
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

Repository: Archives of American Art
Title: Martin Birnbaum papers
Date: 1862-1967
(bulk 1920-1967)
Identifier: AAA.birnmart
Creator: Birnbaum, Martin, 1878-1970
Extent: 3.2 Linear feet
Language: Collection is in English.
Summary: The papers of New York art dealer, critic, and author Martin Birnbaum measure 3.2 linear feet and date from 1862-1967, with the bulk of the material dating from 1920-1967. The papers document Birnbaum's association with the firm of Scott & Fowles, the lives and activities of his friends and colleagues, and his literary work, through biographical material, correspondence, writings and notes, business records, printed material, a scrapbook, scattered artwork, and photographs of Birnbaum, friends and colleagues, and artwork.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information
Material on reels N698, N698A-N698B were lent for microfilming by Martin Birnbaum in 1967. The rest of the collection was donated in an anonymous gift in 1970 and by Martin Birnbaum's great-nephew, Jerome Ziegler, in 1975.

Separated Materials
The Archives of American Art also holds microfilm of material lent for microfilming (reels N698, N698A-N698B) including correspondence, bookplates, sketches, newspaper clippings, and a list of books containing ornamental drawings and illustrations. Loaned materials were returned to the lender and are not described in the collection container inventory.

Available Formats
Portions of the collection and material lent for microfilming are available on 35mm microfilm reels N698, N698A, N698B, 108, and 1023-1027 at the Archives of American Art offices and through interlibrary loan. Researchers should note that the arrangement of material described in the container inventory does not reflect the arrangement of the collection on microfilm.

Processing Information
Portions of the collection were loaned and microfilmed prior to receipt. The entire collection was arranged and a finding aid written by Stephanie Ashley in 2016 with funding provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art.
Preferred Citation

Restrictions
Use of original papers requires an appointment and is limited to the Archives' Washington, D.C. Research Center. Contact Reference Services for more information.

Use of archival audiovisual recordings with no duplicate access copy requires advance notice.

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Biographical / Historical
New York art dealer, critic, and author Martin Birnbaum (1878-1970) was the manager of the American branch of the Berlin Photographic Company in New York City from 1910–1916, and a longtime partner in the art firm Scott & Fowles. He spent the later part of his career building the Grenville Lindall Winthrop Collection, now at the Fogg Museum.

Birnbaum immigrated to the United States from Hungary as a child. He was an accomplished violinist who studied at City College of New York, and graduated with a law degree from Columbia University in 1901, but developed a life-long interest in art during visits to Europe. As manager of the Berlin Photographic Company he had great success in staging art exhibitions at the company's New York galleries, which led him to a junior partnership in the Fifth Avenue firm of art dealers, Scott & Fowles. Birnbaum traveled widely and built relationships with many of the prominent artists and art collectors of his day and, in addition to the Grenville Lindall Winthrop collection, was influential in developing other important art collections including those of Edward Davis, Reginald Davis, and Henry P. McIlhenny.


Scope and Contents
The papers of New York art dealer, critic, and author Martin Birnbaum measure 3.2 linear feet and date from 1862-1967, with the bulk of the material dating from 1920-1967. The papers document Birnbaum's association with the firm of Scott & Fowles, the lives and activities of his friends and colleagues, and his literary work, through biographical material, correspondence, writings and notes, business records, printed material, a scrapbook, scattered artwork, and photographs of Birnbaum, friends and colleagues, and artwork.

Correspondence, primarily letters received by Birnbaum in New York, and throughout Europe from 1917-1960s, reflects Birnbaum's association with Scott & Fowles, particularly Stevenson Scott, and includes many details about the lives and activities of his correspondents, among them: artists Edward Bruce, Cecilia Beaux, Beniamino Bufano, Stephen C. Clark, Louise Dillingham, William Hunt Diedrich, Luis Fernandez,
Herbert Haseltine, Jan Hoowij, Malvina Hoffman, Leonebel Jacobs, Lenard Kester, Lois Mailou Jones, Paul Manship, Gari Melchers, Maxfield Parrish, Charles S. Ricketts, William Rothenstein, John Singer Sargent, Janet Scudder, Carl Sprinchorn, Maurice Sterne, Albert Sterner, Carl N. Wertz, and Stanley Wilson. Also found is correspondence with art collectors and patrons including Mabel Choate, Edmund Davis, Reginald Davis, Henry P. Mollhenny, James Parmalee, Edith Wetmore, and Grenville Windall Linthrop, and museums including the Fogg Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and then curator Gisela Marie Augusta Richter, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Correspondence with scholars, writers, and publishers including George Coedes, Edmund Dulac, Joseph Francis Charles Rock, Upton Sinclair and others, documents aspects of Birnbaum’s literary and scholarly work.

