



Smithsonian
*Freer Gallery of Art and
Arthur M. Sackler Gallery*

A.W. Bahr Papers

Evelyn Khoo and Lara Amrod

2008



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Collection Overview

Repository:	Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives
Title:	A.W. Bahr Papers
Date:	1919-1957
Identifier:	FSA.A2001.14
Creator:	Bahr, A. W.
Extent:	1.25 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	Abel William Bahr was a coal merchant and general importer born in China who became an important collector of Chinese art. Several books and catalogues have been published about his collection. His papers include numerous drafts and notes about his memoirs as a collector, correspondence with other collectors and photographs of Chinese art objects, from jade to pottery to paintings.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Gift of Penelope Bahr and Helen M. Bahr (Stewart).

Provenance

Penelope Jane Bahr and Helen M. Bahr (Stewart) donated their grandfather's papers to the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives on November 12th, 2001.

Related Material

There are no known related materials at any other institution or historical society.

Processing Information

Processed by intern Evelyn Khoo, with the assistance of archivists Rachael Cristine Woody and David Hogge. Encoded by Rebecca Morgan, Summer 2012.

Preferred Citation

A.W. Bahr Papers, FSA.A2001.14. National Museum of Asian Art Archives. Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Gift of Penelope Jane Bahr and Helen M. Bahr (Stewart), November 12th, 2001.

Restrictions on Access

Collection is open for research.

Use Note

Permission to reproduce and publish an item from the Archives is coordinated through the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery's Rights and Reproductions department. Please contact the Archives in order to initiate this process.

Biographical Note

- 1877* Born in Shanghai to German father and Chinese mother
- Circa 1880s* Educated at St. Xavier's School in Shanghai
- Circa 1894* Work as a clerk at a wholesale and retail coal merchant's office, left solely in charge during the first Sino-Japanese war, encouraged by backers to start his own business
- 1898* Goes into business with shipping friend, started the Central Trading Company
- 1900* Marries Miss Helen Marion Southey (daughter of Mr. T.S. Southey, in Hong Kong. Working at firm of Hopkins Dunn and Company. Begins construction on his first house, Fairview, outside the settlement on North Honan Road Extension, first son born[?]
- 1901* Recipient of Victoria Medal for his role as a gunner during the Boxer Rebellion (had joined the Shanghai Volunteers)
- 1908* Shanghai Exhibition of Chinese Art, which he helped to organize and which he loaned many pieces from his own collection. Secretary of the Royal Asiatic Society. Publishes a catalogue of the exhibit in 1911, "Old Chinese Porcelains and Works of Art in China: Being Description and Illustrations of Articles selected from an Exhibition held in Shanghai, November 1908"
- 1909* Begins his association with Lord Kitchener; travels with him through China
- 1910* Leaves permanent residence in China, moves to London, England
- 1911* Catalogue of an Exhibition of Early Chinese Paintings from the Collection of A.W. Bahr, published by the Fine Art Society
- 1915* Applies to Foreign Office in London to go to America. (Involved in the art business; the war had stopped all such activities in London)
- 1927* Private printing of the catalogue, "Archaic Chinese Jades collected in China by A.W. Bahr, now in Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, described by Berthold Laufer"
- 1938* "Early Chinese Paintings from the A.W. Bahr Collection" by Osvald Siren, published by the Chiswick Press
- 1946* Leaves England, with his wife, daughter Edna, two sons and their wives and two granddaughters for Canada
- 1947* Metropolitan Museum of Art purchases Chinese paintings from Bahr, collection of archaic jades exhibited in the Royal Ontario Museum. The Met also publishes a portfolio of the painting, 'Ching Ming Shang Ho, Spring Festival on the River' which Bahr had donated to the museum

1948	The Met exhibits Bahr's Chinese paintings. Several Chinese art objects on loan to the Art Association of Montreal and exhibited in the new Far East gallery
1949	Tang figurine, paint cakes and Han pottery vase on display at the Royal Ontario Museum of Archaeology
1950	Donates Chinese ceramics to the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts
1951	Begins writing his memoir[?]
1952	Last visit to London
1954	Gets typed draft of memoir. Living in Ridgefield, CT, working with C.R. Cammell
1959	Dies

Scope and Content Note

This collection contains manuscript drafts and notes for Bahr's memoir, written by Bahr himself and C.R. Cammell, who was also the editor of *The Connoisseur* magazine. Other papers include correspondence with collectors of Chinese art or other figures in the art world, such as Lord Kitchener, the King and Queen of Sweden, Walter Muir Whitehill, Kenjiro Matsumoto and Senator Theodore Francis Green, among others. The bulk of the collection contains approximately 300 photographs of different Chinese art objects, from jade figurines to pottery to paintings. Most of these photographs are unidentified, but some of them include marginalia that indicate that they were of Bahr's own art objects for publication in books or articles. Photographs which are identified point to art objects also belonging to Bahr. The photographs have been organized based on the object type in the photograph, such as painting, statue or figurine.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into 7 series:

