

Grants to improve Archives' function



Collection exhibited

Photographs that the Detroit Institute of Arts has acquired in the last two years are on display in the museum's Albert and Peggy de Salle Gallery of Photography through May 10. Among them is "Sitting Man with Pink Face" by Irving Penn, American, born in 1917. It is a platinum-palladium print. Hours are 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 5200 N. Woodward, Birmingham.

The Archives of American Art has received grants from the J. Paul Getty Trust and the Andrew Mellon Foundation, each contributing half of a total of \$350,000 to support a project to make the organization's collections more accessible. Archives director Richard Murray has announced.

The grants will support staff and related requirements for a three-year project. "The result of the project," Murray said, "will be a far more inclusive data base of basic descriptions of all the collections and more detailed descriptions of selected major holdings. Information on the Archives' extraordinary collections of documents, works on paper and oral history interviews and photographs will be more readily available to researchers."

The Archives, a bureau of the Smithsonian Institution, has assembled the world's largest collection of material documenting the history of the visual arts in the nation. More than nine million items of original source material are available on microfilm.

Yet because the holdings have reached such an unprecedented size,

much valuable information remains beyond the ability of staff to record and thus beyond the grasp of researchers, according to the grant proposal.

The Mellon/Getty grants will enable the Archives to bring together pertinent sources of information, including accession files, inventories, the card catalog and reports from each of its six regional centers. The information will be placed in the computer data-base system in use at the Smithsonian.

A typical example of a collection crammed with important letters, but

used by few researchers, is the Carnegie Museum International Exhibition records. Between 1895 and 1940, the Carnegie directors corresponded with hundreds of American and European artists, among them Mary Cassatt (50 letters to and from), DeGas (14) and Thomas Eakins (120). The collection's very size, however — 283 records storage boxes — has prevented the Archives from making it useful to art histories and other scholars.

The automated system will be especially valuable for cross references. The Carnegie records, moreover, lend themselves readily to automa-

ted indexing because the Carnegie produced a card index to all correspondents.

The second objective of the project is to expand information on significant collections now seldom called for because they are inadequately described in the card catalog.

Among the collections targeted by the Archives to receive additional analyses and descriptions before being placed in the data base are the records of artists, gallery dealers, critics and scholars among them Peggy Bacon, Marcel Breuer, Clement Greenberg, Betty Parsons, Ad Reinhardt, Ben Shahn and David Smith.

The data compiled from the project will be available at the Smithsonian and at each of the Archives' centers located in Boston, New York City, Detroit, Washington, D.C., San Francisco and Los Angeles. The information will also be available at a future date on a national computer network outside the Smithsonian system.

"The goal is to provide true nationwide access to our collections," Murray said.

clarification

The date of the 1987 Michigan Arts Awards ceremony at Detroit Institute of Arts is Tuesday, May 5.

Five awards of \$2,500 each will be given to Misha Gordin, photographer, Loren Estleman, writer, Thom Bohmert, sculptor, Jens Plum,

painter and Ross Lee Finney, composer/musician.

The awards are presented by the Arts Foundation of Michigan each year to Michigan artists who have made outstanding contributions in their fields.



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