



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Paulus Berensohn
Papers, circa 1950-2017, bulk 1976-2010,
in the Archives of American Art

Ryan Evans

2018 July 27

Archives of American Art
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Paulus Berensohn papers
Identifier:	AAA.berepaul
Date:	circa 1950-2017 (bulk 1976-2010)
Extent:	7.7 Linear feet 9.1 Gigabytes
Creator:	Berensohn, Paulus
Language:	English .
Summary:	The papers of artist Paulus Berensohn measure 7.7 linear feet and 9.1 GB and date from circa 1950-2017, bulk 1976-2010. The collection documents his career as a poet, ceramic artist, dancer, and educator in Penland, North Carolina, through biographical material, correspondence, writings, teaching files, printed materials, photographs of artwork, and works of art on paper and mail art.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Donated in 2017 by Paulus Berensohn Estate via Jon Ellenbogen, executor.

Related Materials

Also found at the Archives of American art is an oral history interview with Paulus Berensohn, 2009 March 20-21, conducted by Mark Shapiro.

Processing Information

The collection was processed and a finding aid prepared by Ryan Evans in 2018.

Preferred Citation

Paulus Berensohn papers, circa 1950-2017, bulk 1976-2010. 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. Use of archival audiovisual recordings and born-digital records with no duplicate copy requires advance notice.

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Biographical / Historical

Paulus Berensohn (1933-2017) was a ceramicist, dancer, and arts instructor in Penland, North Carolina.

Berensohn was born Paul Bernsohn in New York City in 1933. Despite being dyslexic as a child, he was accepted into Yale University before dropping out in his first semester to attend Juilliard School, and later Bennington College. While in college, Paulus was finally able to pursue his childhood interest in modern dance and upon returning to New York City studied with Merce Cunningham and performed for Martha Graham.

Berensohn was first inspired to study pottery during a visit to the Land commune, a community of artists near Stony Point, N.Y., where he met the potters Karen Karnes and M.C. Richards. Richards would become a lifelong friend and collaborator. In the late 1960s Berensohn settled at the Penland School of Craft in the Blue Ridge Mountains in North Carolina where he taught workshops in pottery, movement, and journaling. Berensohn purposely avoided becoming a commercial artist, and for years refused to fire his clay works, often returning them to the earth. He became well-known particularly for his pinch pottery technique, and he published the book *Finding One's Way with Clay: Pinched Pottery and the Color of Clay* in 1972. He travelled extensively throughout the 1990s and early 2000s teaching workshops and lecturing on various topics. Later in his life he lectured frequently on the environmental and ecological philosophical topic of deep ecology, and how it related to his lifelong endeavors in the arts.

Scope and Contents

The papers of artist Paulus Berensohn measure 8.6 linear feet and 9.1 GB and date from circa 1950-2017, bulk 1976-2010. The collection documents his career as a poet, ceramic artist, dancer, and educator in Penland, North Carolina, through biographical material, correspondence, writings, teaching files, printed materials, photographs of artwork, and works of art on paper and mail art.

The biographical material series includes digital video and audio interviews as well as a daily planner from the mid-1990s and various awards and resumes.

Correspondence includes letters from notable individuals as well as letters of recommendation. Also found are examples of correspondence art between Berensohn and his artistic community, many the result of workshops on creating envelopes and binding.

Writings include lecture journals Berensohn used to organize his talks, draft manuscripts of books and articles, as well as writings by others including poetry by M.C. Richards. Also included are sound recordings by Berensohn on his tapestry making.

Teaching files include instruction materials and lesson plans for the topics of pottery, movement, journaling, and making envelopes. Also included are materials related to Berensohn's Pebble Ritual, including a sound recording that would have been played during this instruction and ritual.

The printed material series includes various source materials including articles and journals, as well as promotional material for Berensohn's workshops and printed material regarding collaborators and friends.

Photographic material includes printed photographs, snapshots, slides and negatives of the artist, instructional events, nature and artwork. Also included are digital photographs of the same subjects.

