



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Victor Mikhail Arnautoff Papers, 1920-2017, bulk 1920-1953 in the Archives of American Art

Rayna Andrews

Funding for the processing of this collection was provided by Gerald and Bente Buck.

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Victor Mikhail Arnautoff papers
Date:	circa 1920-2017 (bulk 1920-1953)
Identifier:	AAA.arnavict
Creator:	Arnautoff, Victor Mikhail, 1896-1979
Extent:	3.3 Linear feet
Language:	The collection is in English and Russian. There are also a few materials in Chinese.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The Victor Mikhail Arnautoff papers were donated to the Archives of American Art in 1983 by Jacob and Vasily Arnautoff, Victor Arnautoff's sons. Additional papers were donated in 2018 by Michael and Peter Arnautoff, Victor Arnautoff's son and grandson, and by Robert Cherney, a scholar who wrote a book about Arnautoff.

Available Formats

Portions of this collection are available on 35 mm microfilm reels 3429-3430 at the Archives of American Art offices and through interlibrary loan. 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 collection was minimally processed and a finding aid prepared by Rayna Andrews in 2018.

Preferred Citation

Victor Mikhail Arnautoff papers, 1920-2017, bulk 1920-1953. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

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

Biographical / Historical

Victor Mikhail Arnautoff (1896-1979) was an artist and art teacher known for his murals. Arnautoff was born in the Ukraine and served in the Russian army during World War I. After a defeat in Siberia, he crossed into China, where he remained for five years. In China he met and married his wife Lydia, and they had their first two sons.

In 1925 Arnautoff went to San Francisco to study at the California School of Fine Arts. He continued with his family to Mexico in 1929 and became an assistant to muralist Diego Rivera. While in Mexico, his third son was born, and Arnautoff met Bernard Zakheim, with whom he would later work on the Coit Tower murals. Arnautoff and his family returned to San Francisco in 1931 and in 1934 he was chosen to paint one of the murals at the Coit Tower with funding from the Public Works of Art Project. Arnautoff was one of the most prolific muralists in San Francisco in the 1930s, completing murals at Coit Tower and the Palo Alto Clinic, as well as the Presidio chapel, George Washington High School, and the California School of Fine Arts library. He also painted murals at five post offices in California and Texas.

Arnautoff began teaching at the California School of Fine Arts in 1936. He taught at Stanford from 1938 to 1962 and also taught art courses at the California Labor School.

Following the death of his wife in 1961, Arnautoff retired from teaching at Stanford and returned to the Soviet Union in 1963. While living there he continued to create works of art and published a memoir. He died in Leningrad in 1979.

Scope and Contents

The papers of artist and art teacher Victor Mikhail Arnautoff measure 3.3 linear feet and date from 1920 to 2017 with the bulk of the material dating from the 1920 to 1953. The collection contains biographical material such as marriage certificates, passports, naturalization certificates, and an Arnautoff family history; correspondence between family members, as well as with colleagues including Diego Rivera, and with institutions concerning Arnautoff's work; writings about Arnautoff and others, including his statement regarding the House Un-American Activities Committee Hearing; professional records related to mural projects and exhibitions of Arnautoff's work; and printed material including exhibition announcements and catalogs, clippings, and *On the Drumhead* by Mike Quin, illustrated by Victor Arnautoff. Also included are a scrapbook containing correspondence, printed material, and photographs highlighting Arnautoff's career with particular emphasis on the controversy surrounding his *Dix McSmear* lithograph, as well as photographic material depicting Arnautoff, other individuals, and works of art. The bulk of the collection is made up of artwork, including sketches, a sketchbook, watercolors, and prints.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged in eight series.