Writings include drafts of The Last Romantic, including Upton Sinclair’s revision, and some of Birnbaum’s early published and unpublished writings, as well as notes on Aubrey Beardsley.

Business records include financial records such as bills, receipts, canceled checks and statements for sales of artwork, and scattered legal records.

A small amount of printed material primarily consists of programs for musical events which evidence Birnbaum’s early success as a violinist, as well as scattered news clippings, 2 exhibition catalogs, and announcements for the publications of Angkor and the Mandarin Road and The Last Romantic. Additional printed material about Birnbaum can be found in the dismantled scrapbook, 1960-1961.

Artwork includes 2 etchings and a sketch by Birnbaum, bookplates by various artists, circa 10 sketches by other and unidentified artists, and 3 cards with original artwork.

Photographs include snapshots and portraits of Birnbaum and artists and friends, among them: Robert Chanler, Charles Despiau, Norman Douglas, Luis Fernandez, Herbert Haseltine, Augustus John, Paul Manship, Gari Melchers, Elie Nadelman, Albert Sterner, Stevenson Scott, and Grenville Lindall Winthrop. Also found is a photo of Birnbaum with Edward Bruce, Alfred Potterton, Leon Stein, and Maurice Sterne, circa 1915-1916, and photographs proposed for use in The Last Romantic, travel snapshots, and photos of artwork.

**Arrangement**

Collection is arranged as 8 series.

**Missing Title:**
- Series 1: Biographical Material, 1890-1950s (0.3 linear feet; Box 1, OV 4-5)
- Series 2: Correspondence, 1862-1967 (1.7 linear feet; Boxes 1-2)
- Series 3: Writings and Notes, circa 1890-circa 1960 (0.45 linear feet; Box 2)
- Series 4: Business Records, 1918-1967 (0.15 linear feet; Box 2)
- Series 5: Printed Material, 1895-circa 1960 (0.15 linear feet; Box 3)
- Series 6: Scrapbook, 1960-1961 (1 folder; Box 3)
- Series 7: Artwork, circa 1890-circa 1960 (0.15 linear feet; Box 3)
- Series 8: Photographs, circa 1900-circa 1960s (0.3 linear feet; Box 3)

**Names and Subject Terms**

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

**Subjects:**

Art -- Collectors and collecting

**Types of Materials:**

Etchings
Photographs
Sketches

Names:

Beardsley, Aubrey, 1872-1898
Beaux, Cecilia, 1855-1942
Bruce, Edward, 1879-1943
Bufano, Beniamino, 1898-1970
Chanler, Robert Winthrop, 1872-1930
Choate, Mabel, 1870-1958
Clark, Stephen C. (Stephen Carlton), b. 1882
Coedès, George
Davis, Edmund
Davis, Reginald
Despiau, Charles, 1874-1946
Diederich, William Hunt, 1884-1953
Dillingham, Louise
Douglas, Norman, 1868-1952
Dulac, Edmund, 1882-1953
Fernández, Luis, 1900-1973
Fogg Art Museum
Haseltine, Herbert, 1877-1962
Hoffman, Malvina, 1887-1966
Hoowij, Jan, 1907-
Jacobs, Leonebel
John, Augustus, 1878-1961
Jones, Lois Mailou, 1905-1998
Kester, Lenard, 1917-
Manship, Paul, 1885-1966
McIlhenny, Henry P.
Melchers, Gari, 1860-1932
Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, N.Y.)
Nadelman, Elie, 1882-1946
Parmelee, James
Parrish, Maxfield, 1870-1966
Philadelphia Museum of Art
Potterton, Alfred B.
Richter, Gisela Marie Augusta, 1882-1972
Ricketts, Charles S., 1866-1931
Rock, Joseph Francis Charles, 1884-1962
Rothenstein, William, Sir, 1872-1945
Sargent, John Singer, 1856-1925
Scott & Fowles (Firm)
Scott, Stevenson
Scudder, Janet, b. 1873
Sinclair, Upton, 1878-1968
Sprinchorn, Carl, 1887-1971
Stein, Leo, 1872-1947
Sterne, Maurice, 1878-1957
Sterner, Albert, 1863-1946
Wernitz, Carl N. (Carl Newland), 1874-1944
Wilson, Stanley
Winthrop, Grenville Lindall, 1864-1943
Occupations:
Art critics -- New York (State) -- New York
Art dealers -- New York (State) -- New York
Authors -- New York (State) -- New York
Series 1: Biographical Material, 1890-1950s

