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Collection Summary

Repository: Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College Libraries

Creator: Morgan, Priscilla, 1919-2014

Title: Priscilla Morgan Papers

**Inclusive
Dates:** 1910-2014

Bulk Dates: 1945-2014

Quantity: 17.3 cubic feet (48 boxes)

Abstract: This collection documents the career and collaborative efforts of Priscilla Morgan, a New York-based international arts administrator, producer, and emissary of arts and culture. The collection contains correspondence, manuscripts, subject files, travel files, maps, and photograph albums.

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Biographical Note

Priscilla Morgan (1919-2014) attended Vassar College from 1937 to 1939. She served as a commanding officer in the United States Women's Naval Reserve during World War II, where one of her notable accomplishments was producing a concert by Frank Sinatra in 1943. Following her service in the Navy, she launched her career as a radio producer in New York City and went on to become a theatrical agent for writers, directors and producers.

In the mid 1950s, European travel and business became central to her career. During this period, Morgan met the composer Gian Carlo Menotti, founder of the Spoleto Festival (Festival of the Two Worlds), which later developed into the Spoleto Festival USA (Charleston, North Carolina). Menotti and Morgan became collaborators and proponents of a legacy of performing and visual artists through their co-direction of the festival. At this time, Morgan also became involved in live television and continued as a theatrical agent at William Morris Agency until her full-time association in the mid-1960s laying the ground work for the Spoleto Festival. In years following, Morgan's partnership as a confidant and advisor to the sculptor Isamu Noguchi became central to her life, as she guided public commissions and varied projects for the renowned artist. Her relationship with Noguchi lasted until his death in 1988.

A long-standing and influential New York cultural figure, Morgan's collaborative projects involved a wide range of performing and visual artists. She cultivated formidable networks of artistic liaisons, with both artists and philanthropists, during her lengthy career as producer, festival director, and as board member of the Noguchi Museum until the time of her death.

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Scope and Content Note

This collection documents the career of Priscilla Morgan, a producer and advocate of the performing, visual and literary arts both in New York City, Europe, and Japan. The papers document her contributions as a producer, theatrical agent, philanthropic promoter, festival administrator, museum board member and seminal host within wide-reaching New York cultural circles.

The collection consists mainly of subject files (1932-2014), as created by Morgan's office, and correspondence files which contain professional and personal correspondence with performing and visual artists, colleagues and philanthropists in the performing arts. The subject files document Ms. Morgan's productions in theater, film, television and visual arts from the mid 1950s until her death in 2014.

Morgan's involvement with Isamu Noguchi, and her commitment to the museum in his name, figure prominently in the papers. Her partnership with Noguchi spanned between the personal and the public, as documented in both the collection's subject files and correspondence files. Subject files also document collaborative works with artists including R. Buckminster Fuller, Willem deKooning, Martin Manulis, Robert Wilson, Rene Bouche and others.

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Arrangement

The collection is arranged into three series: Series I. Subject Files, 1932-2014; Series II. Correspondence 1945-2014, and Series III. Photographs, 1910-2009. [Top](#)

Access and Use

Access

Material relating to settlement of the Noguchi estate (Folders 21.1-21.3) are restricted through 2037. The remainder of the collection is open for research according to the [regulations of the Vassar College Archives and Special Collections Library](#) without any additional restrictions.

Restrictions on Use

Permission to quote (publish) from unpublished or previously published material must be obtained as described in the [regulations of the Vassar College Archives and Special Collections Library](#).

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Subject Headings

Names:

- De Kooning, Lisa, 1956-2012
- Fuller, R. Buckminster (Richard Buckminster), 1895-1983
- Gilchrist, Ellen, 1935-
- Menotti, Gian Carlo, 1911-2007
- Noguchi, Isamu, 1904-1988

Organizations:

- Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum

- Spoleto Festival U.S.A.

Subjects:

- Art patrons--United States--Biography
- Arts, American--New York (State)--New York

VCL Categories:

- Art and Artists
- Music
- Travel

[Top](#)**Encoding Information**

Encoded by Laura Streett, January 2019.