- Series 1: Biographical Material, 1920-1952, 1961-1979, 1995-1997 (Box 1; 0.1 linear feet)
- Series 2: Correspondence, circa 1923-2008 (Box 1; 0.5 linear feet)
- Series 3: Writings, 1956, circa 1984-2006 (Box 1; 5 folders)
- Series 4: Professional Records, 1940-1953, 1963-2004 (Box 1, OV 5; 0.2 linear feet)
- Series 5: Printed Material, 1923-1998, 2007-2017 (Boxes 1-2, OV 5; 0.6 linear feet)
- Series 6: Scrapbook, 1928-1968, 1979-1981 (Bound Volume 4; 0.2 linear feet)
- Series 7: Photographic Material, circa 1920s-circa 1960s, 2015 (Box 2; 0.2 linear feet)
- Series 8: Artwork, circa 1920s-circa 1950s (Boxes 2-3, OVs 6-13; 1.4 linear feet)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Artists -- California -- San Francisco
Muralists -- California -- San Francisco

Types of Materials:

Drawings
Scrapbooks
Sketchbooks

Names:

Rivera, Diego, 1886-1957
United States. Congress. House. Committee on Un-American Activities

Occupations:

Art teachers -- California -- San Francisco

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Material, 1920-1953, 1961-1979, 1995-1997

0.1 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: This series consists of identification documentation such as birth, marriage, and death certificates, passports, visas, and naturalization certificates. Also found are an Arnautoff family history, which includes a family tree for Leonid Arnautov and Elga Aše, as well as obituaries.

Box 1, Folder 1	Passports, Travel, and Immigration Documents, 1920-1931, 1961
Box 1, Folder 2	Marriage, Birth, and Death Certificates, 1923-1925, 1942-1970
Box 1, Folder 3	Emergency Relief Administration and United States Employment Service Documents, 1934-1935
Box 1, Folder 4	Naturalization Certificates, 1937, 1939
Box 1, Folder 5	Arnautoff Family World War II Ration Books, 1942-1943
Box 1, Folder 6	Lydia Arnautoff Bookkeeping Certificate, 1950
Box 1, Folder 7	Victor Mikhail Arnautoff Resume and Biography, 1952, undated
Box 1, Folder 8	Power of Attorney for Victor Mikhail Arnautoff, 1963
Box 1, Folder 9	Arnautoff Family History, 1979, 1995-1997
Box 1, Folder 10	Memorials and Obituaries, Including Vasily Arnautoff, 1979, 1997

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Series 2: Correspondence, circa 1923-2008

0.5 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: This series contains correspondence among various family members, personal correspondence to Victor Arnautoff, and correspondence to Arnautoff's family about his work after his death. Researchers should note that much of the personal correspondence is in Russian. In some cases, translations of letters (circa 1989) by Lloyd Kramer appear.

Box 1, Folder 11	Lidia Arnautov to Victor Arnautoff, 1922, 1944 Notes: English translation by Lloyd Kramer are included and date from circa 1989.
Box 1, Folder 12	Eugene and Elena Arnautov to Victor Arnautoff, 1923-1924, 1934, undated Notes: English translations and notes by Lloyd Kramer are included and date from circa 1989.
Box 1, Folder 13	Lydia Arnautoff to Victor Arnautoff, 1923-1925, undated Notes: Notes by Lloyd Kramer are included and date from circa 1989.
Box 1, Folder 14	Lydia Arnautoff to Victor Arnautoff, 1923-1924 Notes: English translations and notes by Lloyd Kramer are included and date from circa 1989.
Box 1, Folder 15	Lydia Arnautoff and Others to Victor Arnautoff, 1923-1924 Notes: English translations and notes by Lloyd Kramer are included and date from circa 1989.
Box 1, Folder 16	M. Kichigen (Lotus Art School, Harbin) to Victor Arnautoff, 1923-1925 Notes: English translations by Lloyd Kramer are included and date from circa 1989.
Box 1, Folder 17	Adelaida Arnautova to Victor Arnautoff and Lydia Arnautoff, 1924-1936 Notes: English translations by Lloyd Kramer are included and date from circa 1989.
Box 1, Folder 18	Arkanev to Victor Arnautoff, 1925 Notes: English translations and notes by Lloyd Kramer are included and date from circa 1989.
Box 1, Folder 19	Unidentified Sender to Victor Arnautoff, 1925 Notes: English translation by Lloyd Kramer are included and date from circa 1989.
Box 1, Folder 20	Vasily Purovich Tarasov to Victor Arnautoff, 1926 Notes: English translations by Lloyd Kramer are included and date from circa 1989.
Box 1, Folder 21	Zygmund Sazevich to Victor Arnautoff, 1930, 2008

