

Guide to the Duncan Robinson Papers on Paul Mellon

S018



Compiled by Meg Rinn

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Institutional Archives
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<https://britishart.yale.edu/about-us/departments/institutional-archives>

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Yale Center for British Art, Institutional Archives
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CALL NUMBER: S018

CREATOR: Robinson, Duncan

TITLE: Duncan Robinson papers on Paul Mellon

DATES: 1930-2007

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: .92 linear feet (3 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English (Latin script)

SUMMARY: Collection material mostly pertains the life of Paul Mellon and his relationship with Duncan Robinson, with an emphasis on Mellon's personal interests in horse racing and sporting art.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use on site, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/>.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Duncan Robinson, 2021.

Conditions Governing Access

The collection is partially restricted. Please contact the Yale Center for British Art Archives for further information.

Preferred Citation

Duncan Robinson Papers on Paul Mellon. Yale Center for British Art, Archives.

Biographical / Historical

Duncan Robinson (June 27, 1943 – December 2, 2022) served as director of the Yale Center for British Art (YCBA) from 1981 to 1995. He was born in Kidsgrove, Stoke-on-Trent, England, and attended Clare College, Cambridge. From 1965 to 1967, Robinson attended Yale University on a Mellon fellowship, earning a master's in art history.

His museum career began in 1970 when he was appointed assistant keeper of paintings and drawings at the Fitzwilliam Museum, part of Cambridge University. He was promoted to keeper in 1976, and remained at the Fitzwilliam until joining the Yale Center for British Art in 1981.

Robinson's tenure as director of the Yale Center for British Art saw the expansion of the collections and the museum's increased importance as a research hub for British art history. He oversaw major acquisitions such as James McNeill Whistler's *Nocturne in Blue and Silver* and J. M. W. Turner's *Channel Sketchbook*, and exhibitions such as the Tate collaboration *George Stubbs, 1724–1806* and *Richard Parkes Bonington: "On the Pleasure of Painting."* He had a close relationship with Paul Mellon, which helped to expand Mellon's collecting interests to include twentieth-century British works. Robinson also served as an adjunct professor of art history at Yale during this time.

Robinson departed the YCBA in 1995 to become director of the Fitzwilliam Museum, where he remained until retiring in 2007. During his time at the Fitzwilliam, he was named Master of Magdalene College (2002–12), as well as a deputy vice chancellor of Cambridge starting in 2005.

Beyond these extensive responsibilities, Robinson actively served on various boards, councils, and cultural heritage organizations, including his time as chairman of the Henry Moore Foundation, trustee of the Royal Collection, and more. He was appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in 2008 in recognition of his extensive contributions to the heritage of art.

For more information, please see the obituary for Robinson published by the Yale Center for British Art: <https://britishart.yale.edu/news-and-press/memorial-duncan-robinson-cbe-1943-2022>

Biographical / Historical

Paul Mellon (1907–1999) was the son of Pittsburgh financier and former Secretary of the Treasury Andrew W. Mellon. As a young man, Mellon developed a love for British art, literature, and sport, interests that permeated his adult life and philanthropic pursuits. Mellon was a graduate of Yale College (class of 1929) and Cambridge University, where he deepened his knowledge of British literature and interest in equestrian sports. In partnership with his second wife, Rachel Lambert Mellon (1910–2013), Paul Mellon amassed a large collection of rare books and art, much of which was originally displayed at their homes in Antigua, New York, Virginia, and Washington, DC. Paul Mellon's focused collecting of British art began in the late 1950s. In 1966 he bequeathed his extensive collection of art and rare books to Yale University, along with an endowment that established the Yale Center for British Art, which opened to the public in 1977.

Scope and Contents

Collection material mostly pertains to the life of Paul Mellon and his relationship with Duncan Robinson. Included in the collection are publications that focus on Mellon's interests such as horse racing and sporting art, copies of speeches given by Mellon, obituaries and tributes, and posthumous speeches given by Robinson about Mellon.

