

Mary Ellen Croteau Papers 1963-2019

Creator: Mary Ellen Croteau (1950-2019)
Extent: 2.5 linear feet (5 boxes and digital materials)
Language: English
Repository: Women and Leadership Archives, Loyola University Chicago

Administration Information

Access Restrictions: None.

Usage Restrictions: Copyright was not transferred to the Women and Leadership Archives.

Preferred Citation: Identification of item, date, box #, folder #, Mary Ellen Croteau Papers, Women and Leadership Archives, Loyola University Chicago.

Provenance: The materials were donated to the Women and Leadership Archives on March 11, 2011 and March 9, 2017 by Mary Ellen Croteau (WLA2011.25). Items collected by Laura Berfield May 2019 (WLA2023.22).

Processor: J. Curtis Main, April 2011. Beth Loch, May 2012.

Processing Information: Addendum incorporated, WLA2023.22 accession included, and finding aid updated by Laura Berfield, February 2025.

Separations: Less than 0.25 linear feet of duplicate and extraneous material was removed and discarded.

See Also: SisterSerpents Records, and other artists related to Artemisia at the Women and Leadership Archives. The Artemisia Records at the Art Institute of Chicago.

Biographical History

In an artist statement and biography submitted by the donor at the time of the donation to the WLA, Mary Ellen Croteau described herself as “a radical feminist and artist” who “sees [her] work as social criticism—a visual challenge to all those racist, sexist, and arrogant cultural assumptions that are the bedrock of the American Way.” Through her various forms of artistic expression, she exposed and critiqued patriarchy and sexism.

Croteau was born on June 22, 1950 in Chicago. She graduated from Elizabeth Seton High School in 1968. She attended the Art Institute of Chicago from 1987 to 1988 and received her BFA in sculpture from the University of Illinois at Chicago in 1990. Croteau later went on to receive her MFA from Rutgers University/Mason Gross School of the Arts in 1998. Much of Croteau’s work was based in exposure of the taboo and reversal of social hierarchies. Croteau was also a member, supporter, and leader of several women’s art collectives and activist groups that challenge injustice through artistic expression, including Artemisia and SisterSerpents.

Some of Croteau's major works include: "War memorial," (1994) a display of over 2000 women and girl's names murdered by men; "Musee de Nouvelle Renaissance," (1995-2001) an installation of oil canvas paintings that subvert traditional and religious Western patriarchal beliefs; and "Bag World," (2004-2009) a series demonstrating US society's reliance of plastic bags through various artistic forms. Some of Croteau's major shows include: "Good Girls and Bad," (1994, Artemisia Gallery, Chicago) a collection of pieces illustrating men's violence against women; "Mercy," (1999, Woman Made Gallery, Chicago) a solo exhibition dedication to feminist Andrea Dworkin; and "Manmade," (2008, StartArt, Reykjavik, Iceland) a series exploring human waste and trash. Croteau has been featured in *Village Voice*, *New York Times*, and *Ms.* magazine. She worked with non-recycled plastic waste, including bottle caps and plastic bags, to demonstrate the huge amounts of trash humans create and its damaging effects on the environment.

From September 2003 to June 2017, Croteau owned and operated Art on Armitage, a "window gallery in Chicago dedicated to art exhibitions, installations, and other creations". The raised window box in a building at 4125 W Armitage Ave featured exhibits and installations by artists, local and international, with the goal of making art accessible to the public.

Mary Ellen Croteau passed away on February 16, 2019 at the age of 68.