	Notes: English translations and notes by Lloyd Kramer are included and date from circa 1989. Also includes exhibition invitation featuring Zygmund Szevich portrait of Victor Arnautoff.
Box 1, Folder 22	Ione Robinson to Victor Arnautoff, 1931 June 12
Box 1, Folder 23	Leonid Arnautov to Victor Arnautoff, 1934, 1945 Notes: English translations by Lloyd Kramer are included and date from circa 1989.
Box 1, Folder 24	Christmas Cards, 1934-1948, undated Notes: Includes a card with photograph from Ansel and Virginia Adams.
Box 1, Folder 25	Mikhail Arnautov to Victor Arnautoff, 1937 Notes: English translations by Lloyd Kramer are included and date from circa 1989.
Box 1, Folder 26	Lydia and Victor Arnautoff to Michael Arnautoff, 1943 March-September
Box 1, Folder 27	Manta Frans to Victor Arnautoff, 1945-1946 Notes: English translation by Lloyd Kramer are included and date from circa 1989.
Box 1, Folder 28	Correspondence and Other Material Related to Lydia Arnautoff's Inheritance, 1947-1948
Box 1, Folder 29	Correspondence Related to Victor Arnautoff's Time at the California School of Fine Arts, 1963
Box 1, Folder 30	Victor Arnautoff to Vasily Arnautoff, 1963-1980 Notes: Also includes letters between Nonna, Victor Arnautoff's second wife, and Arden, Vasily's wife. Typed English translations are included.
Box 1, Folder 31	Correspondence Related to Vasily Arnautoff's Trip to the U.S.S.R., 1965-1967
Box 1, Folder 32	Correspondence Related to the Murals at George Washington High School, 1968, circa 1974
Box 1, Folder 33	Lloyd Kramer to Jake Arnautoff, 1989
Box 1, Folder 34	Stephanie Jones to Vasily Arnautoff, 1991-2001 Notes: Also includes Stephanie Jones's correspondence with Vasily's son Peter, as well as printed material, writing, and photographic material.
Box 1, Folder 35	Susan Kay Associates Regarding Murals for Palo Alto Medical Foundation, 1998
Box 1, Folder 36	Carrie Carlton Helser to Peter Arnautoff, 2003
Box 1, Folder 37	Chronological Correspondence, 1924-2007, undated

Notes: Includes letters from Diego Rivera.

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Series 3: Writings, 1956, circa 1984-1996

5 Folders (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Writings include Arnautoff's statement regarding the House Un-American Activities Committee hearing, a Master's thesis about Arnautoff written by Suzanne Lombardi, a biographical essay about Arnautoff written by his great-granddaughter, memories of growing up in China and Mexico by Michael Arnautoff, and *The Paintings of Emmy Lou Packard* by Diego Rivera.

Box 1, Folder 38	Arnautoff Statement Regarding the House Un-American Activities Committee Hearing, 1956
Box 1, Folder 39	Politics and Humanism in the Depression Era Frescoes of Victor Arnautoff, Master's Thesis by Suzanne Lombardi, 1984
Box 1, Folder 40	Biographical Essay on Victor Arnautoff by Merav Lux, His Great-Granddaughter, circa 1992
Box 1, Folder 41	Memories of Growing Up in China and Mexico, from Michael Arnautoff, 1995-1996
Box 1, Folder 42	The Paintings of Emmy Lou Packard Typescript by Diego Rivera, undated

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Series 4: Professional Records, 1940-1953, 1963-2004

0.2 Linear feet (Box 1, OV 5)

Scope and Contents: Professional records include project and exhibition files, and financial information. Also included are correspondence, statements, printed material, and other documents related to the controversy concerning Anton Refregier's murals at the Rincon Annex post office.

