



**Description & Finding Aid:
Kathleen Munn fonds
CA OTAG SC105**

Prepared by Sylvia Lassam, 2005

Kathleen Munn fonds

Dates of creation:

1912 – [193-]

Extent:

17 cm of textual records
2227 drawings and prints
8 photographs

Biographical sketch:

Kathleen Jean Munn (1887-1974) was a modernist Canadian painter active in Toronto between the World Wars. She was the youngest of six children born to a Toronto jeweler who died when she was four (of an infection caused by the impact from a champagne cork) leaving her mother to manage the family business. Her talent for drawing was encouraged by her maternal grandmother, an accomplished amateur painter, and she was sent to study at the Westbourne School with F. McGillivray Knowles from 1904 to 1907. Knowles encouraged personal expression and an understanding of the principles of art and Munn thrived in this environment. In 1909 she began to exhibit Barbizon-inspired landscapes at the OSA, RCA and CNE exhibitions, moving through periods influenced by Whistler, Corot, Puvis de Chavannes and the post-impressionists. About 1912 Munn first traveled to New York to study at the Art Students League and in 1914 she was awarded first prize at the Summer School in Woodstock NY. In 1915-16 she began a series of landscapes in which she showed a mastery of modernist techniques. Her association with the Art Students League, whose teachers were early proponents of modernism, was an important influence. Her notebooks show that she was reading extensively and broadly in the areas of literature, philosophy and aesthetics. She studied Jay Hambridge's mathematical principles, the concept of 'dynamic symmetry' and Denman Ross's colour theory. She seems to have been drawn to writers who proposed an underlying system of order and logic as a basis for individual expression. She also toured Britain and the major art centres of continental Europe in 1920, accompanied by her sister, and this trip seems to have encouraged her quest for a means to express religious and spiritual themes in a contemporary fashion. She was ultimately uncomfortable with complete abstraction and believed that art should express a larger purpose, influenced by readings of Blavatsky, Blake, Whitman, and others. The Group of Seven shared her interest in the spiritual content of painting but she was intolerant of their nationalism; of her contemporaries she formed the closest bonds with Bertram Brooker and Lemoine Fitzgerald. Her studio, in a large room overlooking the ravine at the family home at 320 Spadina Road, was visited often by Brooker. The household consisted of three unmarried siblings: Will (Jr.), who ran the family business, May, a teacher who ran the household, and Kathleen. During the 1920's she began to work on a series of paintings that explored Christian themes and she devoted the 1930's to the subject of the Passion. Two major drawings from this series were purchased by the Art Gallery of Ontario in 1945. She exhibited a number of these drawings with Fitzgerald and Brooker at the Malloney Galleries in Toronto in 1935 but there was little critical response. Discouragement at her lack of critical success, combined with the death of her brother in 1935 and her sister's increasing disability, led to the end of her artistic output around 1939. Most of her work remained in family hands. The Art Gallery of Toronto exhibited her Passion drawings in several group shows in the 1940's and the Willistead Art Gallery in Windsor included her Ascension in a 1954 show of drawings. She died twenty years later, in October 1974.

Scope and content:

Fonds consists of nine notebooks kept by Kathleen Munn as a student at the Art Students League in New York City and at the Summer program in Woodstock, NY. The books contain a meticulous record of her exposure to ideas about artistic theory, philosophy and art history. Undated drawings, prints and unbound notes are also included, and a group of 'arts-and-crafts' inspired decorative designs. The fonds contains more than 1800 pencil drawings executed as studies for her mature work on the subject of the Christian Passion. Photographs of eight of these completed drawings are included.

Contains series:

1. Notebooks
2. Life drawings and studies
3. Studies for 'The Passion'

Custodial history:

Material in this fonds was inherited by the artist's niece, Kathleen Richards, who bequeathed it to her own niece Lenore Richards. Some sketches and items of correspondence have been dispersed to family members over the years; sketches and drawings have been sold by D. & E. Lake Ltd. – Fine Art, Toronto.

