, no date.
  - Folder 12 Selected Bibliography: Diversity and Multiculturalism From the Ringling Museum, no date.
  - Folder 13 Ringling Legacy Society Luncheon Invitation, 2017
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  - Folder 3 Black Art Ancestral Legacy, February 22, 1976- November 27, 2001, 1 of 2.
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  - Folder 5 Black Artists Information: Exhibits, History, Documentation, 1988, 1990s.
  - Folder 6 Afro American Arts Curriculum, June 1, 1991.
  - Folder 7 Native American Art Lecture, 1992-1996
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  - Folder 9 Kwanza, December 11, 1994 – 2013
  - Folder 10 *Beacon: South African Newspaper*, September 24, 1996
  - Folder 11 African American Artists Lecture, November 13, 2008- February 2, 2016, 1 of 2
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- Box 15 Late Teaching Materials 2
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  - Folder 9 Feminist Art Lecture 3, 2010
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  - Folder 11 Minority Artists in the Mainstream Art World Lectures, Spring 2016
  - Folder 12 What is Art? 2019
  - Folder 13 Heritage Lecture, no date.
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- Folder 18 Art History Slide Film, no date
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- Folder 20 Asian Women Artists, 20<sup>th</sup> Century, no date

Box 16 Publications and Printed Materials

- Folder 1 *Art Seven Eight Nine Ten: Curriculum Bulletin Number 5*, The Board of Education of the City of New York, 1955
- Folder 2 Printed Materials, 1982-2018
- Folder 3 Arts Council of Great Britain, 1990-1992
- Folder 4 A Brief History of the John and Mable Ringling Museum, 2003
- Folder 5 Images of America: Sarasota 1940-2005, 2005
- Folder 6 National Association of Women Artists Application, March 1, 2013
- Folder 7 *Art Uptown Gallery 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary*, Uptown Gallery Sarasota, 2015

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- Folder 1 Ringling Bros. & Barnum and Bailey Souvenir Program 109<sup>th</sup> Edition, 1979
- Folder 2 Clipping, *West Coast Woman*, May 1996