Box 1, Folder 43	Pacific Grove Post Office Mural, 1940, 2002-2003
Box 1, Folder 44	Rincon Annex Post Office Murals by Anton Refregier, 1941-1953
Oversize 5	Oversize Material Related to the Rincon Annex Post Office Murals by Anton Refregier, 1953
Box 1, Folder 45	Russian-American Society Membership Card Signed by V. Arnautoff, President, 1945
Box 1, Folder 46	Financial Information, 1948-1953, 1963-1980 Notes: This file primarily includes documents related to Arnautoff's retirement annuity payments. Also included is a copy of Evan Hamikoff's last will and testament in which Arnautoff is named executor.
Box 1, Folder 47	St. Petersburg Exhibitions, 1974-1975, 2002
Box 1, Folder 48	Agreements and Lists, 1983-1993, undated
Box 1, Folder 49	At Work: The Art of California Labor Touring Exhibition, 2002-2004

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Series 5: Printed Material, 1923-1998, 2007-2017

0.6 Linear feet (Boxes 1-2, OV 5)

Scope and Contents: Included in this series are exhibition announcements and catalogs; flyers and newsletters; magazines; newspapers clippings; a copy of *On the Drumhead* by Mike Quin with wood engravings by Victor Arnautoff; a photocopy of a biography of Victor Arnautoff from *California Art Research*; and a photocopy of the short story *The Anatomy Lesson* by Evan S. Connell, Jr.

Box 1, Folder 50	Atelier, circa 1936 Language: Printed in Japanese.
Box 1, Folder 51	Amateur Fencers League of America Fencing Rules, 1937
Box 1, Folder 52	Blank Postcards, circa 1940s
Oversize 5	City of San Francisco, 1976
Box 1, Folder 53	Exhibition and Event Announcements and Invitations, circa 1940s, undated
Box 1, Folder 54	Exhibition Catalogs, 1929-1946
Box 2, Folder 1-2	Exhibition Catalogs, 1948-1957, undated
Box 2, Folder 3	Exhibition Catalogs — Foundation of Western Art, 1933-1940
Box 2, Folder 4-5	Exhibition Catalogs — San Francisco Art Association, 1932-1941
Box 2, Folder 6	Flyers, Newsletters, and Bulletins, 1936-1959, 1980, 2009-2013, undated
Oversize 5	Oversize Flyers, Newsletters, and Bulletins, 1940
Box 2, Folder 7-8	Magazines and Journals, 1923, 1977-1990, 2013-2017 Notes: Includes English translation by Lloyd Kramer, circa 1989, of interview published in October 1977 (folder 7).
Box 2, Folder 9	Material Related to Arnautoff Bon Voyage Party, 1963
Box 2, Folder 10	Material Related to Mind's Eye, a Play About the Coit Tower Murals, 1987
Box 2, Folder 11	Material Related to Murals at Coit Tower, 1983-1990
Oversize 5	Oversize Material Related to Murals at Coit Tower, 1989-1990
Box 2, Folder 12	Material Related to the Presidio Chapel Mural, 1998
Box 2, Folder 13	Newspapers and Newspaper Clippings, 1937, 1951-1982, 1998, undated

Oversize 5	Oversize Newspapers and Newspaper Clippings, 1934-1959, 1975-1992
Box 2, Folder 14	On the Drumhead by Mike Quin, Wood Engravings by Victor Arnautoff, 1948
Box 2, Folder 15	Photocopy of Victor Arnautoff Biography from California Art Research Vol. XX Part One, Edited by Gene Hailey, circa 1937
Box 2, Folder 16	Photocopy of The Anatomy Lesson, Short Story by Evan S. Connell, Jr. from World Writing, 1953, 1992
Box 2, Folder 17	Victor Arnautoff Catalog, 2007 Language: Printed in Russian.