Notes:

Immediate source of acquisition:

Donated to the E.P. Taylor Research Library, Art Gallery of Ontario, in 2005 by Lenore Richards.

Restrictions on access:

Due to their fragility, notebooks (Series 1) may not be photocopied. Otherwise open. Access to Special Collections is by appointment only. Please contact the reference desk for more information.

Terms governing use and reproduction / publication:

Copyright is held by the creator's heirs. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain permission to publish any part of the fonds.

Finding aids:

A finding aid is available for this fonds

Accruals:

No further accruals are expected

Related material:

Art books from the library of Kathleen Munn were donated to the AGO Library in 1976. A list of these titles has been maintained.

Provenance access point:

Munn, Kathleen Jean, 1887-1974

SERIES 1: NOTEBOOKS**Dates of creation:**

1912 - 1926

Extent:

9 notebooks

Scope and content:

Notebooks document Munn's student life in New York City and at the Art Students League Summer School in Woodstock. She recorded her lecture notes, essays containing reviews and summaries of books read, notations regarding books of interest, sketches, anatomical drawings, copies of historical works of art, poems, and occasionally ephemera. Under the tutelage of her teachers at the Art Students League – Andrew Dasburg, Max Weber, A.S. Baylinson, Stanton Macdonald-Wright and Henry L. McFee, she embraced modernism and gained exposure to literary, artistic and musical influences of her day. The notebooks show her to be an avid reader with a keen interest in the intellectual life of her time and in the artistic expression of other cultures and epochs. There is a particular delight in pattern and an underlying search for explanation and order. On the front pastedown of Notebook No. 8 she wrote, "Perfect beauty is the expression of perfect order, balance, harmony, rhythm. Beauty is a supreme instance of order intuitively felt, instinctively appreciated". The notebooks are undated, with the exception of No. 5.

Notes:*Restrictions on access:*

Due to their fragility, notebooks may not be photocopied.

Arrangement:

Eight sketchbooks were numbered by Joyce Zemans during research for her 1988 catalogue, *Kathleen Munn and Edna Tacon, new perspectives on modernism in Canada*. Her numbering system has been maintained and one additional notebook has been designated Notebook No. 9.

Location / item listing:

FOLDER/ UNIT TITLE	START DATE	END DATE	CONTENTS	BOX FILE #
Notebook No. 1	1912	[191-]	Cloth covered notebook with lined pages and printed cover titled 'Students MSS Book' filled with writing and a few small sketches in pencil and ink. Front and back endpapers are also filled with writing. The notes appear to have been taken from readings, not lecture notes, as they are in paragraph form and occasionally have page references. Some of the subjects include Wagner, Fetichism, Maeterlinck's 'Wisdom and destiny', Edmund Gosse's 'Ibsen', pictorial composition, Cubism, modern painting, Matisse, Monet, Gauguin, Renoir and many other artists.	1.1

