

SisterSerpents Records
1989-2001, n.d.

Creator: SisterSerpents

Extent: 3 linear ft.

Processor: Kristin Emery, August 2011

Administration Information

Access Restrictions: None

Usage Restrictions: SisterSerpents retain all copyright for materials created by the organization.

Preferred Citation: Loyola University Chicago. Women and Leadership Archives. SisterSerpents Records. Box #, Folder #.

Provenance: Mary Ellen Croteau, founding member of SisterSerpents artist collective, donated these materials to the Women and Leadership Archives on July 20, 2011. (WLA2011.52)

Separations: 1.5 linear feet of duplicate or extemporaneous material removed. Mary Ellen Croteau designated some materials for addition to her personal papers which have been removed as well.

See Also: Croteau, Mary Ellen Papers at the Women and Leadership Archives and the Artemisia Gallery Records at the Art Institute of Chicago.

Administrative History

SisterSerpents is a radical feminist art collective that was formed in 1989 in Chicago, IL. SisterSerpents' work was generally done anonymously, however, among the founding members were Chicago-based artists Mary Ellen Croteau and Jeramy Turner. The group was most active from 1989 through 1998.

SisterSerpents' members carried out multiple public art operations including poster and sticker campaigns all over Chicago. They held annual art exhibitions and performances, which included women artists from all over the country who had responded to calls for submissions that SisterSerpents placed in art magazines and *Ms. Magazine*. SisterSerpents' art has been exhibited in Chicago, New York, Germany and Denver, CO. Members have represented SisterSerpents on numerous panels that addressed women's issues and have given talks on topics of interest. They have also been interviewed by a number of authors and researchers, usually on the topic of using art for political activism.

SisterSerpents' art was highly political and often very explicit. The members used art as an ideological weapon to shock and frighten, to inspire women and to do away with the patriarchal system that oppresses women. SisterSerpents strove to address political and feminist issues through their art such as: reproductive rights, eradication of rape, institutionalized misogyny and sexism, and the oppression of women in society. They often used anger and humor to make poignant statements regarding these topics. Regardless of politics, several of their posters are included in the Smithsonian's Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum's permanent collection.

Scope and Content

The SisterSerpents records span the period of 1989 to 2001, with the vast majority of material pertaining to 1989-1996. The records contain material related to the art, exhibitions and activities of the SisterSerpents radical feminist artist collective, and are comprised of documents, newspapers, photographs, slides, videocassettes, audiocassettes and some three-dimensional objects. There are three series in this collection: Administrative, Audio-Visual and 3-D Objects/Oversized. The collection is arranged alphabetically by subject.

Series 1: Administrative, 1989-2001, n.d., Boxes 1-3

This series contains biographical and administrative information about SisterSerpents, including resumes, manifestos, mailing lists, memos, exhibit material, posters created by SisterSerpents, artists' statements by members of the group, presentations given by members of SisterSerpents, subject files pertaining to issues relevant to the group, information about related groups, and newspaper clippings which include interviews with group members, promotional articles about exhibits and reviews of SisterSerpents' art and exhibitions. It also contains several years' worth of *MadWoman Magazine*, published by SisterSerpents.

Subseries 1A: Correspondence, 1989-2001, n.d., Box 3

This sub-series contains correspondence both sent and received by SisterSerpents. There is general correspondence, submissions by artists, letters to the editor, hate mail, requests for art, requests for interviews, prospectus requests. There is also correspondence regarding exhibitions, and rejection letters from galleries around the world.

Series 2: Audiovisual, 1989-1994, n.d., Boxes 4-5

This series contains audio-visual material pertaining to the art and exhibitions of SisterSerpents, as well as some of the panels and presentations that they were a part of. This series includes negatives of exhibits as well as some posters and photographs, as well as a few social events put on by the group. There are three videocassettes that show a performance, a panel on using art as a weapon and an interview on *American Art Forum*. There are two identical audio-cassettes that contain a panel that was put on by SisterSerpents at the 1992 Women's Caucus for Art National Conference on the subject of radical feminist art. There are three boxes of slides that contain images from various exhibitions, as well as close-ups of the artwork that was in these exhibitions.

Series 3: 3-D Objects/Oversized, 1990-1995, n.d., Boxes 6-7

This series contains two woodblock stamps of the SisterSerpents logo that were used in creating posters and stationery. The series also includes full-sized newspapers that did full-page spreads on SisterSerpents or their art and exhibitions. Of special interest is an edition of the Industrial Workers of the World newsletter that contains a center-fold of the SisterSerpents' famous "Consider a Fetus" poster.

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Subjects:

Artemisia Gallery

Croteau, Mary Ellen

Feminism and art

Feminism and art--History--20th century--Exhibitions.

Feminism and art--United States--20th century.

