

# Finding Aid for the E. Parker Lesley, Jr. Papers, 1934-1969

## Summary Information

Repository	National Gallery of Art Archives Sixth Street and Constitution Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20565 archives@nga.gov
Title	E. Parker Lesley, Jr. Papers
Identifier	SC.017
Creator	Lesley, Everett Parker (Bill) Jr., 1913-1982
Date	1934-1969
Extent	1.25 cubic feet (3 boxes); approximately 175 digital files
Abstract	This collection documents the activities of E. Parker Lesley, Jr., as an officer with the Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives (MFAA) Section of the United States Army in Germany during and immediately after World War II. These materials also relate to Lesley's career as a museum professional and scholar of decorative arts. Papers include correspondence, reports, and publications.

## Biographical Note

August 31, 1913	Born, Baltimore, Maryland
1934	B.A., Classical Literature (Greek), Stanford University, Palo Alto, California
1935	Certificate, University of Paris, France
1937	M.F.A., Art and Archeology, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey  Certificate, Free University of Brussels, Belgium
1938-1939	Curator of European Art, Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, Michigan

1939-1942	Assistant Professor of Art and Architecture, University of Minnesota, Minnesota
1946-1947	Chief, Restitution Branch, Office of Military Government for Greater Hesse, Germany
1946	Awarded Chevalier, Order of Poland Restored (Polinia Restituta), Poland
1947	Honorary Medal of Art & Science, House Order of Orange-Nassau (Orde van Oranje-Nassau), The Netherlands
1947-1948	Studied at New York University, New York, New York
1950-1954	Keeper, Department of Exhibitions, Cooper Union Museum, New York, New York
	Acting Director, Norfolk Museum of Arts and Sciences (later, Chrysler Museum of Art), Norfolk, Virginia
	Assistant Professor of Art, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia
1959-1979	Professor of Art, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia
1974-1976	Curator of Decorative Arts, National Gallery of Art, Washington
1978-1979	Eminent Professor of Art (later, Professor Emeritus), Old Dominion University
February 1982	Died, Norfolk, Virginia

## Scope and Content

This collection documents the activities of Everett Parker (Bill) Lesley, Jr., as a captain with the Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives (MFAA) Section of the United States Military Government in Germany immediately after World War II. While in Germany, Lesley was assigned to several posts, including Frankfurt and Bad Nauheim. In April 1946, he accompanied a restitution train of twenty-seven cars, *Special Train A*, from Nuremberg, Germany, to Cracow, Poland. The shipment included many important works of art and cultural monuments, most notably the Veit Stoss altar from the Church of Our Lady, Cracow, and Leonardo da Vinci's *Lady with an Ermine*. Lesley helped draft and later signed the *Wiesbaden Manifesto*, which opposed the military decision to transport 202

German-owned works of art to the National Gallery of Art, Washington, for safekeeping. This collection also reflects Lesley's research interest in decorative arts.

The collection consists of official documents relating to Lesley's work with the MFAA. Materials include a daily journal, a sworn statement regarding a Cracow shooting incident, memoranda regarding the Bernterode mine repository, requests for an investigation relating to property, a report of the discovery of property belonging to the House of Saxe-Weimar, and a guest book from the Wiesbaden Central Collecting Point. Of special interest are the approximately 200 photographs documenting the journey of the restitution train from Germany to Poland in April and May 1946.

Lesley's academic and scholarly work include a research paper on the arts and crafts movement, notes taken during an interview with artists Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera, exhibition catalogues from the Cooper Union Museum for the Arts of Decoration, correspondence, and reference material on the *Chalice of Abbot Suger of Saint-Denis*.

## Arrangement

Materials are arranged in the following series:

Series 1 Art Restitution-Related Materials, 1944-1951

Series 2 Professional Subject Files, 1934-1969

Series 3 Photographs, 1946

## Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access	This collection is open for research by appointment under the conditions of the National Gallery of Art Archives Access Policy. For all inquiries or to schedule an appointment, please contact <a href="mailto:archives@nga.gov">archives@nga.gov</a> .
Preferred Citation	National Gallery of Art Archives. E. Parker Lesley, Jr. Papers.
Rights Status	Copyright undetermined
Language	English
Acquisition Information	Gift of E. Parker Lesley, Jr., 1979
Processing Information	Initially organized by National Gallery of Art Library staff before transfer to the National Gallery of Art Archives, 1999. Arranged and described by archives staff, 2007.