FOLDER/ UNIT TITLE	START DATE	END DATE	CONTENTS	BOX FILE #
Notebook No. 2	[191-]	[192-]	Cloth covered burgundy notebook, untitled, with lined sheets, filled with writing as above. The latter part of the book contains discussions of European cities – London, Munich, Berlin, Cracow – visited during Munn's European tour in 1920. Other entries include discussions of Denman Ross' theories of colour and design, architecture of the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Renaissance, Byzantine, Romanesque and Gothic, entries on Nietzsche and Gaudier-Brzeska, Japanese flower arrangement. They show that she was aware of <i>Blast</i> , the Vorticists, Kandinsky, and other modern painters and musicians. Notes and drawings on perspective are included, and a discussion of "Science and art drawing" by J. Humphrey Spanton. Two leaves have been torn out.	1.2
Notebook No. 3	[191-]	[191-]	Notebook with paper covered boards, cloth backstrip, disbound. Two New York addresses are written down in the first few pages, one at 215 West 57 th Street, the other at 161 East 63 rd Street. This notebook is more casual and fragmentary, containing notes that may have been taken at lectures and are interspersed with rough drawings in pencil. There are a number of loose pages inserted, and an envelope with stamps dated 1915. The notes are a mixture of art-related topics (specific artists suggest an art history class: Titian, El Greco, etc.), and scraps of poetry, a number of these on the subject of love.	1.3
Notebook No. 4	[192-]	[192-]	Notebook covered in blue cloth with a dark red backstrip. The stitching is intact and the sheets are unlined. Contains 6 pages of designs on oiled tracing paper tipped into the book. Drawings accompany a summary of E.A. Batchelder's <i>The principles of design</i> and A.H. Munsell's <i>A colour notation</i> . Also included are summaries of Denman's Ross' writings, two books on Japan, and reviews of several novels, including <i>Roderick Hudson</i> by Henry James. Much of the book has been written back-to-front.	1.4
Notebook No. 5	1919	1925	Notebook is bound in worn limp red leather and contains lined pages. Many of the entries are dated. Contains summaries of books on aesthetics, with occasional quick pencil sketches. Books read include <i>Burnett on painting</i> ; <i>Design, the making of patterns</i> ; <i>Paul Cezanne his life and art</i> by Vollard; <i>The painter's palette</i> by Denman Ross; Clive Bell's <i>Art</i> ; Sir Joshua Reynolds's <i>Discourses</i> with Roger Fry's introduction, and entries on 'negro art', theosophy and a number of artists including Brancusi, Surat and others. Two leaves have been fully removed and one sheet has been partially removed.	1.5

FOLDER/ UNIT TITLE	START DATE	END DATE	CONTENTS	BOX FILE #
Notebook No. 6	[192-]	[192-]	Notebook is bound in black speckled paper- covered boards with cloth backstrip, worn and largely disbound. Addresses on the front free endpaper include that of Albert Barnes. Pages are unlined. A number of rough pencil sketches, most of a cubist nature, are included, and summaries include <i>The aesthetic attitude</i> by Langfeld; the Picabia issue of <i>The little review</i> (Spring 1922); <i>Projective ornament</i> by Claude Bragdon; <i>On a composition by Gauguin</i> by Roger Fry; <i>Dynamic symmetry in composition as used by the artist</i> by Jay Hambridge, etc. Four oiled tracing paper sheets with notes and drawings have been loosely inserted.	1.6
Notebook No. 7	[1921]	[1926]	Notebook is bound in black speckled paper covered boards with cloth backstrip. A number of notes and printed articles are loosely inserted. The pages are unlined and stitching is loose. Two full-page pencil drawings of a domestic scene and 3 full-page charcoal drawings are included within the book. Inserted items include an article on Georges Seurat by Walter Pach, articles on health and digestion, a list of lectures and demonstrations, brochure for a free concert at the Met. This notebook contains a combination of essay-style reviews and short notes, perhaps from lectures. There are reviews of <i>Modern French painters</i> by Jan Gordon, <i>A primer of modern art</i> by Sheldon Cheney, <i>The science of eating</i> by Alfred W. McCann, and <i>Cezanne</i> by Tristas L. Klingson.	1.7
Notebook No. 8			Notebook is bound in black paper-covered boards with a red backstrip. Binding is shaken but intact. The artist's name and the address 320 Spadina Road, are written onto the front pastedown, along with penciled notes. This notebook contains primarily drawings of patterns and motifs from Indian, Japanese, Greek, Assyrian, Peruvian, Egyptian and primitive art, some drawn on onionskin paper and tipped into the book. Most are pencil drawings with a few in coloured pencil. Decorative borders, flower arrangements, drawings of sculpture and pottery are included.	1.8
Notebook 9	[191-]	[192-]	Notebook is bound in grey marbled paper covered boards with black cloth backstrip and attached label with hand-written notation: 'Kathleen J. Munn/Art Students League/57 St./ near B.W.' The binding is shaken but intact and the sheets are unlined. A number of books are listed and the latest publication date found is 1917 (Joseph Conrad's <i>The shadow line</i>). The notebook appears to consist mainly of anatomical studies and lecture notes, with 3 leaves removed and 2 partially removed. Rough sketches accompany the notes. The notebook is likely for the academic year 1918-1919	1.9