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<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Dates</u>
Series 1: Administrative Records 1989-1996, n.d.			
1	1	Administrative	n.d.
	2	Administrative: Inter-Office Memos	1990-1991
	3	Administrative: Mailing Lists	1991-1994, n.d.
	4	Artists' Statements	n.d.
	5	Audience Reactions	1990-1991, n.d.
	6	Exhibit Materials: ABC NO Rio 10 years, 7 Days	1990
	7	Exhibit Materials: Berlin 37 Räume	1992
	8	Exhibit Materials: Entry Forms	1992, n.d.
	9	Exhibit Materials: Hall of Shame	1996
	10	Exhibit Materials: Home Improvements: Demolishing Domesticity	1994
	11	Exhibit Materials: Proposals	1989-1991, n.d.
	12	Exhibit Materials: Piss on Patriarchy, Piss on Passivity	1992
	13	Exhibit Materials: Rattle Your Rage	1990
	14	Exhibit Materials: SisterSerpents at The Edge	1993
	15	Exhibit Materials: Snakefest '91: Art Against Dickheads	1991
	16	Exhibit Materials: Used Boyfriend Auction	n.d.
	17	Exhibit Materials: Women's Caucus for Art National Conference	1994
	18	Exhibit Materials: Your Message Here	1990
	19	Newspaper Clippings	1991, n.d.
	20	Newspaper Clippings	1991-1992
	21	Newspaper Clippings	1993-1994
	22	Posters	1991-1992, n.d.
	23	Posters: Event Fliers	1991-1994, n.d.
	24	Posters: Fetus Poster	1989
	25	Posters: Images	n.d.
	26	Posters: Text	n.d.
	27	Presentations	1990-1993, n.d.
2	1	Publications: Madwoman Magazine	1990-1993
	2	Publications: Madwoman Magazine	1994-1995
	3	Related Groups: Girl Vigilantes	1989-1990, n.d.
	4	Related Groups: HAGS	1991, n.d.
	5	Related Groups: Live Turkeys	1994-1995
	6	Related Groups: Miscellaneous	1982, 1992, n.d.
	7	Related Groups: Northwestern University Protest	1989
	8	Stickers	n.d.
	9	Subject Files: Abortion Rights	1989-1990, n.d.
	10	Subject Files: Feminist Theory	n.d.
	11	Subject Files: Feminist Theory	1979-1991, n.d.
	12	Subject Files: Political Art Theory	1986-1992, n.d.

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13	Subject Files: Pornography	1979, 1990, n.d.
14	Subject Files: Pro Life Literature	1982-1992, n.d.

Subseries 1A: Correspondence 1989-2001, n.d.

2	15	Artist Submissions	1990-1993, n.d.
	16	General	1989, n.d.
	17	General	1990
	18	General	1991-1992
	19	General	1993-2002
	20	German Exhibit	1991, n.d.
	21	Hate Mail	1990-1991
	22	Interview Requests	1992-2001, n.d.
	23	Letters to the Editor	1989-1994, n.d.
3	1	National Design Museum	1994-1995
	2	Prospectus Requests	1989, n.d.
	3	Prospectus Requests	1990
	4	Prospectus Requests	1991
	5	Prospectus Requests	1992, 1994
	6	Rejection Letters	1991, n.d.
	7	Sent	1991-1995, n.d.
	8	Solicitations for Artwork	1990-1994

Series 2: Audiovisual, 1989-1994, n.d.

Audiocassette Tapes

4	SisterSerpents: Radical Feminist Art	1992
	SisterSerpents: Radical Feminist Art (duplicates)	1992

Negatives

1	Demolishing Domesticity	1994
2	Miscellaneous	n.d.
3	Snakefest '91: Art Against Dickheads	1991

Photographs

4	4 th of July Weenie Roast and 5 th Birthday Party	n.d.
5	Contact Sheets	n.d.
6	First Supper, Misc	n.d.
7	Miscellaneous	n.d.
8	Miscellaneous Artwork	1991-1992, n.d.
9	SisterSerpents at The Edge Exhibit	1993
10	Snakefest '91: Art Against Dickheads	1991

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11		Snakefest '91: Art Against Dickheads Opening	1991
12		Transparencies	n.d.

Videocassettes

1		<i>American Art Forum</i>	1992
2		SisterSerpents Panel Discussion: <i>Art as a Weapon</i>	1990
3		<i>SisterSerpents Set History Straight</i>	1991

Slides

5	1	ABC No Rio Show	1990
	2	Altered Fetus	n.d.
	3	<i>Art Against Dickheads Show</i>	1989-1991
	4	Artemisia Show	1991, n.d.
	5	Denver Show (<i>SisterSerpents at The Edge</i>)	1993
	6	Fetus Poster	1989
	7	Filmmakers Gallery Exhibit/ ABC No Rio Art	1989-1994
6	1	Guild Complex Window Installation	1989
	2	<i>Home Improvement: Demolishing Domesticity Show</i>	1994
	3	July 4 th Show	1990
	4	<i>Piss on Patriarchy, Piss on Passivity Show</i>	1992
	5	<i>Rattle Your Rage Show</i>	1990
7	1	<i>Rattle Your Rage Show</i>	1990
	2	SisterSerpents Lecture	n.d.
	3	<i>SisterSerpents Set History Straight</i>	n.d.
	4	SisterSerpents Artwork	n.d.
	5	Stickers and Articles	n.d.
	6	Street Posters	n.d.
	7	Unidentified	n.d.

Series 3: 3-D Objects and Oversized, 1990-1995, n.d.

3-D Objects

8	1	SisterSerpents Woodblock Stamp-Large	n.d.
	2	SisterSerpents Woodblock Stamp-Small	n.d.

Oversized

9	1	Newspapers	1990-1995, n.d.
FF-1	1	Posters: Altered Fetus	n.d.
	2	Posters: Fetus Poster	1989

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3	Posters: Homage to John Heartfield	1989-1990
4	Posters: Miscellaneous	1991, n.d.