**COKER, GYLBERT.**
**Gylbert Coker papers, 1968-2002**

Emory University  
Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library  
Atlanta, GA 30322  
404-727-6887  
rose.library@emory.edu

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**Descriptive Summary**

| Creator: | Coker, Gylbert. |
| Title: | Gylbert Coker papers, 1968-2002 |
| Call Number: | Manuscript Collection No. 1042 |
| Extent: | 9.75 linear ft. (11 boxes) and 33.8 MB born digital material (265 files) |
| Abstract: | Papers of African American academic Gylbert Coker including curatorial work, research materials, correspondence, printed material, and project documents. |
| Language: | Materials entirely in English. |

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**Administrative Information**

**Restrictions on Access**
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**Source**
Gift, 2006.

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Citation
[after identification of item(s)], Gylbert Coker papers, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

Processing
Arranged by record type.

Born digital materials arranged and described by Brenna Edwards and Zhexiong Liu, 2019-2020. Born digital materials include files taken from six 3.5" floppy disks. Forensic disk images were created from the floppy disks using Kyroflux. Individual files were extracted using FTK Imager and scanned for viruses using McAfee’s anti-virus software; none were found. Duplicate and system files have been removed, and files were scanned for personally identifiable information; none were found. Access copies retain original folder titles and file names.

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Collection Description

Biographical Note
Gylbert Garvin Coker (b. 1944) is a noted art history scholar, curator, and actor/artist. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts, Visual Art from Pratt Institute (New York, New York) in 1972; a Master of Arts, American Civilization at New York University (New York, New York) in 1982; a Master of Arts, Art history from Hunter College (New York, New York) in 1999; and a Ph.D. in Art Administration from Florida State University (Tallahassee, Florida) in 2010. Her dissertation covered the multiculturalism policy in museums and was a case study on the Pensacola Museum of Art (Pensacola, Florida). Coker trained at New York institutions including the Guggenheim Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Coker was a curator at the Studio Museum in Harlem. She set up the art department gallery and curated exhibitions at the Southern University of New Orleans (SUNO), as well as curated exhibitions at Florida Agriculture and Mechanical University (FAMU). She was also the acting Executive Director for the Children's Art Carnival and co-curator of the Art Across the Park projects in New York City in 1980 and 1982, an outdoor exhibition on which she worked with Horace Brockington and David Hammons. From 1999-2005, Coker was responsible for developing exhibitions for the Zora Neale Hurston Museum in Eatonville, Florida, and later was the curator for the Thomasville Cultural Center in Thomasville, Georgia. She also curated an exhibition on Bob Thompson (1978); a retrospective of Benny Andrews (which was one of his last exhibitions before his death); and Moulin Rouge: The Seeds of Modernity, which took a second look at the influence of African American music and dance as well as the influences of African, Asian, Caribbean, and Latin American cultures.

As an art critic, Coker was one of the first African American scholars to write for the Art in America and Arts journals and was responsible for introducing the art work of Bill Traylor to the
public through an exhibit in 1978. Her reviews appeared in the *Amsterdam News*, *The Village Voice*, and local arts magazines and newspapers in New Orleans, Louisiana, and Tallahassee, Florida. She also exposed the people living in the Georgia and Florida areas to the floral images of Robert Mapplethorpe, Carrie Mae Weems, and a curated a group show of contemporary female artists.

As an actor Coker worked on several soap operas and a number of off-off Broadway productions. She was also the personal secretary to Mrs. Countee Cullen, serving as adviser and cataloger to the Charles Alston Estate and to Mrs. Palmer Hayden.

**Scope and Content Note**
The collection consists of the papers of Gylbert Coker from 1968-2001. The papers relate to Coker’s involvement in various art projects including Children's Art Carnival, Cityarts Workshop, Zora Neale Hurston Museum, and in particular, the Art Across the Park projects (1980 and 1982) in New York City. The papers include correspondence with artists as well as documents concerning planning and implementing the projects. The collection also includes significant writings by Coker in her role as art critic and researcher as well as writings by others. Included in the collection are also printed materials such as exhibit catalogues and flyers. There are also audiovisual materials documenting performances and interviews, as well as classes and exhibits. Born digital material includes correspondence, project files, and writing files.