SERIES 2: LIFE DRAWINGS AND STUDIES**Dates of creation:** 1912 – [192-]**Extent:** 378 sheets of drawings
1 cm of textual records
1 stencil
4 prints**Scope and content:**

Series consists of undated drawings that appear to be contemporary with the notebooks in Series 1 and are consistent with the usual output of an art student. Figure studies predominate, probably originating in life drawing classes with a few drawings of specific individuals and places. A number of published plates of models and statuary are included. Four experiments with print-making are also included in this series, possibly dating from 1930 when Munn attended printmaking classes at the Art Students' League. A file of decorative patterns and one cut stencil are also included in this series. One pattern contains a draft letter to the artist's mother on the verso, remarking on a proposed visit to Elbert Hubbard's Roycroft studio in East Aurora, NY (Hubbard died in 1915). A money-making scheme is mentioned in the letter, perhaps revolving around the production of these stencils. Photocopies of letters written to Kathleen Munn around this time are included (originals remain in the family). Series also contains a hand-lettered sign for a sale at Munn's Jewelry store, undated and unsigned.

Notes:*Physical condition:*

Pages have often been drawn on both sides.

Arrangement:

Boxes 2, 3 and 4 are oversize and measurements are given for the range of page sizes. Drawings in Box 5 fit within a standard legal file folder.

Location / item listing:

FOLDER/UNIT TITLE	START DATE	END DATE	CONTENTS	BOX- FILE #
Life drawings: sketchbook			Plain bound sketchbook (42.5 x 35.5 cm) with 8 full page drawings and 1 half-page bound in. 5 drawings removed along perforation. The drawings are ink and brush studies, apparently from models.	2.1
Life drawings: charcoal			40 pages of drawings in charcoal on paper (28.5 x 15.5 to 42.5 x 34.5 cm) of figures that appear to have been executed in a life drawing class.	2.2
Life drawings: ink and brush/pen			47 pages of drawings in black ink and brush or pen and ink on paper (30 x 12 to 47 x 37 cm) of figures apparently drawn from life.	4.1
Figure drawings: pencil			28 drawings in pencil on paper (19.5 x 22.5 to 46 x 30.5 cm) consisting of figure studies. The group seems to be a combination of drawings from life and copies of poses from published sources.	4.2

Figure studies: line drawings		32 pages of drawings on paper consisting of pencil and charcoal drawings of figures drawn from life. With few exceptions they consist of simple outlines.	5.1
Portrait studies		33 pages of drawings on paper (15.5 x 19 to 48 x 32 cm) in pencil, charcoal and brush that contain studies of individuals.	2.3
Portrait studies: elderly figures on park benches		11 pages removed from a small sketchbook (12 x 18 cm) containing coloured pencil studies of elderly figures seated on park benches. One sheet contains drawings on the verso.	5.2
Heads		9 sheets of drawings on paper (40.5 x 31 to 46 x 30.5 cm) in charcoal and pencil that contain studies of heads.	2.4
Figure drawings: Cubism (1)		20 sheets of pencil drawings (30 x 22.5 cm to 45.5 x 30.5 cm) on paper containing drawings that superimpose grids and angles on the human figure.	2.5
Figure drawings: Cubism (2)		8 pages of drawings in pencil and red pencil on heavy paper containing figures and copies from the antique, with geometrical structures overlaid.	5.3
Miscellaneous notes and studies		14 miscellaneous pencil sketches and notes on paper (12.5 x 12.5 to 42 x 26.5 cm) containing rough drawings and notations, including outline drawings of Titian's <i>Entombment</i> and Fra Angelico's <i>Annunciation</i> . The drawings share attempts to work out formal problems.	3.1
Anatomical studies (1)		5 pencil drawings on paper (25.5 x 38 to 30 x 41 cm) with written notations showing proportions of the human body at different ages and with different sexes.	3.2
Anatomical studies (2)		6 pencil drawings on paper of the human torso with detailed notes, showing muscles, bone structure, organs, etc.	5.4
Geometric studies		15 pencil drawings on paper (26 x 41 cm) that appear to be copied from a textbook. The drawings are labeled from Plate 1 to Plate 15 and have accompanying notes, with increasingly complex geometric calculations.	3.3
Study notes on the human figure (1)		35 pencil drawings on oiled tracing paper (25 x 17 cm) mounted on 21 sheets of paper (27 x 39 cm) probably containing copies from a text. Subjects include classical figures and anatomical studies of feet, eyes, various bones, muscles and joints, ears, faces, etc.	3.4
Study notes on the human figure (2)		25 pencil drawings on oiled tracing paper with detailed drawings and notes on various parts of the human figure, including the bodies and faces of children.	5.5
Prints	[193-]	File contains 4 prints, including 2 prints from the same plate on different papers (12.5 x 10 cm – plate size), and 2 abstract mono-prints on paper made from the same plate (41 x 30.5 cm)	3.5
Miscellaneous drawings		8 pencil and pastel drawings on paper (22 x 14 to 31 x 41.5 cm) consisting of a variety of subject including landscapes,	3.6