Scope and Content

The Mary Ellen Croteau Papers consist of 1.25 linear feet (3 boxes) and span the years 1963-2011. This collection is divided into three series: professional, audio/visual, and oversized. The professional records include various catalogues and gallery programs, gallery announcements and publicity materials, and magazines and newspapers in which Croteau's work appeared. Also in the professional records are a portfolio of Croteau's career made by herself, photocopies by Croteau of her work with the feminist art collective Sister Serpents, and various photocopies made by Croteau of her appearances in media. The audio/visual series includes a data CD of the exhibit "Are We There Yet? 40 Years of Feminism" and over 500 slides of her artwork from the 1970s through the 2000s. The oversized series includes a Chicago newspaper, "New City," featuring Croteau's work on the front cover in 2004, a Minnesota-based "Artpaper" magazine featuring Croteau's work on the front cover in 1991, and a set of three "Slop super market" satirical clearinghouse magazines.

Series 1: Professional, 1989-2011, undated, Box 1

Contains materials relating to Croteau's professional art career such as exhibit materials, gallery publicity materials, newspaper and magazine articles, and advertisements. Other materials include a portfolio of Croteau's work she compiled for her "Man Made" exhibit, plus some gallery materials of other artists. Many photocopies of Croteau's work with feminist art collective Sister Serpents are also in these records.

Series 2: Audiovisual, 1963-2007, circa 2017, undated, Boxes 2-4

Contains a data CD of a digital presentation to coincide with the art exhibit: "Are We There Yet? 40 Years of Feminism" and a CD of Croteau's artist files through 2016. Also contains over 500 slides of Croteau's artwork spanning four decades, including detail photographs, collection images, and slides of her "books." The provenance of the original slide order has been maintained.

Series 3: Oversize, 1991-2004, Box 3

Contains five magazines that Croteau kept in which she was featured on the cover or she collected.

Series 4: Addendum 1, 1992-2019, undated, Box 5

This series contains Addendum 1, an accrual of materials that were processed but not incorporated with the series above. Similar and/or related materials listed above may also be found here. This series contains correspondence, biographical information, audio and video cassettes, photographs, and digital media. The materials are organized alphabetically within each subseries.

Subseries 4.1: Biographical Materials, 1992-2019, undated, Box 5

Contains materials relating to Mary Ellen Croteau's professional career as an artist. It includes correspondence, her artist statements, biographical information, curriculum vitae, exhibit postcards, a newspaper article featuring Croteau, and programs from Croteau's memorial service in 2019.

Subseries 4.2: Audiovisual Materials, 1997, 2005, undated, Box 5

Includes an audiocassette of a radio interview with Croteau, transparencies of her artwork, and two VHS tapes of programs mentioning her artistic work.

Subseries 4.3: Digital Materials, 2007-2011

Consists of digital files of Croteau's artistic works in fifteen folders. Thirteen of the folders feature photographs of her artwork and exhibits. Another folder has a PowerPoint for a presentation Croteau made for an environmental art lecture. The final folder contains materials related to art fairs she contributed to, which includes photographs, price lists, receipts, show cards, and correspondence. Consult the archivist for access to digital materials.

Subjects:

Mary Ellen Croteau (1950-2019)
Artemisia Gallery
Feminism and Art
Chicago Art Galleries
SisterSerpents

Box	Folder	Title	Dates
		<i>Mary Ellen Croteau Papers 1963-2019</i>	
		Series 1: Professional, 1989-2011, undated	
1	1	Galleries/Exhibits: Catalogs	1992-1999
1	2	Galleries/Exhibits: Catalogs	2000-2009, undated
1	3	Galleries/Exhibits: "Mercy"	1999
1	4	Galleries/Exhibits: Postcards/Publicity	1989-2011
1	5	Galleries/Exhibits: Other Artists	2009-2010