**Arrangement Note**
Unprocessed collection.
## Container List

### Correspondence

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### Photographs

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<td>Art Across the Park, (New York, New York), 1980</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Headshots</td>
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<td>&quot;Make a Face,&quot; exhibit, 1976 [photographer: Marilyn Nance]</td>
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### Sketchbooks

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### Subject files

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<td>The Actor's Gym</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>African American Art [1 of 2]</td>
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<td>African American Art [2 of 2]</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>African American Genealogy</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>African Art [1 of 2]</td>
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<td>African Art [1 of 2]</td>
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<td>African Symbolism</td>
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2  15  Art Across the Park II (New York, New York), financial, 1982
2  16  Art Across the Park II (New York, New York), funding sources, 1982
2  17  Art Across the Park II (New York, New York), grant proposals, 1982
2  19  Association to Preserve the Eatonville Community
2  20  Biographical
2  21  Black Arts National Diaspora (New Orleans, Louisiana)
2  22  The Brooklyn Museum
2  23  CAPS applications, 1973-1974
2  24  Children's Art Carnival (New York, New York) [1 of 2]
2  25  Children's Art Carnival (New York, New York) [2 of 2]
3  1  City College of New York Art Library accessions, 1968-1970
3  2  Cityarts Workshop [1 of 2]
3  3  Cityarts Workshop [2 of 2]
3  4  Community Environments
3  5  Cullen, Ida
3  6  Curatorial work [1 of 2]
3  7  Curatorial work [2 of 2]
3  8  Fellowship applications
3  9  Florida Atlantic University, Schmidt Center Gallery
3 10  Fradkin, Lucy
3 11  Franklin Furnace Cric Crac exhibit, 1981
3 12  Goddard College, Plainfield, Vermont
3 13  Henry Street Settlement House Exhibition, 1985-1986
3 14  Historical preservation
3 15  Howard University
3 16  Hunter College
3 17  International Black Photographers
4  27  Jackson, Jesse, 1988 presidential campaign, 1988
3 18  Just Above Midtown (New York, New York)
3 19  Langston Hughes House of Kuumba
3 20  Mental institutions
3 21  Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City
3 22  National African American Museum
3 23  National Black Arts Festival (Atlanta, Georgia), 1988
3 24  National Conference of Artists
3 25  National Council of Negro Women
3 26  National Museum of American Art
3 27  New York State Council on the Arts
3 28 New York University
3 29 Notes
3 30 Philadelphia Museum of Art, Black History Month, 1984
3 31 Rockefeller Foundation in Museum Studies
3 32 Saar, Betye
3 33 Studio Museum in Harlem
4  1 University of Arizona Museum of Art
4  2 West Indies, Carnival [1 of 2]
4  3 West Indies, Carnival [2 of 2]
4  5 Zora Neale Hurston Museum (Eatonville, Florida) [1 of 2]
4  6 Zora Neale Hurston Museum (Eatonville, Florida) [2 of 2]

Writings
4  7 Alston, Charles
4  8 Articles [1 of 2]
4  9 Articles [2 of 2]
4 10 *Black Folk Art in America*, exhibit review
4 11 Blurs for pamphlets and catalogs
4 12 Duncanson, Robert [1 of 2]
4 13 Duncanson, Robert [2 of 2]
4 14 Garvin, Fanita
4 15 Hammond, Harmony
4 16 Keckley, Elizabeth
4 17 Lewis, Edmonia [1 of 2]
4 18 Lewis, Edmonia [2 of 2]
4 19 Lewis, Norman
4 20 Naptime [1 of 2]
4 21 Naptime [2 of 2]

Writings by Others
4 23 Euba, Femi, "Riddles on the Ground," playscript
4 24 Jones, Gary Edwards, "Kinfolk," playscript
4 25 McDonald, Joseph, "Second Chance," playscript
4 26 Unidentified typescript

Printed material
5  - Exhibit catalogs, brochures, fliers, newsletters
6  - Exhibit catalogs, brochures, fliers, newsletters
### Audio recordings
7 - Gylbert Coker visual performance, undated
7 - Harmony Hammond interview, 1983
7 - Samella Lewis interview, undated

### Video recordings
7 - Buffalo Soldier, exhibition and seminar
7 - Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, Summer 2000 boys program
7 - Zora Neale Hurston Festival, Carrie Mae Weems exhibit, 2001

### Born digital materials
RRL - Access copies of processed born digital material [Reading room access ONLY]
7 - "Correspondence 97/98," 3.5" floppy disk [Original RESTRICTED]
7 - "Eatonville," 3.5" floppy disk [Original RESTRICTED]
7 - "G. Projects 2000," 3.5" floppy disk [Original RESTRICTED]
7 - "Projects," 3.5" floppy disk [Original RESTRICTED]
7 - "Projects 2001-2001," 3.5" floppy disk [Original RESTRICTED]
7 - "Thomasville works 2001-2002," 3.5" floppy disk [Original RESTRICTED]

### Unprocessed additions
8 - Printed materials, correspondence, photographs, and research files
9 - Correspondence, clippings, photographs, and writing
10 - Correspondence, printed material, writing
11 - Photographs, printed material, notebooks, slides, floppy disks