interiors and studies of animals.

Printed study sources			File includes 15 leaves removed from books including plates of models and statuary. Also included are 3 leaves, probably from an art periodical, on Munsell's colour theory, a leaf from <i>L'illustration</i> with plates of Art Deco jewelry, partially cut-out, and the printed front board from <i>La Bible historiee toute figuree de la John Rylands Library...</i> by Robert Fawtier (Paris, 1924).	3.7
Watercolour sketch			Red and black wash over pencil on paper (25.5 x 20 cm) of a boy and girl picking apples. Two pencil sketches of entwined figures on the verso	5.6
Advertisement			"Munn's 60 th Anniversary Sale..." hand lettering on card, in black, red and grey, by Kathleen Munn? The store operated until 1941 at 800 Yonge Street, Toronto.	5.7
Stencil designs	[191-]		27 designs in pencil on paper and 1 stencil cut in heavy paper. The designs include borders, corner designs, book covers, etc. The verso of one sheet contains the first page of an undated draft letter in Kathleen Munn's hand to her mother evidently en route to Buffalo and Boston in which she mentions a visit to Elbert Hubbard's studio in East Aurora NY, and a scheme to make money.	5.8
Letters	1912	1914	Photocopied letters from Munn's mother and brother in Toronto reporting on family affairs, the garden, the business, etc.	5.9

SERIES 3: DRAWINGS FOR 'THE PASSION'

Dates of creation:

[192-] – [193-]

Extent:

1844 pages of drawings
8 photographs

Scope and content:

Series contains preparatory pencil drawings for 'The Passion' series. Munn commonly used both sides of her sheets of paper and the numbers given are for the number of pages. Some contain a brief notation or number. She apparently combined and rearranged the small drawings; some are pasted composites, and others contain pin-holes. Most sheets contain a single figure with variations in stance, usually involving points or dots, suggesting that she was using an angle to work out geometrical structure. The sheer quantity indicates the extraordinary effort involved in the creation of her final drawings. Series also contains 1 ink and brush drawing, and one charcoal drawing. None are dated.

Notes:

Arrangement:

The archivist has arranged the drawings for physical safety only. Boxes 5,6 and 7 contain pages that fit within a legal file folder. There are generally 3 sizes of sheets used: small sheets, approximately 13.5 x

18.5 cm; letter-size sheets, approximately 28 x 21 cm; and legal-size sheets, approximately 35.5 x 21 cm. Oversize material for this series is found in Box 4. Where noted, drawings were loosely inserted between the covers of commercial writing pads. The covers have been removed for conservation reasons and grouped at the end of each box.

