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Doris Caesar Papers

Collection Summary

Title:	Doris Caesar Papers
Call Number:	MS 95-02
Size:	0.25 linear feet
Acquisition:	Acquired by Martin H. Bush as Vice President for Academic Resources at Wichita State University.
Processed by:	AG, 9-1994; JEF, 11-24-1998; MN, 11-2012
Restrictions:	None

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Content Note

The diary depicts the life of Doris Caesar, a successful, educated career woman whose life was divided as to her artistic ventures and a family. It includes a variety of events and experiences in her life. Caesar's evaluations of other artists' works are astute and never seem to be overly critical or vindictive. The diary entries, written between October 1955 and November 1957, are interesting and enhance the reader's understanding of her philosophies, interests, and family life in addition to her work and accomplishments.

Biography

Doris Caesar was born November 8, 1892, in Brooklyn, New York to Lillian Dean Porter and Alfred Haynes Porter, an attorney who eventually acquired status in the commercial realm as president of the Royal Baking Powder Company.

Her mother died of pneumonia at the age of 37, when Doris was 11 years old. Her attentive father developed a closeness with his only child. He was intrigued by opera and frequently took Doris to the Metropolitan or the New Amsterdam Theater.

Eventually father and daughter moved to New York City, after which they toured Europe extensively.

Doris enrolled in the Art Students League in 1909 at the age of 16 and remained there four years. She studied drawing under Frederic A. Brigman and painting under several others.

She was married to Harry Caesar, a graduate of Princeton, in December 1913. Two sons were born in 1914 and 1916. World War I followed, ending with the Armistice of November 11, 1918. A baby daughter arrived in 1923. With the death of her father in following year, her thoughts returned to art, with a new emphasis on sculpture.

Throughout the ensuing five years she untiringly attended Archipenkols School on three-dimensional art. During this time she began to exhibit her productions at the bookstore and art gallery of Erhard Weyhe at 794 Lexington Avenue. Through his exhibits she developed an interest in contemporary German and English sculpture.

Despite the warnings by the manager at Weyhe's gallery that she was not ready for one-person exhibits, she persuaded the Montross Gallery to offer one in 1931. She was harshly criticized for over-emphasis on portrait heads. She was more successful with her second exhibition two years later at Montross.

She was more inventive and daring than the vast majority of those who lived half a century before World War II, but was engrossed in the same responsibilities of a wife and mother as one of the earlier era. Her husband's health problems were always a major part of her life to which she adapted and responded as necessary. She was proud of her children and devoted much time and effort to them.

When eventually Caesar's own originality of style was fully developed, her figures were nude women of elongated height and emaciated. But they reflect the realities of human existence and a woman's role in the society of her times. Martin H. Bush, author of her biography, explains, "By using long craning necks that culminate in pitifully small heads, she dramatizes the troubles of day-to-day living and the harsh realities of life. Yet emerging from this seeming awkwardness is an inner beauty, a kind of intuitive strength in the face of pain, and courage in the face of adversity."

Source: Bush, Martin H., *Doris Caesar*. Syracuse, New York, Syracuse University Press, 1970, pp. 23-48.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 1	FF 1	Diary of Doris Caesar, 10-2-1955 through 11-9-1957
		Caesar's sculptures, by title, noted in her diary:
		Big Reclining Woman, 11-8-1956
		Big Torso, 11-29-1956
		Crucifix, 4-24-1956, 10-24-1956
		Dancing Girl, 11-8-1956
		Flying Angel, 10-24-1955
		Large Figure, 4-18-1956
		Large Reclining Woman, 8-29-1956
		Large Standing Woman (1956), 3-25-1957

Large Standing Woman With Arms Raised (1956), 2-27-1957
Mother and Child (1952), 2-27-1957
New Woman With Arms Raised, 3-3-1956
Portrait, 11-30-1955, 12-7-1955
Reclining Figure, 7-21-1956
Reclining Woman, 4-29-1956, 7-30-1956, 8-3-1956, 8-20-1956, 10-8-1956, 11-9-1956
Seated Figure No. 1, 10-6-1955
Seated Woman, 5-13-1956, 10-24-1956
Small Seated Figure, 3-27-1956
St. Francis (1956), 3-3-1956, 3-8-1956, 10-24-1956, 2-27-1957
Standing Figure, 10-7-1956
Standing Figure No. 7, 10-13-1955
Standing Man, 10-3-1955
Standing Torso, 4-16-1956
Standing Woman, 10-2-1955, 12-10-1955, 3-27-1956, 5-2-1956, 6-25-1956, 8-3-1956, 9-27-1956, 10-24-1956, 2-27-1957
Tall Standing Figure, 3-31-1956
Tall Standing Woman, 10-8-1956
Torso, 12-9-1956
Torso with Head, 10-5-1955, 10-16-1955
Woman – Foot Up (1954), 3-25-1957
Young Woman, 7-8-1956.
Artists, by name, in diary entries:
Albers (Josef), 4-9-1957
Burchfield (Charles E.), 12-4-1955;
Calder (Alexander), 4-9-1957
de Kooning (Willem), 4-9-1957
Gauguin (Paul), 4-9-1957
Gorky (Arshile), 4-9-1957
Kline (Franz), 4-9-1957
Kootz (Samuel M.), 12-8-1955

Pollock (Jackson), 4-9-1957

Rodin (Auguste), 11-18-1956, 4-9-1957

Roesch, Curt, 11-4-1956, 11-7-1956, 11-11-1956, 12-1-1956

Rothko (Mark), 12-4-1955, 4-9-1957

Stein, Gertrude, 5-10-1956

Weinberg (Louis), 1-6-1957

Zorach (William), 4-29-1956

Box 1

FF 2

Brief synopsis and partial transcription of the diary's entries, written by collection processor Avis German.

For information, please contact us at:

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