Artwork includes works on paper by Berensohn, handmade cards, enveloped and bound booklets, and works by others.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged in seven series:

- Series 1: Biographical Material, circa 1990-2017 (0.2 linear feet; Box 1, 7.21 gigabytes; ER01-ER03)
- Series 2: Correspondence, circa 1956-2017 (bulk 1985-2010) (0.8 linear feet; Box 1)
- Series 3: Writings, circa 1970-2016 (2.4 linear feet; Boxes 204, 11, 0.072 gigabytes; ER04-ER06)
- Series 4: Teaching Files, circa 1970s-2005 (0.3 linear feet; Box 4, 0.152 gigabytes; ER07)
- Series 5: Printed Material, circa 1970s-2009 (0.7 linear feet; Boxes 4-5, OV13)
- Series 6: Photographic Material, circa 1950-2011 (2.6 linear feet; Boxes 5, 7-12, 1.659 gigabytes; ER08-ER19)
- Series 7: Artwork, circa 1980s-2010 (1.7 linear feet; Boxes 5-6, 12, OV14)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Art -- Study and teaching

Types of Materials:

Interviews
Sound recordings

Occupations:

Art teachers -- North Carolina -- Penland
Ceramicists -- North Carolina -- Penland
Dancers -- North Carolina -- Penland

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Material, circa 1990-2017

7.21 Gigabytes (ER01-ER03)

0.2 Linear feet (Box 1)

The biographical material series includes digital video and audio interviews, a daily planner from the mid-1990s, awards, and resumes.

Box 1, Folder 1	Resume and Biographical Text, circa 1990s
Box 1, Folder 2	Three-Year Planner, 1993-1995
Box 1, Folder 3	Meg and John's Wedding, Ceremony by Paulus Berensohn, circa 1990s-2010
Box ER01	Paulus Interview, Digital Audio Recording, circa 2005 <i>0.277 Gigabytes (1 computer file)</i>
Box ER02	Earthbeat Interview (Jan. 2002), Digital Audio Recording, 2002 <i>0.284 Gigabytes (1 computer file)</i>
Box ER03	Fetzer Writer's Retreat, Digital Video Recordings, 2010 <i>6.65 Gigabytes (5 computer files)</i>
Box 1, Folder 7	NCECA Honorary Council Award, 2013
Box 1, Folder 8	Death Announcement, circa 2017

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Series 2: Correspondence, circa 1956-2017 (bulk 1985-2010)*0.8 Linear feet (Box 1)*

The correspondence series includes letters from notable individuals, letters of recommendation, and examples of correspondence art between Berensohn and his artistic community, many the result of workshops on creating envelopes and binding.

Box 1, Folder 9	B, circa 1992-2016
Box 1, Folder 10	Jonah Bokaer, circa 2009-2010
Box 1, Folder 11	C, circa 1987-2000
Box 1, Folder 12	Remy Charlip, circa 1970s-1980s
Box 1, Folder 13	D, circa 1994
Box 1, Folder 14	F, circa 1990s
Box 1, Folder 15	G, circa 1988-2002
Box 1, Folder 16	H, 1991
Box 1, Folder 17	K, 1987-1992
Box 1, Folder 18	L, 1956, 2017
Box 1, Folder 19	M, circa 1990s-2001
Box 1, Folder 20	N, 2003
Box 1, Folder 21	P, circa 1993-2009
Box 1, Folder 22	R, circa 1988-2003
Box 1, Folder 23	S, circa 1987-1999
Box 1, Folder 24	T, circa 1994-2006
Box 1, Folder 25	V, 1999
Box 1, Folder 26	W, circa 1994-1999
Box 1, Folder 27-28	Unidentified/Last Name Only, circa 1970s-2014

Box 1, Folder 29	Letters of Recommendation, circa 1984-1986
Box 1, Folder 30-32	Holiday and Greeting Cards, circa 1980s-2010
Box 1, Folder 33	Cards Addressed to Others, circa 1990s-2010

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Series 3: Writings, circa 1970-2016

0.072 Gigabytes (ER04-ER06)

2.4 Linear feet (Boxes 2-4, 11)

Writings include lecture journals Berensohn used to organize his talks, draft manuscripts by the artist of books and articles, as well as writings by others including poetry by M.C. Richards. Also included are sound recordings by Berensohn on his tapestry making.

