Joan Heath Fortner Papers
1948-1981, undated

Creator: Joan Heath Fortner (1932-2024)
Extent: 1.5 linear feet (2 boxes)
Language: English
Repository: Women and Leadership Archives, Loyola University Chicago

Administration Information

Access Restrictions: None.

Usage Restrictions: Copyright to materials was retained by the donor.

Preferred Citation: Identification of item, date, box #, folder #, Joan Heath Fortner Papers, Women and Leadership Archives, Loyola University Chicago

Provenance: Joan Heath Fortner donated her papers to the Women and Leadership Archives in 2010 (WLA2010.1).

Processor: Sutton Skowron, August 2010. Updated January 2025.

Separations: 0.17 linear feet of extraneous material was removed.

See Also: Mundelein College Collection at the Women and Leadership Archives.

Biographical History

Joan Heath Fortner was born Joan Irene Heath in 1932 to Norbert and Agnes Heath. She is an alumna of Immaculata High School (1950), Mundelein College (1954, BFA), the New York Fashion Academy (1955), and Loyola University Chicago (1979, MA in Education). In 1947, at the age of 15, she became the youngest person ever to win the Chicago Tribune American Fashions Competition, a title she garnered for five consecutive years. She was the 1950 recipient of the Bishop O'Brien scholarship to the Art Institute in Chicago. In 1953 she won a second scholarship to the New York Fashion Academy for a design she submitted to a contest by the Evans Fur Company.

Fortner was active in art organizations in Chicago and surrounding suburbs for years. She was president of the Des Plaines Art Guild and the executive director of Art Cubes, a nonprofit art service organization funded by the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and the Illinois Arts Council that brings the arts to older adults, for twenty years. Throughout the years, Joan received many awards for her artwork and was involved in teaching art classes, as well as creating and exhibiting her watercolor and acrylic paintings. Joan passed away November 10, 2024.

Scope and Content

The Joan Heath Fortner Papers consist of 1.5 linear feet (2 boxes) of materials spanning the years 1948-1981, with some undated material, relating to Joan's education and early forays into fashion.

These documents include correspondence, sketches, and photographs. Material is arranged alphabetically within each series and chronologically within each folder.

Series 1: Biographical, 1948-1981, undated, Box 1
This series contains items relating mainly to Joan's life in fashion in high school and college and touches briefly on her life in later decades. Documents include information on fashion contests that she entered, correspondence from competitions and the New York Fashion Academy, and newspaper articles detailing her high school and college achievements in fashion and fencing.

Series 2: Visual, undated, Box 2
This series contains photographs of Joan as a young woman and Joan today, as well as a photo from a fashion show. Also included are sketches and designs of Joan's dresses.

Subjects:
Chicago Tribune Co.
Fashion design
Fortner, Joan Heath (1932-)
Illinois Arts Council
Loyola University, Chicago
Mundelein College
New York. Fashion Academy.

Box	Folder	Title	Dates
		Joan Heath Fortner Papers 1948-1981, undated	
		Series 1: Biographical, 1948-1981, undated	
1	1	Contests	1952-1953
1	2	Correspondence	1949-1954
1	3	Newspaper Articles	1948-1981, undated
		Series 2: Visual, undated	
2	1	Photographs	undated
2	2	Sketches and Designs	undated