

**Mildred Orrick fashion and
costume sketches, circa 1928-1962
KA.0067**

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Kellen Design Archives
April 5, 2010
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Collection Overview

Repository	Kellen Design Archives
Creator	Orrick, Mildred, 1906-1994
Title	Mildred Orrick fashion and costume sketches
Date [inclusive]	circa 1928-1962
Extent	2.1 linear ft: 5 boxes

Abstract

Fashion designer Mildred Orrick (1906-1994) graduated from the New York School of Fine and Applied Art (later, Parsons School for Design) in 1928 and went on to a career as a fashion and costume designer and illustrator, and designed part of the Futurama exhibition at the 1939 New York World's Fair. Orrick was a visiting critic at Parsons from 1947 to 1962. The collection consists of Orrick's fashion and theater costume sketches, 1920s-1950s. Additional Orrick sketches may be found in the Kellen Design Archives' Claire McCardell sketch collection.

Preferred Citation note

[Identification of item], [date (if known)], Mildred Orrick fashion and costume sketches, KA.0067, box ___, folder ___, New School Archives and Special Collections, The New School, New York, New York.

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Biographical note

Mildred (Boykin) Orrick was born in 1906 in Virginia. She studied at the Florida State College for Women prior to enrolling at the New York School of Fine and Applied Art (later, Parsons The New School for Design). As a student, Orrick was a classmate of Claire McCardell and Joset Walker with whom she maintained lifelong personal and professional relations.

Orrick graduated from Parsons in 1928 and obtained her first design work sketching and modeling for Natasha Rambova in her fashion atelier. Rambova later introduced Orrick to Norman Bel Geddes, who commissioned several projects from her during the 1930s. It was also during this decade that she married architect Jesse Orrick and began freelancing as a magazine illustrator and fashion designer to support a growing family.

In approximately 1943, Joset Walker hired Orrick as a sketcher, thus introducing Orrick to Seventh Avenue. Although Orrick continued her illustration work, she was also working in the fashion industry as a designer, predominantly for the Janice Milan label. In 1957, Claire McCardell asked Orrick to assist her with the summer 1958 collection for Townley Frocks. Following McCardell's death in 1958, Orrick stayed with Townley until the McCardell label was discontinued the following year. Throughout the next two decades, she designed for several labels, including Darlyn Junior, Anne Fogarty, and Villager Clothes.

Mildred Orrick died in Virginia on December 4, 1994.

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Scope and Contents of Collection

The collection primarily consists of costume and fashion design sketches executed in charcoal, crayon, pencil, and watercolor. The bulk of the sketches contain no identifying information, such as dates or commissioner. Fabric swatches are attached to many of the sketches. The largest group of sketches depicts women's apparel. A smaller number of costume design sketches were executed earlier in Orrick's career and feature costumes for the plays *Lysistrata*, *Hamlet*, *Beyond the Horizon*, and an unproduced play about Joan of Arc, in addition to costumes for General Motors' 1939 New York World's Fair exhibit, "Futurama," produced by Norman Bel Geddes. Also included are illustrations for a yoga book and research sketches of ethnic and historical costume.

Series and folder titles are taken from labels presumably created by Orrick. The original title is noted if labels were altered for clarification during processing.

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Arrangement note

Organized in 5 series.

- I [General, 1920s-1950s](#)
- II [Costume design, circa 1928-circa 1944](#)
- III [Private commissions, 1934-1944](#)
- IV [Publicity, 1943-1962](#)
- V [Research studies, 1940s](#)

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Administrative Information

Publication Information

Kellen Design Archives April 5, 2010

Conditions Governing Access note

Collection is open for research use. Please contact archivist@newschool.edu for appointment.

Use Restrictions

To publish images of material from this collection, permission must be obtained in writing from the New School Archives. Please contact: archivist@newschool.edu.

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

Donated by Sarah Orrick and Martha Orrick, 1996.

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Related Materials

The New School Archives holds Claire McCardell's fashion sketches (KA.0082) for Townley Frocks, including 256 sketches Mildred Orrick executed for Townley's McCardell label for the 1958 collection. The New School Archives also holds two scrapbooks created by Orrick's friend and fellow designer Joset Walker (KA.0045), who was responsible for bringing Orrick to Seventh Avenue.