3.1: Lectures, circa 1990-2010

Box 2, Folder 1	American Craft Council Awards Reception (May 1990), 1990
Box 2, Folder 2	Phoenix Workshop, Lecture Journal (July 1990), 1990
Box 2, Folder 3	Flinders Island, Australia, Lecture Journal (Dec. 1991), 1991
Box 2, Folder 4	Massachusetts Art Education Association Annual Spring Conference, Provincetown, Lecture Journal (May 1993), 1993
Box 2, Folder 5	"How to Love the World: Art, Craft, Education, and a Sense of Ecology," Westtown School, Lecture Journal (Dec. 1993), 1993
Box 2, Folder 6	"Touching Stone" The Touchstone Center for Children, Lecture Journal (Feb. 1995), 1995
Box 2, Folder 7	"Singing Up the Hand" Southern Highlands Craft Guild, Lecture Journal (Apr. 1995), 1995
Box 2, Folder 8	"Twelve Variations on the Theme of Soul" Keynote, ACC Southeast Regional, Lecture Journal (Oct. 1995), 1995
Box 2, Folder 9	"Shining Clay" Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, Omega Institute, Santa Fe Clay, etc., Lecture Journal, circa 1991-1994
Box 2, Folder 10	"Turning Energy Into Matter Into Energy," Lecture Journal, circa 1990s
Box 2, Folder 11	NCECA Journal, Lecture Journal, circa 2000
Box 2, Folder 12	"Clay, the Ecstatic Skin of the Body of the Living Earth" Xiem Clay Center, Lecture Journal (Nov. 2001), 2001
Box 2, Folder 13	"The Secret Life of Craft" Mint Museum of Craft and Design, Lecture Journal (Sep. 2004), 2004
Box 2, Folder 14	"Imagination, Awe and the Golden Mask" NCECA Conference, Lecture Journal (Mar. 2005), 2005

- Box 2, Folder 15 "Rooted and at the Same Time Free: Living Evolution in the Craft Arts"
Marywood University, Lecture Journal (Nov. 2005), 2005
- Box 2, Folder 16 Shakerag Workshops, Swannie Tennessee, Lecture Journal (June 2007),
2007
- Box 2, Folder 17 University of Nebraska Graduate Ceramics Department, Lecture Journal (Oct.
2007), 2007
- Box 2, Folder 18 "Inside the Dance There Is This Other Dance" Harvard University Dance
Center, Lecture Journal (Oct. 2007), 2007
- Box ER04 Haystack Mountain School, Powerpoint, 2008
0.044 Gigabytes (1 computer file)
- Box 2, Folder 20 "Notes for the Archives of American Art Interview," Lecture Journal (Mar.
2009), 2009
- Box 2, Folder 21 Various Lecture Journals, circa 1990s-2010

3.2: General Writings, circa 1970-2009

- Box 2, Folder 22-26 *Finding One's Way With Clay* Manuscript Draft, circa 1970
- Box 11, Folder 1 "My Camera As Kiln: Kiln Log and Workbook", 1976
- Box 2, Folder 27-32 *The Circular Loom: Driving Towards the Invisible World* Manuscript Draft, circa
1980s
- Box 2, Folder 33 Tapestry Story (Nov. 10, 1984), 1984
4 Sound cassettes
- Box 2, Folder 34-35 *From the Artist in Me to the Artist in You*, circa 1987
- Box 3, Folder 1 *From the Artist in Me to the Artist in You*, circa 1987
- Box 3, Folder 2 *The Silver Sword* Manuscript Draft, circa 1980s
- Box 3, Folder 3 Fantasy, Imagination and Visualizing; Right, Left Brain Mode (Notes), circa
1980s
- Box 3, Folder 4 "Silica, Alumina/ Rapture and Awe: Revisioning Clay Imaginatively" Manuscript
Draft, circa 1990

- Box 3, Folder 5-6 *The Madness of Art: The Making and Keeping of a Journal of Deeper Ecology*
Manuscript Draft, circa 1990s
- Box 3, Folder 7 Essay on Teaching Journaling, circa 1990s
- Box 3, Folder 8 "How Shall I Love Before I have Lost Everything" Manuscript Draft, circa 2000
- Box 3, Folder 9 "Everything We Touch Is Touching Us: Craft Art as Healing and a Deeper
Sense of Ecology" Manuscript Draft, 2000-2002
- Box 3, Folder 10 "Every Morning All Over Again", 2000-2002
- Box 3, Folder 11-12 Interview with Paulus Berensohn, Archives of American Art (Mar. 2009),
Annotated Draft, circa 2009
- Box 3, Folder 13 Unidentified Manuscript Drafts, circa 1980s
- Box 3, Folder 14-15 Various Journal Entries, circa 1980s-1990s
- Box 3, Folder 16 Bibliographies, circa 1980s-1990s
- Box 3, Folder 17-18 Papers, Articles, Lists, Etc. , circa 1995
- Box 3, Folder 19 Notes, circa 1980s-2005