Updated by Emma Gronbeck, November 2024.

[Top](#)**Administrative Information****Preferred Citation**

Priscilla Morgan Papers, Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College Libraries.

Processing Information

Processed by Janine St. Germain, 2018.

Acquisition Information

Bequest of the estate of Priscilla Morgan, 2017.

[Top](#)**Series List****[Series I.](#) Subject Files, 1932-2014 (Boxes 1-31 and 43-46)****Scope and Content Note**

Subject files reflect the filing system of Ms. Morgan's office, the majority of folders arranged by their original folder titles. The files document Morgan's business acumen, and often include budget drafts of both visual and performing art projects, numerous dinner party seating charts, guest lists, menus and event logistics, extensive phone logs, and travel itineraries, dating from her earliest days as a radio/theater/television producer, through to

her final years serving on the board of the Noguchi Museum. Business files track Ms. Morgan's earliest years as a young producer for William Morris Agency, for William Liebling, and on through to her development of her own production agencies, Drunk With Love, and MPM Productions. Files document her negotiations both on behalf of her clients, as well as her own personal advancement in the field.

Spoletto Festival USA files document the festival's earliest years in Charleston, North Carolina, including initial fundraising efforts to raise capital in support of the festival mission. Logistical files document itineraries and scheduling of some of the festival's earliest performers, visual artists and speakers, e.g. Philip Glass, Buckminster Fuller, and Robert Wilson.

Art collection files contain documentation of Morgan's personal collected artworks, including loans, consignments and sales agreements. Early efforts to bring the Spoletto Festival to the USA is documented in the Harlem Theater Workshop files, illustrating Morgan and Menotti's failed attempt in launching the festival in Harlem.

Subject files document correspondence and collaborative efforts with Gian Carlo Menotti (founder of the Spoletto Festival in Italy and the United States), Isamu Noguchi, and R. Buckminster Fuller. The Noguchi files reflect the artist's long-standing reliance on Morgan to execute his creative vision when negotiating commissions for new works. A limited number of files (here and in correspondence files) include handwritten notations by Noguchi, in particular, a draft artist statement regarding Akari Light Sculptures. Noguchi Museum files illustrate Morgan's role as a board member, fundraiser, and advisor for the Noguchi estate, through to the end of Morgan's life.

Travel files, some including travel for William Morris Agency, include detailed documentation of international travel logistics, itineraries, budgets, agendas, correspondence, entertainment budgets, and letters of introduction, providing detailed insight into how business was conducted and managed by a young woman managing a business in the mid 1950s. Travel files often include correspondence.

Arrangement

The subject files are arranged alphabetically into fourteen subseries as defined by the creator:

Art Collection

Biographical

Drunk With Love Productions

Events

Fuller, R. Buckminster

General

Harlem Theatre Workshop

Legal

Menotti

MPM Productions

Noguchi, Isamu

Noguchi Museum

Spoletto Festival

Travel

[Series II](#). Correspondence, 1945-2014 (Boxes 32-43)

Scope and Content Note

Correspondence files reflect Morgan's own filing system, mainly arranged chronologically, in addition to select files arranged by name, as determined by Morgan's office. Correspondents include performing and visual artists, as well as philanthropic collaborators involved in the New York City and European art world.

Spoletto office correspondence provides documentation of the festival's earliest efforts with logistics and correspondents with artists, VIPs and festival administrators.

A limited number of correspondence files include carbon copies of Ms. Morgan's originating letters.

Arrangement

Correspondence files of substantial volume are arranged by year, otherwise the series is arranged alphabetically by name, as arranged by the creator.

Series III. Photographs, 1910-2009 (Boxes 47-48)

Scope and Content Note

Collection includes early photographic prints of the Morgan family, photographs from travels with Isamu Noguchi, copy prints of Noguchi as a child, as well as images documenting Morgan's business travels both in Europe and Japan.

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