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Series 6: Scrapbook, 1928-1968, 1979-1981

0.2 Linear feet (BV 4)

Scope and Contents: The scrapbook includes biographical material such as Arnautoff's resume and student ID card; correspondence; photographs of works of art; and printed material including clippings, exhibition announcements and invitations, and exhibition catalogs. A large portion of the scrapbook features material related to Arnautoff's lithograph *Dix McSmear* and the associated controversy.

Volume 4 Scrapbook, 1928-1968, 1979-1981

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Series 7: Photographic Material, circa 1920s-circa 1960s, 2015

0.2 Linear feet (Box 2)

Scope and Contents: This series includes photographs and transparencies of Victor Arnautoff, other individuals, scenery, and artwork. Some artwork depicted in these photographs is by other artists.

Box 2, Folder 18	Photographs of Victor Arnautoff, Other Individuals, and Landscapes, circa 1920s-circa 1940s, circa 1960s
Box 2, Folder 19	Photographs and Negatives of Works of Art, 1920s-1940s
Box 2, Folder 20	Photographs of Works of Art, 1920s-1930s, 1951
Box 2, Folder 21	Photographs of Works of Art, 1930s, undated
Box 2, Folder 22	Photographs of Works of Art by Other Artists, 1940s, undated
Box 2, Folder 23	Photographs of Works of Art by Other Artists — Robert Cherny Murals, 2015 Notes: Includes one electronic disc (CD) containing photographs of Robert Cherny murals taken by Dick Evans.

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Series 8: Artwork, circa 1920s-circa 1950s

1.4 Linear feet (Boxes 2-3, OVs 6-13)

Scope and Contents: This series makes up the bulk of the collection. It consists of sketches, prints, watercolors, and a sketchbook.

Box 2, Folder 24	Sketchbook, circa 1926-1931
Box 2, Folder 25	Sketches — Decorative, 1928, undated
Box 2, Folder 26	Sketches — Figures, 1931, undated
Overize 6	Overize Sketches — Figures, 1928-1932, undated
Box 2, Folder 27	Sketches — Greeting Card Studies, circa 1926-1931, 1950, undated
Box 2, Folder 28	Sketches — Historical, undated
Box 2, Folder 29	Sketches — Mexico, 1929-circa 1930
Box 2, Folder 30	Sketches — Murals, circa 1930s, undated
Box 2, Folder 31	Sketches — Palo Alto Clinic, circa 1930s
Box 2, Folder 32	Sketches — Portraits, undated
Box 2, Folder 33	Sketches — San Francisco Scenes, undated
Box 2, Folder 34-36	Sketches, undated
Overize 7	Overize Sketches, undated
Overize 8	Overize Sketches, undated
Overize 9	Overize Sketches and Paintings, circa 1920s-1930s
Overize 10	Overize Sketches and Paintings, circa 1929-1947
Overize 11	Overize Sketches and Paintings, undated
Overize 12	Overize Sketches and Prints, circa 1950s, undated
Overize 13	Overize Sketches, Paintings, and Prints, undated
Box 3, Folder 1	Prints, 1930s-1950s, undated

Box 3, Folder 2	Prints — Longshoremen Strike, circa 1934, circa 1948
Box 3, Folder 3	Prints and Sketch of Maxim Gorky, undated
Box 3, Folder 4	Watercolors, circa 1920s-1930s, undated
Box 3, Folder 5	Works of Art by Other Artists, 1928-1940, undated Notes: Includes portrait of Arnautoff, drawn by Alva Bissic.

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