



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Karl Theodore Francis Bitter Papers, 1887-circa 1977, in the Archives of American Art

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

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Karl Theodore Francis Bitter papers
Date:	1887-circa 1977
Identifier:	AAA.bittkarl
Creator:	Bitter, Karl Theodore Francis, 1867-1915
Extent:	2.5 Linear feet
Language:	The collection is in English.
Summary:	The papers of sculptor Karl Bitter date from 1887 to 1977 and measure 2.5 linear feet. The bulk of the collection consists of photographs of works of art and commemorative medals from expositions. Also found are scattered biographical information, family correspondence, two diaries, printed materials, sketchbooks, and sketches.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Portions of the Karl Theodore Francis Bitter papers were lent for microfilming by Bitter's daughter, Marietta Bitter Abel, in 1969. Marietta Bitter Abel, Mr. Michael Abel, and Lt. Col. Jonathon F. Abel donated most of the loaned material excluding the photographs along with additional items in several increments from 1970-2010. The commemorative medals were gifted in 1975 by Walter Hancock, a friend of Bitter's son Francis.

Separated Materials

The Archives of American Art also holds microfilm of material lent for microfilming (reels N70-8 and N70-35) including biographical material, correspondence, and photographs. While most of these materials were later donated, the photographs remain with the lender and are not described in the collection container inventory.

Available Formats

The collection was digitized in its entirety in 2014 and is available on the Archives of American Art's website.

Materials lent for microfilming are available on 35mm microfilm reels N70-8 and N70-35 at the Archives of American Art offices and through interlibrary loan.

Processing Information

Portions of the collection were previously microfilmed on reels N70-35, N70-40, and 673. Microfilmed portions were merged, processed, and arranged by Jayna Josefson in 2013 and digitized in 2014 with funding provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art.

Preferred Citation

Karl Theodore Francis Bitter papers, 1887-circa 1977. 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. Contact Reference Services for more information.

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Biographical / Historical

Austrian-born sculptor Karl Bitter (1867-1915) was active in New York City, New York. He exhibited his works at worldwide expositions and examples of his sculpture and memorials can be found throughout the United States.

Karl Theodore Francis Bitter was born in Vienna, Austria, where he trained as a sculptor. While serving in the Austrian military in 1889, Bitter immigrated to the United States and applied for citizenship. Ultimately, Bitter settled in New York City and worked as an assistant in a home decorating firm while establishing his reputation as a sculptor. After winning a 1930 competition to design the Astor memorial bronze gates at Trinity Church, he used the funds to establish a small studio on 13th Street, which he shared with fellow sculptor Giuseppe Moretti. Bitter quickly established himself as a world-famous sculptor who also specialized in private memorials and works for public buildings.

After working as a sculptor at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 and as director at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York in 1901, Bitter was named head of the sculpture programs at both the 1904 St. Louis Exposition and the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition held in San Francisco, California.

Bitter was awarded the silver medal of the Paris Exposition, 1900; the gold medal of the Pan-American Exposition, 1901; and the gold medal at the St. Louis Exposition, 1904. He was a member of the National Institute of Arts and Sciences, National Academy of Design, American Academy of Arts and Letters, Players' Club, Century Club, and the Architectural League.

Karl Bitter married Marie Schevill with whom he had three children. He died suddenly in 1915 after being struck by a car.

Scope and Contents

The papers of sculptor Karl Bitter date from 1887 to 1977 and measure 2.5 linear feet. The bulk of the collection consists of photographs of works of art and commemorative medals from expositions. Also found are scattered biographical information, family correspondence, two diaries, printed materials, sketches, and sketchbooks.

Biographical material consists of one short biography of Karl Bitter. The bulk of the correspondence is to Bitter's children, Marietta (Mrs. Walter Abel) and Francis Bitter, and relates to the relocation of Bitter's caryatid sculptures on the St. Paul Building in New York City. There are typescripts of letters from Karl Bitter to sculptor Daniel C. French and from Marie Bitter to her children.

Two diaries from 1901 and 1909 kept by Bitter describe his trips abroad. The 1901 diary is similar to a scrapbook and was kept during his honeymoon with Marie Schevill. Their travels through France and Italy are vividly described through prose, sketches, maps, postcards, and a photo of Bitter and Marie. A 1909 diary is from Bitter's first trip back to Austria since he left for the United States. Written in the form of letters to his wife, he describes his reactions to being back in Europe, seeing his family, and sightseeing.

Scattered printed material includes a clipping, an exhibition announcement, a postcard, and reproductions of works of art by Bitter.

Photographs are of Bitter, his family and friends, studios, and sculpture. Also found are two photo albums containing many images of Bitter's sculptures throughout the country.

There are two sketchbooks and a print by Blanche Stollson. Also found are Bitter's commemorative medals from various international expositions.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged as 6 series.

- Series 1: Biographical Material, circa 1927 (Box 1; 1 folder)
- Series 2: Family Correspondence, 1915-1958 (Box 1, 3 folders)
- Series 3: Diaries, 1901-1909 (Box 1, 3; 0.1 linear feet)
- Series 4: Printed Material, 1912-circa 1977 (Box 1, OV 7; 4 folders)
- Series 5: Photographic Materials, 1887-circa 1960s (Box 1-5, OV 7; 1.0 linear feet)
- Series 6: Artwork and Artifacts, circa 1890-1915 (Box 1, 3, 6; 1 linear foot)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Artists' studios
Artists' studios -- Photographs
Sculptors -- Austria -- Vienna
Sculptors -- United States

Types of Materials:

Diaries
Medals
Photographs
Prints
Scrapbooks
Sketchbooks
Sketches

Names:

Bitter, Francis, 1902-1967
Bitter, Marie
Bitter, Marietta
French, Daniel Chester, 1850-1931
Stollson, Blanche

Places:

Austria -- description and travel
France -- description and travel
Italy -- description and travel

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Material, circa 1927

1 Folder (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Found is one short biography of Karl Bitter.

Available Formats: This series has been scanned in its entirety.