The New School Archives' Saks Fifth Avenue fashion publicity records (KA.0018) contains a large number of fashion photographs and press releases for Anne Fogarty designs dating from the period of Orrick's association with the company. Orrick, however, is not identified in any of the publicity material.

Photographs of Orrick with Parsons School of Design Fashion Design Department students in the 1950s will be found in the Parsons School of Design Alumni Association records (PC.03.02.01). The Alumni Association records also contain a file of correspondence with Orrick, indicating she was involved in the establishment of the Alumni Association in 1952.

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Keywords for Searching Related Subjects

Corporate Name(s)

- Harper's bazaar.
- New York World's Fair (1939-1940).
- Townley Frocks (Firm).

Genre(s)

- Drawings.
- Photographs.
- Research notes.
- Sketches.
- Swatches.

Occupation(s)

- Costume designers.
- Fashion designers.

Personal Name(s)

- Geddes, Norman Bel, 1893-1958
- Rambova, Natacha
- Strange, Michael, 1890-1950

Subject(s)

- Costume design.
- Fashion design.
- Women designers -- New York (State) -- New York.
- Women's clothing industry.
- Yoga -- Pictorial works.

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Other Finding Aids note

For selected item-level description and images from the Mildred Orrick fashion and costume sketches, see The New School Archives Digital Collections at <http://digitalarchives.library.newschool.edu/index.php/Detail/collections/KA0067>.

Collection Inventory**Series I. General 1920s-1950s**

With the exception of the leotard illustrations in the Women's clothing sub-series, there are no dates or identifying information associated with the drawings in this series. A small number of the women's clothing sketches feature the words "Harpers" and "Vogue" in the bottom left-hand corners, possibly indicating they were executed in the 1930s and 1940s when Orrick worked as an illustrator. The leotard illustrations were published in a *Harper's Bazaar* article, a copy of which will be found in the Publicity series.

Link to selected images from this series., 1920s-1950s

[\[http://digitalarchives.library.newschool.edu.libproxy.newschool.edu/index.php/Detail/collections/KA0067.01\]](http://digitalarchives.library.newschool.edu.libproxy.newschool.edu/index.php/Detail/collections/KA0067.01)

	Box	Folder
Children's clothing	1	1
Gloves	1	2
Shoes	1	3
Uniforms	1	4
Women's clothing		
General	1	5-24
	2	1-4
Bathing suits	2	5-6
Leotard fashion, probably 1943	2	7
Sears, Roebuck and Company [?]: Country Girl	2	8-10

Series II. Costume design circa 1928-circa 1944

Originally titled "Rambova, Geddes, Costumes" by Orrick, this series primarily contains costume design drawings for theatrical productions. It also contains costume sketches for General Motors' 1939 World's Fair "Futurama" exhibit.

Under the direction of Norman Bel Geddes, Orrick designed the clothing of the miniature inhabitants of a futuristic display. It is possible the original series title stemmed from Rambova's introduction of Orrick to Bel Geddes, which may have then led to the Michael Strange commission. Sketches created for Natasha Rambova will be found in the Private Commissions series as these materials were of non-theatrical nature.

Link to selected images from this series., circa 1928-circa 1944

[\[http://digitalarchives.library.newschool.edu.libproxy.newschool.edu/index.php/Detail/collections/KA0067.02\]](http://digitalarchives.library.newschool.edu.libproxy.newschool.edu/index.php/Detail/collections/KA0067.02)