Arrangement

Organized into six series: Series 1. Speeches and articles written by Paul Mellon; Series 2. Articles featuring or related to Paul Mellon; Series 3. Photographs; Series 4. Obituaries and memorials; Series 5. Posthumous writings and speeches about Paul Mellon; Series 6. Paul Mellon, [Restricted].

Collection Contents

Series I. Speeches and articles written by Paul Mellon, 1930-1996

This series features speeches, articles, or works edited by Paul Mellon, ranging from his time at Clare College, Cambridge University, to acceptance speeches.

Materials are arranged chronologically.

b. 1966, f. 1	Lady Clare [ed. Paul Mellon]	1930
b. 1966, f. 2	Paul Mellon Speeches	1954-1989
b. 1966, f. 3	Address by Paul Mellon on receiving the annual award of the Thoroughbred Club of America	1975
b. 1966, f. 4	Acceptance speech made by Duncan Robinson on behalf of Paul Mellon at the Skowhegan 50th anniversary awards dinner	1996

Series II. Articles featuring or related to Paul Mellon, 1985-1997

This series features printed works, mostly magazines, about Mellon or his art collections.

Materials are arranged alphabetically by title.

b. 1966, f. 5	The Brick House: a gallery of British sporting art	1989
b. 1966, f. 6	The British Sporting Art Trust newsletter	1995-1997
b. 1966, f. 7	Horseracing magazines	1985, 1990

Series III. Photographs, 1994, undated

Within the "[?]" at the Brick House" folder are a set of personal photographs from Duncan Robinson that features a group trip to Paul Mellon's home in Upperville, Virginia, known as the Brick House. The horses folder features images of Mellon's various race horses, including a copy photo of Queen Elizabeth II with Mill Reef. There are additional portraits of Mellon.

Photographs are arranged alphabetically by title.

b. 1966, f. 8	[?] at the Brick House	1994
b. 1966, f. 9	Horses	undated
b. 1966, f. 10	Paul Mellon	undated

Series IV. Obituaries and memorials, 1999

This series contains obituaries, statements, and tributes regarding the death of Paul Mellon. Also included are materials from his memorial services at the National gallery of Art and Clare College.

Materials are arranged chronologically.

b. 1966, f. 11	Obituaries from US press	1999 February
b. 1966, f. 12	Obituaries from UK press	1999 February
b. 1966, f. 13	A Thanksgiving for the life of Paul Mellon	1999 February 8
b. 1966, f. 14	Memorial Service, National Gallery of Art	1999 April 21
b. 1966, f. 15	Memorial Service, Clare College, Cambridge	1999 May 8
b. 1966, f. 16	Publications featuring tributes to Paul Mellon	1999

Series V. Posthumous writings and speeches about Paul Mellon, 1999-2007

Following Paul Mellon's death, Duncan Robinson was often asked to speak regarding Mellon, and occasionally kept articles related to the donations made in Mellon's will. Unless otherwise noted, as in the case of William S. Reese, the speeches here were given by Robinson.

Materials are arranged by format: articles and clippings, speeches, and other tributes.

b. 1967, f. 1	Press regarding Mellon donations	1999-2000
b. 1967, f. 2	Paul Mellon as a collector and patron of British art and scholarship	undated
b. 1967, f. 3	Paul Mellon as collector of Americana and Virginia by William S. Reese	2000 July 24
b. 1967, f. 4	Paul Mellon as I knew him	2002 October 23
b. 1967, f. 5	Cambridge University, Fitzwilliam Museum	2002-2004
b. 1967, f. 6	St. George's Bloomsbury address	2006 October 5
b. 1967, f. 7	The Galloping Anglophile	2007
b. 1967, f. 8	Paul Mellon: a Cambridge tribute [exhibition]	2007
b. 1967, f. 9	Paul Mellon as Collector	2007 November 11

Series VI. Paul Mellon, Restricted, undated, 1972-1998

Material represents personal documents that fall under access restrictions.

Series VI is closed to research.

Materials are arranged chronologically.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

Art -- Collectors and collecting -- United States
Art museum directors
Memorial service
Philanthropists -- United States
Race horses -- United States

Names

Mellon, Paul

Corporate Bodies

Clare College (University of Cambridge)
Fitzwilliam Museum