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1	6	Media: As Cover Artist	1991-2003
1	7	Media: Mentions in Media	1991-2004, undated
1	8	Media: Work with SisterSerpents	1990-1997
1	9	Portfolio	undated
1	10	Publications: Articles/Featured	1994-2003
		Series 2: Audiovisual, 1963-2011, circa 2017, undated	
1	11	Are We There Yet? 40 Years of Feminism [CD]	2008
1	12	M.E. Croteau Art Archives through 2016 [CD]	circa 2017
1	13	Bag/Braids [5 slides]	2007
1	14	Monoprints [18 slides]	[1905], 1989, 1991, undated
1	15	Good Book (Bible) [5 slides]	1990, undated
1	16	Statue [3 slides]	1990, undated
1	17	Candlestand [8 slides]	1990, undated
1	18	Masc. Complex [3 slides]	1990
1	19	St. Mike [5 slides]	1990, undated
2	1	Wailing Wall [11 slides]	1990, undated
2	2	Tract [3 slides]	1990, undated
2	3	Slight Alterations [2 slides]	1992, undated
2	4	Jock Straps [12 slides]	1992
2	5	Cigars [3 slides]	1992
2	6	Pee-Wee [3 slides]	1992
2	7	Jar [4 slides]	1991-1992
2	8	Keychain [3 slides]	1992-1993, 2001
2	9	Trophy [3 slides]	1992
2	10	Dickheads [2 slides]	1992
2	11	Auto Mirror Ornament [2 slides]	1992, undated
2	12	Lights [4 slides]	1992
2	13	Fat Man [3 slides]	1992
2	14	Corpse [5 slides]	1991, 1994-1995, undated
2	15	Bellies [6 slides]	1993-1995
2	16	Fetus Magnets [9 slides]	1992-1993, undated
2	17	Bat & Balls [8 slides]	2003
2	18	Doll- Not a Choice [6 slides]	1991, 1996
2	19	Snake [1 slide]	1990
2	20	Collage/Xerox [5 slides]	1992, undated
2	21	Artist Boxes [4 slides]	1992, undated
2	22	Jokes [1 slide]	1992
2	23	Men to Avoid [15 slides]	1992, undated
2	24	High/Low (Skin) [7 slides]	1992-1993, undated

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2	25	Stone Book [6 slides]	1993, 1998
2	26	Hair Book [12 slides]	1992-1993, undated
2	27	250 Words [25 slides]	1994, undated
2	28	Belly Book [5 slides]	1993
2	29	Same Story [4 slides]	1992-1993
2	30	Good Girls/Bad Installation [6 slides]	1994
2	31	Anna Mendieta [6 slides]	1992, undated
2	32	Objects [12 slides]	1994, undated
2	33	War Memorial [11 slides]	1994-1995
2	34	Veils [20 slides]	1994
2	35	Panties [15 slides]	1994
2	36	Briefs [11 slides]	1994
2	37	Chador [8 slides]	1994
2	38	Bride Gown [8 slides]	1994-1995
2	39	Booths [7 slides]	1992, undated
2	40	Flag Art [11 slides]	1992-1994
2	41	Unrepentent Magdalene [36 slides]	1995-1996, undated
2	42	Annunciation [32 slides]	1996-1997, undated
2	43	Madonna [26 slides]	1997-1998, 2003, undated
2	44	Lilith & Eve [15 slides]	1997, undated
2	45	God [17 slides]	1995, 1997, undated
2	46	God #1 [4 slides]	1996-1997
2	47	Judgement/Paris [15 slides]	1997-1998, undated
2	48	St. Lorena [24 slides]	1996, undated
3	1	Sisters [25 slides]	1997, undated
3	2	Medusa [18 slides]	2002
3	3	Musee- Installation [21 slides]	1997-1998, undated
3	4	Musee- Installation Cont. [8 slides]	1997-1998, undated
3	5	Hall of Shame [8 slides]	1996, 2007, undated
3	6	Then/Now [9 slides]	1998
3	7	Mercy [12 slides]	1999
3	8	Doll- Pins [4 slides]	1997-1999
3	9	Mirror [13 slides]	1997, 2000, 2004
3	10	Blood on Cement [7 slides]	1998-2000
3	11	Apron [2 slides]	1999-2000
3	12	Girls Panties [3 slides]	1999-2000
3	13	The Club [5 slides]	1999-2000
3	14	Desk [7 slides]	1999-2000
3	15	De Soto, IL [4 slides]	1999-2001
3	16	Waste Management [1 slide]	2000