0.3 Linear feet (Box 1, OVs 4-5)

Scope and Contents: Series consists of certificates, visa applications, a 1922 passport, commencement programs, lists of names and addresses, letterhead, and travel material. United States visas are for 1907-1908 and 1913. Certificates include those from Birnbaum's grammar school, the City College Associates for membership, the Committee of the American Museum of Natural History to which Birnbaum was elected, and the Library of Congress for the deposit of his play *The Bachelor*. Also found are Birnbaum's commencement programs from the College of the City of New York where he received a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1897, and Columbia University where he received a master of arts degree in 1898 and a law degree in 1901.

Travel material includes tourist maps of French Indochina, the Congo, and Europe and the Black Sea, as well as menus and passenger lists from ocean liners and cruise ships.

Box 1, Folder 1 Certificates, Passports, and Visas, 1890-1959
Notes: Oversized material housed in OV 4

Box 1, Folder 2 Commencement Programs, 1897-1901

Box 1, Folder 3 Letterhead and Envelopes, circa 1900-circa 1960

Box 1, Folder 4 Names and Addresses, circa 1920s-circa 1950s

Box 1, Folder 5 Travel Material, 1920s-1950s
Notes: Oversized material housed in OV 5

Box 1, Folder 6 Who's Who Entry, 1942

Box OV 4 Oversized Certificates, Passports, and Visas from Box 1, Folder 1

Box OV 5 Oversized Travel Material from Box 1, Folder 5

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Series 2: Correspondence, 1862-1967

1.7 Linear feet (Boxes 1-2)

Scope and Contents: Correspondence is primarily in the form of incoming letters to Birnbaum, with drafts or copies of some of Birnbaum's outgoing letters. Correspondence is with family members, friends and colleagues, including artists, clients, galleries, museums, scholars, writers, and publishers.

Found is significant correspondence with artists including Cecilia Beaux, Orland Campbell, Louise Dillingham, William Hunt Diedrich, Herbert Haseltine, Jan Hoowij, Malvina Hoffman, Leonebel Jacobs, Lois Mailou Jones, Rockwell Kent, Lenard Kester, Paul Manship, Gari Melchers, Maxfield Parrish, Janet Scudder, Carl Sprinchorn, Maurice Sterne, Albert Sterner, and Carl N. Werntz. Correspondence with Edward Bruce discusses Bruce's painting, and his relationships with Birnbaum and Scott & Fowles concerning the development of his private collection. Letters from John Singer Sargent relate to Sargent's own work and his interests in acquiring works of art by others. Letters from Maxfield Parrish provide details about the artist's life and work in Windsor, Vermont.

Also found is correspondence with noted art collectors including Edmund Davis and his brother Reginald Davis, Henry P. McIlhenny, Grenville Lindall Winthrop, and Edith Wetmore. Material relating to Winthrop includes drafts of many of Birnbaum's letters to Winthrop, telegrams regarding sales, price lists, and correspondence with Harvard University's Fogg Museum, all of which document Birnbaum's crucial role in the development of the Winthrop collection and Winthrop's ultimately transformative gift to the Fogg Museum. Correspondence with Harvard University and Kate Winthrop Morse also relates to the Fogg's interest in Morse's sister, sculptor Emily Winthrop Miles.

2 folders of letters document directly Birnbaum's relationship with Scott and Fowles, primarily with Stevenson Scott, from the 1920s to the 1940s.

Correspondence with writers, publishers, and others illustrate Birnbaum's important literary and social connections and friendships and includes letters from Upton Sinclair relating primarily to collaborations prior to the publication of *The Last Romantic*; correspondence with Vantage Press, Inc., regarding the publication of *Angkor and the Mandarin Road* (1952); letters from Edmund Dulac and W. B. Yeats regarding the serial publication of *The Hawk's Well* to be illustrated by Dulac; letters from Fenella Lovell, a model renowned for being the subject of a 1910 portrait by Gwen John; a folder of letters from Virginia Gerson who invited Birnbaum to many of her salons; and one letter each from from Dorothy Parker, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and Thornton Wilder.