3.3: Writings by Others, circa 1979-2016

- Box 3, Folder 20 Essay by George Kokis, circa 1990s
- Box 3, Folder 21 Memoir by Carol Ladas-Gaskin, 2016
- Box 3, Folder 22 Poetry by Ronald Goodman, 1994, 1995
- Box 3, Folder 23 Poetry by Willa Koretz, 1995
- Box 3, Folder 24 Poetry by Mary Oliver, circa 1990s
- Box 3, Folder 25-26 Poetry by M.C. Richards, circa 1979-1994
- Box 3, Folder 27 Poetry by Carol I. Wicks, circa 1990s
- Box 3, Folder 28-29 Poetry Incorporated by Paulus Berensohn, circa 1990s

Box 4, Folder 1	Stories by Anna Shaler, circa 1990s
Box 4, Folder 2	Thesis by Ian C. Anderson, 1996
Box 4, Folder 3	Writings by Suzi Gablik, circa 1990s
Box 4, Folder 4	Writings by Squidge Liljablad Davis, 1995
Box 4, Folder 5	Writings by J. Ruth Gendler, 2003
Box 4, Folder 6-7	Various Texts, circa 1980s-2010
Box ER05	Eileen's Garden, Digital Video Recording, 2007 <i>0.011 Gigabytes (2 computer files)</i>
Box ER06	Powerpoint by D. Kazanis, "Physics of Mysticism", 2006 <i>0.016 Gigabytes (1 computer file)</i>

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Series 4: Teaching Files, circa 1970s-2005

0.3 Linear feet (Box 4)

0.152 Gigabytes (ER07)

Teaching files include instruction materials and lesson plans for the topics of pottery, movement, journaling, and making envelopes. Also included are materials related to Berensohn's Pebble Ritual, including a sound recording that would have been played during this instruction and ritual.

Box 4, Folder 10	Pottery Workshop, circa 1970s Image(s)
Box 4, Folder 11	Penland Movement Program (1985), circa 1985
Box 4, Folder 12	Shining Clay Workshop, circa 1991-1994 Image(s)
Box 4, Folder 13-14	Journal Workshop, circa 1990s
Box 11, Folder 2	Envelope Workshop, circa 1990s
Box 4, Folder 15	Shining Clay, Sensuous Touch Workshop, circa 1998 Image(s)
Box 4, Folder 16	Pebble Ritual, circa 1990s-2005 <i>Includes born-digital records, see ER07</i> Image(s)
Box ER07	Pebble Ritual, Digital Audio Recording, circa 2005 <i>0.152 Gigabytes (1 computer file)</i>
Box 4, Folder 17	Various Workshops, circa 1993-1995
Box 4, Folder 18	Various Instructional Materials, circa 1980s-1990s

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Series 5: Printed Material, circa 1970s-2009

0.7 Linear feet (Boxes 4-5, OV13)

Printed material includes reference articles and journals, as well as promotional material for Berensohn's workshops, and printed material regarding various collaborators and friends.

Box 4, Folder 19	Aiko's Art Materials Import, Inc., circa 2002
Box 4, Folder 20	Alexander Technique, circa 1970s-1986
Box 4, Folder 21	Clippings, circa 1980-2009
Box 4, Folder 22	Debra Fraser, circa 1990s
Box 4, Folder 23	<i>Neue Keramik</i> Journal (Mar./Apr. 2004), 2004
Box 4, Folder 24	Newsletters, Various, 1991-1999
Box 4, Folder 25	Poetry, circa 1980s-2010
Box 4, Folder 26	Qi Gong, Tai Chi, circa 1990s
Box 4, Folder 27	<i>Qi</i> Journal (Autumn 1996), 1996
Box 4, Folder 28-31	Reference Articles, circa 1970s-1990s
Box 4, Folder 32	<i>Somatics</i> Journal, 1996-1997
Box 5, Folder 1	Burt Supree, circa 1992
Box 5, Folder 2	Workshops, Various, circa 1995
Oversize 13	Oversize Various Workshops, 1990
Box 5, Folder 3-4	Miscellaneous, circa 1970s-2000

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Series 6: Photographic Material, circa 1950-2011

2.6 Linear feet (Boxes 5, 7-12)

1.659 Gigabytes (ER08-ER19)

Photographs include snapshots, slides and negatives of Berensohn, instructional events, nature and artwork. Also included are digital photographs of the same subjects.