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3	17	Beach State Park [11 slides]	2000-2001
3	18	Smiley [4 slides]	2000-2001
3	19	TV Nation [4 slides]	2000-2001
3	20	Tire- Detroit [4 slides]	2000-2001
3	21	Indiana [6 slides]	2000-2001
3	22	Suburb Utopia [5 slides]	2000-2001
3	23	Penis Hotel [3 slides]	2000-2001
3	24	Homo Erectus [1 slide]	1992
3	25	Clearcut [26 slides]	2001-2002
3	26	Here, There, Everywhere [5 slides]	2001
3	27	Velvet Frame [4 slides]	1997, undated
3	28	USMC Blanket [6 slides]	1998, 2002
3	29	Wargames [1 slide]	2005
3	30	Bombast [12 slides]	2004
3	31	Rifle Dick [8 slides]	2003
3	32	Grenade Dick [4 slides]	2003
3	33	Ball Grenade [7 slides]	2003-2004
3	34	Camoflag [3 slides]	2004
3	35	Toybox [12 slides]	2003-2005
3	36	Bucket O' Brains [8 slides]	2003
3	37	G.I. Joe [20 slides]	2004
3	38	Which Toy [5 slides]	2004
3	39	Baby Bottle [2 slides]	2004-2005
3	40	Hats [7 slides]	2004-2005
3	41	Family Portraits [6 slides]	2004
3	42	Fallout Project [3 slides]	2004
3	43	SistersSerpents Posters [17 slides]	1989, 1990-1993, 1995, undated
3	44	Demolishing Domesticity [8 slides]	1994, undated
3	45	School Paintings [41 slides]	1963-1964, 1973, 1975, 1984-1989, undated
		Series 3: Oversize, 1991-2004	
4	1	Artpaper magazine, September Issue	1991
4	2	Newcity newspaper, October 28 Issue	2004
4	3	slopart's "Super Market Fine Art Products" circular (3 copies)	1997
		Series 4: Addendum 1, 1992-2019, undated	
		Subseries 4.1: Biographical Materials, 1992-2019, undated	

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5	1	Artist Statements	undated
5	2	Biographical Information	undated
5	3	Correspondence	2005
5	4	Croteau's Curriculum Vitae	undated
5	5	Exhibit Postcards	1992, 1994, undated
5	6	Newspaper Article	undated
5	7	Program: Croteau Memorial Service, May 12	2019
		Subseries 4.2: Audiovisual Materials, 1997, 2005, undated	
5	8	Audiocassette: Radio Interview	2005
5	9	Transparencies of Artwork [photos]	undated
5	10	VHS tapes: "Chicago Women Artists"	1997
5	11	VHS tapes: "Mary, Mary"	undated
		Subseries 4.3: Digital Materials, 2007-2011	
--	--	Art Fair Materials	2007-2011
--	--	Photographs: "Bag World" Exhibit	2008-2010
--	--	Photographs: "Clearcut" Exhibit	2008-2010
--	--	Photographs: "Icons, Idols, & Blasphemies" Exhibit	2011
--	--	Photographs: Landscapes	2008-2009
--	--	Photographs: "Man Made" Exhibit	2008-2010
--	--	Photographs: "Mercy" Exhibit	2008-2011
--	--	Photographs: Monoprint Series	2009
--	--	Photographs: "Musee de Nouvelle Renaissance" Exhibit	2007-2010
--	--	Photographs: School and Early Art	2011
--	--	Photographs: SisterSerpents and Other Art	2007-2009
--	--	Photographs: "Slight Alterations" Exhibit	2007-2009
--	--	Photographs: Landscapes "Textures Edited"	2010
--	--	Photographs: "War Games" Exhibit	2011
--	--	PowerPoint: Environmental Art Lecture	2011