

AMON CARTER MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART ARCHIVES COLLECTION GUIDE

Collection Summary

- Title:** Ruth Carter Stevenson Papers
- Date:** 1931–2013, bulk dates 1960s–1990s
- Creator(s):** Stevenson, Ruth Carter (1923–2013)
- Extent:** 9.2 linear feet
- Code:** RCS
- Repository:** Amon Carter Museum of American Art Archives
- Abstract:** The Ruth Carter Stevenson Papers document Stevenson’s work in the arts, education, and civic planning. The bulk of her papers date from her regency of the University of Texas system, chairmanship of the Amon Carter Museum of American Art and the National Gallery of Art, and work with the City of Fort Worth on public art, urban planning, and parks.

Information for Researchers

Access Restrictions

These papers are restricted. The collection is open to qualified researchers by special request only.

Use Restrictions

The Ruth Carter Stevenson Papers are the physical property of the Amon Carter Museum of American Art. The Amon Carter Museum of American Art assumes no responsibility for infringement of literary property rights or copyrights or for liability to any person for defamation or invasion of privacy.

Preferred Citation

Ruth Carter Stevenson Papers, [item identification], Amon Carter Museum of American Art Archives.

Related Collections in the Amon Carter Museum of American Art Archives

Amon G. Carter Papers

Related Collections in the Amon Carter Museum of American Art

Approximately 700 artworks were gifted or bequeathed by Stevenson to the museum's art collection.

Contact the museum archivist at archivist@cartermuseum.org or 817.989.5077 for additional information.

Administrative Information

Acquisition and Custody Information

Gift of Ruth Carter Stevenson
Gift of the Ruth Carter Stevenson Estate

Processed By

Jonathan Frembling

Biographical Note

As the daughter of the museum's namesake, Amon G. Carter Sr. (1879–1955), Stevenson was solely responsible for seeing that her father's wish to establish a museum for the city of Fort Worth was realized. Under her leadership, the Amon Carter Museum of American Art opened to the public in January 1961.

Ruth Carter Stevenson was born in Fort Worth, where she attended North Hi-Mount Elementary School, Stripling Middle School, and Arlington Heights High School. At age fifteen she enrolled at the Madeira School in McLean, Virginia, taking her first art history course, which included trips to the landmark museums and galleries of Washington, DC. Upon graduation from Madeira, Stevenson attended Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, New York, graduating in 1945. Her exposure to art expanded still more during her years at Sarah Lawrence, when she traveled frequently to art destinations in New York City.

Stevenson returned home to Fort Worth in 1949, and at the age of twenty-six she was elected to the board of the Fort Worth Art Association. During her first year in this capacity, she was instrumental in organizing the first major American art exhibition in Fort Worth, which included works by Winslow Homer. The following year, she spearheaded an art education program for every fifth-grader in Fort Worth through her service in the Junior League. This activity would telecast her lifelong commitment to providing arts education for students. In the decades following the opening of the Amon Carter, she wholeheartedly supported and encouraged the educational program at the museum, and today more than 20,000 school students each year tour the Amon Carter's galleries.

In 1960, Stevenson began a twenty-three-year association with the Fort Worth City Art Commission; many of these years she served as chairman. She also served on the board of Fort

Worth's Trinity Valley School, and in 1963 she founded the Arts Council of Fort Worth and Tarrant County. That same year, she was appointed by then Governor John Connally to the board of regents of the University of Texas, becoming only the second woman to serve in that capacity. In addition to pressing for the preservation of the historic campus architecture, Stevenson played a key role in the full desegregation of the University of Texas school system. In 1992, the university established the Ruth Carter Stevenson Chair of Architecture.

Stevenson's involvement with the arts reached far beyond the state of Texas. She served on the Visiting Committee of the Fogg Museum at Harvard; joined the boards of the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Trust for Historic Places, and the American Federation of Arts; and became the first woman appointed to the board of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. In 1987, she was invited to the Supreme Court building in Washington as an honored guest at Justice Sandra Day O'Connor's event for women who had made a difference in American society.

Later in life, Stevenson would again turn her focus fully onto the city of her birth and the museum she founded on a high point in Fort Worth's esteemed Cultural District, a hub of international art centers she helped to establish. She assumed the presidency of the Amon G. Carter Foundation, renowned for its charitable giving, after the passing of her brother, Amon G. Carter Jr. (1919–1982). She served on the Amon Carter Museum of American Art's board for more than fifty years, and in her last decade in that role she oversaw a massive expansion of the structure. The new building increased the museum's gallery spaces fourfold and resulted in a state-of-the-art conservation facility and both cold- and cool-storage vaults for the museum's expansive photography holdings.

Stevenson was active in many civic, philanthropic, and botanical pursuits until the end of her life. During the museum's 50th Anniversary year, the museum acquired a rare painting by Mary Cassatt (1844–1926) in honor of her decades of leadership and guidance. In April of that year, she was honored at a gala on the museum's plaza, which was attended by some 400 guests from around the country. On that occasion, Earl A. Powell III, director of the National Gallery and a longtime friend of Stevenson, made remarks in her honor. "Over its history, the Amon Carter has put together one of the great collections of American art. It is a great, great place Ruth has created for Fort Worth and the nation."

Scope and Content Note

The Ruth Carter Stevenson Papers contain correspondence, published materials including articles, reproductions, and ephemera, oral histories, and photographs. The material is divided by physical form. Oversized items are housed separately. Contents retain their original order and are arranged chronologically. Undated material follows dated material. Published material was copied and left in its original order.

Oral Histories: Stevenson was interviewed about her various projects and interests across her career. Both audio tape and transcripts are available for most of these interviews.

Correspondence: A diverse collection of correspondence, primarily professional, regarding her many projects, associations, and commitments.

Personal Papers: Materials relating to Stevenson's personal life and family.

Art Collection: Files on artists and artworks that she collected. The files document acquisitions, loans, and gifts of these works.

Professional Papers: Documents from Stevenson's professional career. Documented are her service on various museum and educational boards, professional organizations, and achievements.

Photographs: Photographic documentation from childhood through her late life.

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Scope and Content Note: Papers dealing with Stevenson's professional career and her many associations. Divided into two broad groups—business records of the Amon Carter Museum of

American Art, professional engagements, and urban planning. Stevenson founded the Amon Carter Museum at the behest of her father and served as board chair for 53 years. Records from these years range from fundraising efforts to institutional governance. The second group notably deals with her work on the boards of the University of Texas and the National Gallery of art as well as her many other engagements and awards. Further, she actively agitated in areas of civic architecture and planning—working with the State of Texas and the City of Fort Worth on a variety of urban plans and monuments. This series is arranged thematically within the three categories—Amon Carter Museum records, professional records, and urban planning. Many of the files are restricted as they contain confidential information.

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