## Related Archival Materials

National Gallery of Art Archives. Curatorial Records - E. Lesley Parker Jr. Office Files, 1973-1976.

*Resources Relating to World War II* describes other WWII-related archival materials available at the National Gallery of Art.

The National Archives and Records Administration of the United States (NARA) holds official government records relating to the work of the Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives officers and the American Commission for the Protection and Salvage of Artistic and Historic Monuments in War Areas (Roberts Commission).

Monuments Men Foundation Archives available at the National WWII Museum.

## Series Descriptions

### **Series 1 Art Restitution-Related Materials, 1944-1951 [box 1]**

Arranged alphabetically. This series contains a catalogue of an exhibition of eighteenth-century paintings held at the Central Collecting Point, Wiesbaden, organized by the Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives (MFAA) Section of the United States Military Government in Germany. Also included is the *Wiesbaden Manifesto* and a publication containing editorials about the Berlin paintings controversy, and materials relating to the military government and transportation of looted art. Of special interest is a report detailing the discovery and transportation of property belonging to the House of Saxe-Weimar.

### **Series 2 Professional Subject Files, 1934-1969 [box 2]**

Arranged alphabetically. This series contains materials relating to Lesley's academic and scholarly work. Included are a research paper on the arts and crafts movement, notes taken during an interview with artists Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera, a bound collection of exhibition catalogues from the Cooper Union Museum for the Arts of Decoration, correspondence, and reference material on the *Chalice of Abbot Suger of Saint-Denis*.

### **Series 3 Photographs, 1946 [box 3]**

Arranged alphabetically by subject. This series documents Lesley's supervision of the removal and return of looted works of art and other cultural materials. Included are nearly 200 photographs documenting the journey of Special Train A from Nuremberg, Germany to Cracow, Poland. Photographs in this series have been digitized and are available to researchers.

## E. Parker Lesley Jr. Papers

### Series 1 Art Restitution-Related Materials, 1944-1951

#### Box 1

- 1-1 Catalogue - Eighteenth Century Painting, Central Collecting Point Wiesbaden (Landesmuseum), 1947  
*Includes 2 concert programs, 1 in English and 1 in German.*
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- 1-2 Civil Affairs and Military Government Activities in Connection with Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives. Report of the General Board United States Forces, European Theater, undated
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- 1-3 Daily journal, December 4, 1944-May 21, 1945 (reference copy and fragile original)
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- 1-4 Disposition of contents at Bernterode Mine Repository, 1945-1946  
*Includes documents on Operation Bodysnatch, disposition of Hohenzollern and Hindenburg caskets, regimental standards in the Marburg Collecting Point, and German war banners, includes preservation copies.*
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- 1-5 Guest book - Wiesbaden, 1947, 1951
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- 1-6 Magazine of Art (February 1946)  
*Includes editorials relating to the Berlin Paintings controversy.*
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- 1-7 Military investigations, 1945-1946
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- 1-8 Report on the discovery and transportation from Eschwege to Frankfurt/Main of property belonging to the House of Saxe-Weimar, 1946
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- 1-9 Statement of Lesley regarding Cracow [Krakow] shooting incident in May 1946
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- 1-10 Wiesbaden Manifesto, 1945 (reference copy and fragile original)

### Series 2 Professional Subject Files, 1934-1969

#### Box 2

- 2-1 Collected catalogues of exhibitions presented at the Cooper Union Museum for the Arts of Decoration, 1950-1954

## E. Parker Lesley Jr. Papers

2-2 Correspondence - Joan Evans, 1963-1969

*Includes a color slide and photograph of Evans.*

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2-3 Reference files regarding Suger Chalice

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2-4 Reference files regarding Suger Chalice (microfilm and printout)

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2-5 Research paper by Everett P. Lesley, Jr. "A History of the Development and Ideals of the Craftsman Movement, 1850-1915"

*Research paper for a Stanford University graphic arts class, spring quarter, 1934.*

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2-6 Notes and transcript of conversations with Frida Kahlo de Rivera and Diego Rivera, 27 May 1939

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### Series 3 Photographs, 1946

#### Box 3

3-1 Cracow [Krakow] - general, April-May 1946

*43 images. Digitized version(s) available.*

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3-2 Cracow [Krakow] - Special Train A, April-May 1946

*14 images. Digitized version(s) available.*

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3-3 Journey of Special Train A, April-May 1946

*120 images. Digitized version(s) available.*

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