



Cooper Hewitt

Smithsonian Design Museum

Therese Bonney photographs, 1925-1937

2011

Smithsonian Libraries
P.O. Box 37012
NMAH 1041, MRC 672
Washington, DC 20013-7012
Business Number: Phone: (202) 633-3872
AskALibrarian@si.edu
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Smithsonian Libraries
Title:	Therese Bonney photographs
Date:	1925-1937
Identifier:	SIL-CH.2000-42-1
Creator:	Bonney, M. Thérèse (Mabel Thérèse), 1894-1978
Extent:	4,300 Photographs (black and white)
Language:	Undetermined .
Summary:	This collection contains 4,300 black and white photographs that document architecture and design in Paris from 1925-1937. These silver-gelatin prints, mostly 8 x 10, depicting French industrial art objects, interior settings, and window displays were amassed by Bonney who lived most of her life in Paris. Many of the photographs were done by Bonney. She collected others from news agencies, photographers, and stock photograph vendors. Many of the photographs are accompanied by captions composed in a conversational manner by Bonney.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

This collection was given to Cooper-Hewitt, then the Cooper Union Museum, in 1939 by the Bonney family.

Other Finding Aids

Guide to collection available.

Collection Digitized

This collection was digitized in its entirety in 2016. The individual photographs can be viewed in the Smithsonian Library and Archive's Image Gallery: [Thérèse Bonney Photographs collection](#) .

Restrictions

Unrestricted research use onsite by appointment. Permission of staff required to photograph materials.

Biographical Note

Photojournalist. Born Syracuse, New York, 1897. She studied at the University of California at Berkeley and Radcliffe College in the 1910s. Bonney immigrated to France in 1919 where she became one of the first ten women to graduate from the Sorbonne. She founded the first American illustrated press service in Europe, the Bonney Service, in 1924.

By the late 1930s, Bonney became discouraged by the poor quality of the work of the photographers she employed, and decided to learn the art of photography herself. The subjects of her photographs ranged from individual objects to interior settings to window displays to major building complexes and focused on the impact of modernism on European design.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, Bonney organized a number of exhibitions and collaborated with her sister, Louise Bonney, on a series of guide books, including "Buying Antique and Modern Furniture in Paris". With the coming of World War II, Bonney took to documenting civilian life in Europe. She published two photo-essay books, "War comes to the People" (1940) and "Europe's Children" (1943). Her concept for a film about children displaced by war, became an Academy Award winning movie, "The Search" (1948). The museum's collection of photographs was the subject of Cooper-Hewitt's 1985 exhibition, "Paris Recorded: The Therese Bonney Collection."

Arrangement

Photographs are arranged by subject. Each box is labeled as to contents.

Location of Other Archival Materials Note

New York Public Library, Rare Books and Manuscripts Section. Photographs of views of Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and New York. The bulk of the photographs are of French landscapes, architecture, costume, and everyday life.

Location of Other Archival Materials Note

University of California at Berkeley, The Bancroft Library. Scrapbooks, clippings, testimonials and other materials relating to Bonney's photographic work, circa 1919-1977.

Location of Other Archival Materials Note

Radcliffe College, Schlesinger Library. Biographical material, correspondence, photographs, and information about the Women's Land Army and the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps, dating from 1931-1964.

Location of Other Archival Materials Note

Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Assorted photographs of Bonney, many documenting important events in her life.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Architectural photography -- France -- Paris
Furniture -- France -- Paris

Furniture -- Pictorial works
Interior decoration -- France -- Paris
Interior decoration -- Pictorial works
Photography -- Archives
Photography -- France -- Paris
Show windows -- Pictorial works

Types of Materials:

Black-and-white photographs

Names:

Bonney Service
Bonney, M. Thérèse (Mabel Thérèse), 1894-1978
Cooper-Hewitt Design Archive

Occupations:

Photographers -- France -- Paris