	Box	Folder
<i>Beyond The Horizon</i> (Roanoke Little Theatre), 1933 Both Mildred Orrick and her husband, Jesse Orrick, worked on this production of the 1920 Pulitzer Prize-winning Eugene O'Neil drama, she as costumer designer and he as set designer. Orrick's watercolor costume design drawings are signed "Boykin," her maiden name. The folder also includes a program.	2	11
Jeanne D'Arc [<i>Forever Young?</i>], circa 1935 Costume design drawings probably commissioned by director Michael Strange, the stage pseudonyme of Blanche Oelrichs (1890-1950). According to her memoir <i>Who Will Tell Me True</i> (1940), Strange scuttled the one-woman show, <i>Forever Young</i> , circa 1937.	2 5	12 1
Bel Geddes, Norman 1931-1939		
<i>Hamlet</i> : Final costumes, 1931	5	2-3
<i>Hamlet</i> : Unused costumes, 1931	5	4
<i>Lysistrata</i> , 1930	5	5
New York World's Fair: General Motors "Futurama", 1939 In 1939, the General Motors Company hired Norman Bel Geddes and George Wittbold to design and build an exhibit titled "Futurama" for the New York World's Fair. Bel Geddes brought Mildred Orrick to the project to design the miniature figures for the exhibition. In addition to Orrick's sketches, the files include a series of detailed progress reports on an array of technical and aesthetic elements of the complex exhibit as it evolved.	2 5	13 6-7

Series III. Private commissions 1934-1944

Orrick assigned the designation "Private Commissions" to these sketches. Her folder-level encompassing dates have also been retained during processing. Although the sketches in this series are arranged chronologically, there is some overlap in years. However, the sketches contain no information indicating when they were executed.

The sketches commissioned by Natasha Rambova were originally filed with costume design sketches under the heading "Rambova, Geddes, Costumes." These consist of pencil sketches of day dresses, formal gowns, suits, and coats, and were probably created for Rambova's fashion atelier. Orrick also executed a series of illustrations for Rambova's 1944 yoga book, *Technique for Living*.

Link to selected images from this series., 1934-1944

[\[http://digitalarchives.library.newschool.edu.libproxy.newschool.edu/index.php/Detail/collections/KA0067.03\]](http://digitalarchives.library.newschool.edu.libproxy.newschool.edu/index.php/Detail/collections/KA0067.03)

1934-1937	2 3 5	14-23 1-2 8
1937-1938	3	3-5
1937-1941		

General	3	6-7
Haskell	3	8-11
Piel	3	12-14
Throne	3	15
1938-1939	5	9-11
1939-1940	3	16-20
1940-1941	4	1-2
Rambova, Natacha: Fashion design drawings, between 1928-1932	4	3
	5	12
Rambova, Natacha: <i>Technique For Living</i> [book illustrations], circa 1944	4	4

Series IV. Publicity 1943-1962

Publicity includes clippings and photographs documenting Orrick's fashion design career. Orrick's original title for these files was "Seventh Avenue." All materials included in the series date from Orrick's fashion design work and do not contain any materials related to her earlier costume commissions. Of note are photographs for an article published in the *Florida Times-Union* about how garments are created at Townley Frocks. Black and white photographs credited to Harry Harris depict the stages of creation, beginning with Orrick's sketches and continuing on to fabric selection, pattern cutting, and sewing.

	Box	Folder
Advertisements, 1947	5	13
Articles, 1943-1962	5	14
Photographs, 1950s, 1959	5	15

Series V. Research studies 1940s

Research studies (originally titled "Research") consists of drawings and tracings Orrick produced based upon historical or ethnographic sources. At least one folder of drawings ("Religious colonies") was inspired by drawings in the *Index of American Design*, a WPA-sponsored Federal Art Project undertaken between 1935-1942. Other folders contain illustrated magazine clippings as Orrick's source material. The drawings depict women dressed in traditional or modified costume with annotations in addition to various accessories. The drawings may have been intended for submission to *Harper's Bazaar*, as a 1943 issue of the magazine includes Orrick's illustrations for "Religious Colonies," and another series of drawings is specifically labeled "for *Harper's Bazaar*." The majority are undated.

	Box	Folder
Bifurcation studies It is unclear what Orrick meant by naming these drawings "bifurcation studies." The folders consist of drawings and tracings taken from a variety of sources, including books and museum collections.	4	5-7
Caleb Bingham, after 1942	4	8
Chinese	4	9
Indians	4	10
Paris [bathing suits]	5	16
Pennsylvania Dutch for <i>Harper's Bazaar</i>	4	11-13

Religious colonies, after 1942

4

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