



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Robert Aitken Papers, circa
1900-1960, in the Archives of American Art

Stephanie L. Ashley

Funding for the processing of this collection was
provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art

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Collection Overview

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| Repository: | Archives of American Art |
| Title: | Robert Aitken papers |
| Identifier: | AAA.aitkrobe |
| Date: | circa 1900-1960 |
| Extent: | 0.5 Linear feet |
| Creator: | Aitken, Robert, 1878-1949 |
| Language: | Collection is in English. |
| Summary: | The papers of California-born sculptor Robert Aitken measure 0.5 linear feet and date from circa 1900-1960. The collection primarily consists of photographs of Aitken in his studio and photographs of his sculpture including fountain figures, mausoleum doors, medallions, reliefs, and portrait busts. Also found is a photograph of Theodore Roosevelt at the dedication of the Navy Monument in Union Square, San Francisco, in 1902. The collection also includes one 1904 letter from Benjamin Wheeler to Robert Aitken thanking Aitken for a bust of George Washington, and scattered clippings and postcards reproducing works of art by Aitken. |

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The collection was donated to the Archives of American Art by the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in November 1973.

Available Formats

This collection is also available on 35 mm microfilm reel 1027. Researchers should note that the arrangement of the material described in the container inventory does not reflect the arrangement of the collection on microfilm.

Processing Information

The Robert Aitken papers were microfilmed at some point after receipt on reel 1027. The collection was processed to a minimal level and a finding aid prepared by archivist Stephanie Ashley in 2014, with funding provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art. The Archives of American Art has implemented minimal processing tactics when possible in order to increase information about and access to more of our collections.

Minimal processing included arrangement to the series and folder level. Generally, items within folders were simply verified with folder titles but not arranged further. Folders within boxes may not be numbered. The collection was rehoused in archival containers and folders.

Preferred Citation

Robert Aitken papers, circa 1900-1960. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

Use of original materials requires an appointment and is limited to the Archives' Washington, D. C. Research Center.

Conditions Governing Use

The Robert Aitken papers are owned by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Literary rights as possessed by the donor have been dedicated to public use for research, study, and scholarship. The collection is subject to all copyright laws.

Biographical / Historical

Noted sculptor Robert Aitken (1878-1949) was born in San Francisco, California, and taught at the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art from 1901-1904. He studied in Paris in 1897 and from 1904-1907, and then settled in New York City where he spent most of his career teaching at the National Academy of Design.

He completed numerous sculpture commissions including portrait busts, medallions and coins, reliefs, and fountain figures. His works include the "Fountain of Earth" for San Francisco's Panama Pacific Exposition, the Navy Monument in San Francisco's Union Square, doors for the Greenhut and John W. Gates Mausoleums in New York, several military sculptures at West Point, and Guardian Figures at the National Archives building and the West Pediment of the United States Supreme Court building, both in Washington D. C.

Aitken was a member of the National Academy of Design, the National Arts Club, the National Institute of Arts and Letters, the National Sculpture Society and the New York Architectural League.

Scope and Contents

The papers of California-born sculptor Robert Aitken measure 0.5 linear feet and date from circa 1900-1960. The collection primarily consists of photographs of Aitken in his studio and photographs of his sculpture including fountain figures, mausoleum doors, medallions, reliefs, and portrait busts. Also found is a photograph of Theodore Roosevelt at the dedication of the Navy Monument in Union Square, San Francisco, in 1902. The collection also includes one 1904 letter from Benjamin Wheeler to Robert Aitken thanking Aitken for a bust of George Washington, and scattered clippings and postcards reproducing works of art by Aitken.

Some of the photographs are silver gelatin and gold toned silver gelatin prints, and some were taken by noted photographer De Witt Ward.

Arrangement

Due to the small size of this collection the papers are arranged as one series.

- Series 1: Robert Aitken Papers, circa 1900-1960

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Artists' studios -- Photographs
Monuments -- California -- San Francisco
Monuments -- Washington (D.C.)
Sculptors

Types of Materials:

Photographs

Names:

Roosevelt, Theodore, 1858-1919
Ward, De Witt
Wheeler, Benjamin

Container Listing

Series 1: Robert Aitken Papers, circa 1900-1960

0.5 Linear feet (Box 1, OV 2)

| | |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Box 1, Folder 1 | Letter, 1904 |
| Box 1 | Photographs |
| Box 1, Folder 2 | Aitken and Busts, circa 1900-circa 1940s |
| Box 1, Folder 3 | Aitken and "Fountain of the Earth" Statue, Panama Pacific Exposition, circa 1915 Includes blank postcards of the fountain |
| Box 1, Folder 4 | Aitken and Friezes, circa 1900-circa 1940s |
| Box 1, Folder 5 | Aitken and Military Sculpture, circa 1930s |
| Box 1, Folder 6 | Aitken and Monmument to American Navy in Union Square, circa 1902 Oversized material housed in OV 2. |
| Box 1, Folder 7 | Aitken and National Academy of Design Medallion, circa 1930s |
| Box 1, Folder 8 | Aitken and Samuel Gompers Monument, circa 1930s Oversized material housed in OV 2 |
| Box 1, Folder 9 | Book Ends, circa 1900-circa 1940s |
| Box 1, Folder 10-11 | Busts, circa 1900-circa 1940s |
| Box 1, Folder 12 | Frederick W. Schumacher Frieze, circa 1930s |
| Box 1, Folder 13 | Mausoleum Doors, circa 1900-circa 1940s |
| Box 1, Folder 14 | Medallions, circa 1900-circa 1940s |
| Box 1, Folder 15 | Monuments, circa 1900-circa 1940s |
| Box 1, Folder 16 | National Archives Figures, circa 1930s, circa 1959-1960 Includes 3 news clippings circa 1959-1960 |
| Box 1, Folder 17-18 | Other Sculpture, circa 1900-circa 1940s |

| | |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Box 1, Folder 19 | Unidentified Individuals in a Forest, 1908 |
| Oversize 2 | Oversized Aitken and Monument to American Navy in Union Square from Box 1, Folder 6 |
| Oversize 2 | Oversized Aitken and Samuel Gompers Monument from Box 1, Folder 8 |

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