Letters from James St. O'Toole contain appraisals of artwork provided to Birnbaum. Letters from James Parmalee relate to Gari Melchers and their involvement in the Smithsonian's National Gallery of Art Commission. Correspondence with Metropolitan Museum of Art includes correspondence with Gisela Marie Augusta Richter, during her time as assistant curator for the Museum.

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<td>Notes: Includes 2 letters from Mary Sargent Potter and 1 letter from Dorothy Parker regarding Birnbaum's donation to the Anti-Nazi League</td>
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Series 4: Business Records, 1918-1967

0.15 Linear feet (Box 2)

Scope and Contents: Business records include financial records, a folder of descriptions of specific artwork with their appraisal and sale values, and legal records.

Financial records comprise bills, canceled checks, and receipts and statements for artwork bought and sold from and to galleries, individuals, and museums in the United States and Europe. These records also document gifts Birnbaum made to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and others.

Legal records consist of a loan agreement between Stevenson Scott and Birnbaum (1916); a signed, handwritten land agreement between Birnbaum and Prince Louis Ferdinand d'Orleans of Bourbon (1938); a copy of the will of Alfred B. Potterton (1940); and a copy of Birnbaum's deposition on the value of an Eli Nadelman bust of Jane Wallach (1958).

One folder documents Birnbaum's involvement with the Professional Children's School in the mid-1960s. Birnbaum made financial contributions to the school and served on its Board of Trustees.

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Series 5: Printed Material, 1895-circa 1960

0.15 Linear feet (Box 3)

Scope and Contents: Printed material includes programs, primarily for musical events which Birnbaum helped to arrange or appeared in as a violinist, and scattered newscloppings about Birnbaum. Announcements and exhibition catalogs include Twayne Publishers Inc.'s announcement for *The Last Romantic*, Vantage Press, Inc.'s announcement for *Angkor and the Mandarin Road*, and 1 exhibition catalog each for exhibitions by Carl Sprinchorn and Maurice Sterne.

- Box 3, Folder 24: Announcements and Exhibition Catalogs, circa 1920-circa 1960
- Box 3, Folder 25: News Clippings, circa 1920-circa 1960
- Box 3, Folder 26: Printed Miscellany, circa 1920-circa 1960
- Box 3, Folder 27-28: Programs, 1895-1960

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1 Folder (Box 3)

Scope and Contents: Found is a dismantled scrapbook from the 1960s documenting Birnbaum's receipt of the Townsend Harris Medal from the Alumni Association of the City College of New York, and the publication of *The Last Romantic*, with related correspondence, clippings and memorabilia from the Alumni dinner.

| Box 3, Folder 29 | Scrapbook, 1960-1961 |

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Series 7: Artwork, circa 1890-circa 1960

0.15 Linear feet (Box 3)
Scope and Contents: Series includes 2 etchings and one pencil sketch by Birnbaum; bookplates by Arthur W. Crisp, Anthony H. Euner, Allen Lewis, Emil Orlik, and others; 3 sketches and 3 cards with original artwork by others; and 7 pencil sketches by unidentified artists.

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Series 8: Photographs, circa 1900-circa 1960s

0.3 Linear feet (Box 3)

Scope and Contents: Series comprises photos of Birnbaum alone and with artists and friends including one of Maurice Sterne, Alfred Potterton, Ned (Edward) Bruce, and Leo Stein (brother of Gertrude Stein), at Ned Bruce's house near Rome, Italy, circa 1915-1916.


Also found are circa 82 travel photographs, primarily of Greece, photographs used in the publication of The Last Romantic, and photographs of works of art.

Box 3, Folder 34-36 Photos of Artists and Others, circa 1900-1951
Box 3, Folder 37 Photos of Birnbaum and Others, circa 1915-circa 1950s
Box 3, Folder 38-40 Photos of Travel, circa 1920s-circa 1930s
Box 3, Folder 41-42 Photos For The Last Romantic, circa 1900-circa 1960
Box 3, Folder 43-48 Photos of Works of Art, circa 1940s-circa 1960s
Box 3, Folder 49-50 Photos of Works of Art, Sculpture, circa 1940s-circa 1960s
Box 3, Folder 51-53 Photos of Works of Art, Unidentified, circa 1940s-circa 1960s

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