- Series 1:* Memoirs, [1944-1956]
- Series 2:* Correspondence, 1919-1957 [bulk 1947-1957]
- Series 3:* Clippings, 1948, no date [bulk no date]
- Series 4:* Other Writings, no date
- Series 5:* Images, no date
- Series 6:* Catalog Images, 1935, no date
- Series 7:* Art Object Photographs, no date

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Art, Chinese
- Art, Japanese

Types of Materials:

Letters
Manuscripts
Photographs

Names:

Bahr, A. W.
Cammell, Charles Richard

Places:

China
China -- Description and Travel
Connecticut
England
Japan
Japan -- Description and Travel

Container Listing

Series 1: Memoirs, 1944-1956

Scope and Contents: This series contains drafts of Bahr's memoir and other writings related to his memoir.

Contents:

Box 1, Folder 1	Bahr's first person accounts, undated
Box 1, Folder 2	Manuscript: "Old China Hand, Merchant, Art Collector and Traveler", circa 1954
Box 1, Folder 3	Cammell's manuscript chapters, undated
Box 1, Folder 4	Handwritten notes on scrap paper, undated
Box 1, Folder 5	Biographical draft, 1949
Box 1, Folder 6	Correspondence regarding memoir, 1944, 1951

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Series 2: Correspondence, 1919-1957 (bulk 1947-1957)

Scope and Contents: This series contains correspondence between Bahr and collectors of Chinese art and other figures in the art world, such as Lord Kitchener, Kenjiro Matsumoto and the King of Sweden. This series also has official correspondence between Bahr and museums, usually regarding donations of his pieces to their collections.

Box 1, Folder 7	Kitchener, Lord (Horatio Herbert Kitchener), undated
Box 1, Folder 8	King of Sweden, 1920-1954
Box 1, Folder 9	Whitehill, Walter Muir, 1956-1957
Box 1, Folder 10	Matsumoto, Kenjiro, 1955-1956
Box 1, Folder 11	Senator Theodore Francis Green, 1957
Box 1, Folder 12	Other Correspondence, 1919-1954
Box 1, Folder 13	Official Correspondence with Museums, etcetera, 1947-1951

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Series 3: Clippings, 1948, undated

Scope and Contents: This series contains newspaper clippings, several of which have handwritten notes on the top saying 'book', indicating they are possibly to be used for his memoir.

Box 1, Folder 14	Clippings, 1948, undated
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Series 4: Other Writings, undated

Scope and Contents: This series has other written materials such as possible poems written on scrap paper and a few written descriptions of Chinese art objects.

Box 1, Folder 15	Poetry, undated
Box 1, Folder 16	Collection descriptions, undated

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Series 5: Images, undated

Language: English.
Scope and Contents: This series contains a few personal photographs of Bahr as well as several photographs of Chinese art objects.

Box 1, Folder 17 Photographs, undated

Box 1, Folder 18 Photonegatives of Lacquer Furniture, undated

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Series 6: Catalog Images, 1935, undated

Scope and Contents: This series contains prints and photographs which seem to be grouped together in catalogs or printed in some publication.

Box 2, Folder 1	Prints, undated
Box 2, Folder 2	Photographs from the Catalogue of the International Exhibition of Chinese Art, 1935-1936
Box 2, Folder 3	Catalogue Pages, undated

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Series 7: Art Object Photographs, undated

Scope and Contents: This series contains mostly unidentified photographs of art objects, possibly for use in Bahr's publications (as indicated by notes and annotation on some of the photographs.) Photographs have been re-organized based on type of object pictures, such as paintings, sculpture or figurine.

Box 2, Folder 4	Paintings - Portraits, undated
Box 2, Folder 5	Paintings - Landscapes, scenes with people and horses, undated
Box 2, Folder 6	Paintings - animals and plants, undated
Box 2, Folder 7	Paintings - deities, monks, etcetera, undated
Box 2, Folder 8	Statues/Sculpture, undated
Box 2, Folder 9	Sculpture Heads, undated
Box 2, Folder 10	Stone animal sculptures/figurines, undated
Box 2, Folder 11	Smaller stone animal sculptures/figures, undated
Box 3, Folder 1	Single small stone or jade figurines and pieces, undated
Box 3, Folder 2	Small stone or jade figurine groups, undated
Box 3, Folder 3	Vessels, undated
Box 3, Folder 4	Disks and blades, undated
Box 3, Folder 5	Miscellaneous - friezes, seal(?) Stone statues, calligraphy, etcetera, undated

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