Location / item listing:

CONTENTS	BOX- FILE #
20 pages inserted in a card folder for Hamilton watches with a hand-lettered date of 1939	5.10
32 pages inserted in Wellington Bond typewriter tablet cover	5.11
29 pages inserted in a Mercantile typewriter tablet cover	5.12
10 pages in an Aircraft Bond typewriter tablet cover	5.13
83 pages inserted into an Aircraft Bond cover	5.14
120 pages inserted into a card folder labeled 'Bulova Watches' with a hand-lettered date of 1938	5.15
12 pages of drawings	5.16
58 pages inserted in an Aircraft Bond cover	5.17
26 pages inserted in an Aircraft Bond cover	5.18
54 pages (The Crucifixion) in an unmarked pad cover	5.19
77 pages of drawings removed from a red paper folder	5.20
50 pages of drawings removed from a red paper folder	5.21
45 pages of drawings from a group of 179 (#1)	6.1
45 pages of drawings from a group of 179 (#2)	6.2
46 pages of drawings from a group of 179 (#3)	6.3
43 pages of drawings from a group of 179 (#4)	6.4
41 pages from a group of 84 drawings and notes (#1) [note: items in this folder were probably extracted by Munn from her notebook of 1924, as she began work on her <i>Passion</i> series; they are therefore earlier than other material in this box]	6.5
43 pages from a group of 84 drawings and notes (#2) [note: items in this folder were probably extracted by Munn from her notebook of 1924, as she began work on her <i>Passion</i> series; they are therefore earlier than other material in this box]	6.6
19 pages of drawings inserted in a Wellington Bond typewriter tablet cover	6.7
33 pages of drawings inserted into an Aircraft Bond typewriter tablet cover	6.8
54 pages of drawings inserted into an unmarked card folder	6.9
73 pages of drawings inserted into an Air Mail Bond tablet cover, with a page of notes (related to a robbery at the jewelry store?) in the artist's hand tipped inside the covers.	6.10
26 pages of drawings inserted into an Aircraft Bond tablet cover	6.11
16 pages of drawings inserted into a British Museum envelope	6.12
25 pages of drawings	6.13
25 pages of drawings	6.14
25 pages of drawings	6.15
79 pages of drawings	7.1
83 pages of drawings	7.2

56 pages of drawings	7.3
59 pages of drawings	7.4
30 pages of drawings inserted into an Aircraft Bond tablet cover	7.5
70 pages of drawings	7.6
25 pages of drawings inserted into a Lafayette tablet cover	7.7
33 pages of drawings inserted into an Aircraft Bond cover	7.8
21 pages of drawings inserted into an Aircraft Bond cover	7.9
15 pages of drawings inserted into an Aircraft Bond cover	7.10
16 pages of drawings inserted into an Aircraft Bond cover	7.11
69 pages of drawings inserted into a Wellington Bond cover	7.12
33 pages of drawings inserted into a Wellington Bond cover	7.13
75 pages of drawings inserted into an Aircraft Bond cover	7.14
26 pages of drawings inserted into a Wellington Bond cover	7.15
16 pages of drawings inserted into a Paragon Series tablet cover	7.16
8 photographs of finished Passion Series pencil drawings.	7.17
Titles of works are as follows (all are ca. 1934-1935; X-numbers refer to AGO photography): X-01654: Betrayal, Passion Series; X-01655: Last Supper, Passion Series; X-01656: Agony in the Garden, Passion Series; X-01657: Crucifixion, Passion Series; X-01658: Descent from the Cross, Passion Series; X-01659: Deposition, Passion Series; X-01660: Ascension, Passion Series [arms up]; X-01661: Ascension, Passion Series [arms down].	
8 large studies for 'The Passion' including:	4.3
1 charcoal drawing (36.5 x 24 cm)	
1 ink and brush with a charcoal cubist still life on the verso (28.5 x 39 cm)	
2 pencil drawings – 36.5 x 29 cm; 28 x 43.5 cm	
4 pencil drawings composed of 2 or more smaller drawings pasted together - 37 x 39 cm; 28.5 x 34 cm; 46 x 51 cm; 43 x 42 cm	