6.1: General Photographic Material, circa 1950-2010

Box 5, Folder 5-6	Images of the Artist, circa 1950s-2010
Box 7, Folder 1	Images of the Artist, circa 1990s-2014 Image(s)
Box 11, Folder 3	Images of the Artist, circa 1950-1970s
Box 5, Folder 7-8	Artwork Images, circa 1970-2010
Box 7, Folder 2-12	Artwork Images, circa 1972-1990s
Box 11, Folder 4-5	Artwork Images, circa 1970s
Box 12, Folder 1-2	Artwork Images, circa 1970s
Box 5, Folder 9	Places, 1982, 1996
Box 7, Folder 13	Places, circa 1990s
Box 5, Folder 10	People, circa 1970s-2000
Box 7, Folder 14-17	People, circa 1990s
Box 5, Folder 11	Nature, circa 1970s-1980s
Box 7, Folder 18	Nature, circa 1990s
Box 5, Folder 19	Bruce Marks in "Night Light" by Pearl Lang, 1959
Box 7, Folder 19	Willie Wenstrand's Work, San Diego, 1976
Box 7, Folder 20	Pottery Workshop (Mar. 1974), 1974
Box 7, Folder 21	Davis Pots, circa 1950s-1960s

Box 5, Folder 25	Contact Sheets, circa 1970s
Box 5, Folder 26	Negatives, circa 1977
Box 7, Folder 22-25	Negatives, circa 1990s
Box 5, Folder 27	Slide Carousel List, circa 1980s-1990s
Box 9, Folder 1-5	Slides, circa 1960s-1990s
Box 10, Folder 1-5	Slides, circa 1960s-1990s

6.2: Digital Photographs, circa 2004-2011

Box ER08	Art of Fine Craft, Conference and Exhibition, Digital Images, 2007 <i>0.187 Gigabytes (97 computer files)</i>
Box ER09	Kaleidoscopes (Artwork), Digital Images, 2008 <i>0.214 Gigabytes (10 computer files)</i>
Box ER10	Leaf (Artwork), Digital Images, 2007 <i>0.01 Gigabytes (3 computer files)</i>
Box ER11	Rob Amberg NCPG, Photographer (Artwork), Digital Images, 2007 <i>0.096 Gigabytes (9 computer files)</i>
Box ER12	Artwork, Digital Images, 2007 <i>0.331 Gigabytes (21 computer files)</i>
Box ER13	Artwork, Digital Images, 2011 <i>0.019 Gigabytes (14 computer files)</i>
Box ER14	Auction Pieces 05/06 (Artwork), Digital Images, 2007 <i>0.099 Gigabytes (4 computer files)</i>
Box ER15	Artwork, Digital Images, 2007 <i>0.196 Gigabytes (86 computer files)</i>
Box ER16	Artwork, Digital Images, 2007-2008 <i>0.03 Gigabytes (20 computer files)</i>
Box ER17	Artwork, Digital Images, 2007-2008 <i>0.002 Gigabytes (13 computer files)</i>
Box ER18	Artwork, People, Nature, Digital Images, 2007-2008

0.316 Gigabytes (213 computer files)

Box ER19

Penland Session Four, Digital Images, 2004
0.16 Gigabytes (327 computer files)

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Series 7: Artwork, circa 1980s-2010

1.7 Linear feet (Boxes 5-6, 12, OV14)

Artwork includes works on paper by Berensohn (many of which were used to make cards for large mailing lists of his artistic community), handmade cards, envelopes and bound booklets, and works by others.

Box 5, Folder 28	Works on Paper, circa 1980s-2000
Box 12, Folder 3-4	Works on Paper, circa 1980s-2010
Oversize 14	Oversize Works on Paper, circa 1980s-1990s
Box 5, Folder 29	Sewn Booklets, circa 1990s
Box 5, Folder 30	Covers, Binding, circa 1990s-2010
Box 5, Folder 31-32	Card Images, circa 1990s-2010
Box 5, Folder 33-34	Cards, Self-Addressed, circa 1990s-2010
Box 6, Folder 1-11	Cards, circa 1990s-2010
Box 6, Folder 12	Postcards, circa 1980s-1990s
Box 6, Folder 13-15	Envelopes, circa 1990s-2010
Box 6, Folder 16	Valentine's Day and Easter, circa 1980s

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