Box 1, Folder 1 [Biography, circa 1927](#)

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Series 2: Family Correspondence, 1915-1958

3 Folders (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Found is correspondence of Karl Bitter's children, Marietta (Mrs. Walter Abel) and Francis Bitter, most of which concerns the Committee to Preserve American Art and the reinstallation of the caryatids on the St. Paul Building in New York City. There is also a copy of a letter written by Marie Bitter to her children concerning the death of her husband and wishes for her own burial, which was sent to Francis Bitter. Also found is a copy of a letter written by Karl Bitter to Daniel Chester French in which he discusses Greek archaeology and his feelings on World War I.

Available Formats: This series has been scanned in its entirety.

Arrangement: Correspondence is arranged alphabetically by correspondent.

Box 1, Folder 2 [Abel, Marietta \(Mrs. Walter\), 1958](#)

Box 1, Folder 3 [Bitter, Francis, 1945-1958](#)

Notes: Includes a copy of a letter written by Marie Bitter in 1916 concerning the death of her husband Karl and of burial arrangement.

Box 1, Folder 4 [Bitter, Karl, 1915](#)

Notes: Copy of a letter to Daniel C. French.

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Series 3: Diaries, 1901-1909

0.1 Linear feet (Box 1, 3)

Scope and Contents: Found are two diaries from Karl Bitter describing his travels abroad in 1901 and 1909. The 1901 diary is from Bitter's honeymoon with his wife Marie and details their travel schedule in France, Switzerland, and Italy. The diary is very specific and describes hotels, restaurants, historic sites, castles, and ruins. It includes scrapbook elements such as hand-drawn maps of bicycle routes, travel receipts, a photograph of Marie and Karl, postcards, and sketches. Visited cities and sites include Cherbourg, Valognes, Mont Saint-Michel, Vitre, the Loire Valley, Geneva, St. Monte, Lake Como, Verona, Venice, and Milan.

The 1909 diary documents Bitter's trip to Austria in the form of letters written to his wife. Bitter details his journey on the USS Deutschland and his trip from Paris to Vienna. He gives his reactions to seeing his family and other sites after living many years abroad. On June 25th, 1909, Bitter describes a lavish party.

Available Formats: This series has been scanned in its entirety.

Arrangement: Materials are arranged chronologically.

Box 1, Folder 5

[Diary, 1901](#)

Notes:

Oversized material housed in Box 3, Folder 1.

Box 1, Folder 6

[Diary, 1909](#)

Box 3, Folder 1

Oversized Diary Items scanned with Box 1, Folder 5., 1901

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Series 4: Printed Material, 1912-circa 1977

4 Folders (Box 1, OV 7)

Scope and Contents: Found is a clipping concerning the 1912 Panama-Pacific Exposition, an exhibition announcement, a postcard, and reproductions of works of art by Bitter.

Available: This series has been scanned in its entirety.

Formats:

Arrangement: Materials are arranged by document type.

Box 1, Folder 7

[Clipping, 1912](#)

Notes: Oversized material housed in OV 7.

Box 1, Folder 8

[Exhibition Announcement, circa 1958](#)

Box 1, Folder 9

[Postcards, circa 1977](#)

Notes: One post card depicts the transferred St. Paul Building caryatids in Holiday Park, Indiana.

Box 1, Folder 10

[Reproductions of Works of Art, circa 1930](#)

Notes: Excerpted from Ferdinand Schevill's book.

Box OV 7

Oversized Clipping scanned with Box 1, Folder 7, 1912

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Series 5: Photographic Materials, 1887-circa 1960s

1 Linear foot (Box 1-5, OV 7)

Scope and Contents: Found are two photo albums; portraits of Karl Bitter; snapshots of Bitter with his family, friends and works of art; studios and homes; and photographs works of art.

Available: This series has been scanned in its entirety.

Formats:

Arrangement: Materials are organized by document type and subject.

Box 1, Folder 11	Photo Album #1, 1897-1914 Notes: Oversized materials housed in Box 3, Folder 5 and Box 4.
Box 1, Folder 12	Loose Materials from Photo Album #1, 1897-1914 Notes: Oversized materials housed in Box 3, Folder 4.
Box 1, Folder 13	Photo Album #2, 1887-1914 Notes: Oversized material housed in Box 5.
Box 1, Folder 14	Loose Materials from Photo Album #2, 1887-1914 Notes: Oversized material housed in Box 3, Folder 3.
Box 1, Folder 15	Karl Bitter, circa 1915
Box 1, Folder 16	Jonathan Abel, after 1958 Notes: In front of "The Ruins" in Indianapolis, Indiana.
Box 1, Folder 17	Studio, Bitter and Moretti, circa 1910
Box 1	Works of Art
Box 1	Indiana
Box 1, Folder 18	Fountain, Indianapolis, circa 1950
Box 1	Minnesota
Box 1, Folder 19	Lowry Memorial, Minneapolis, circa 1910
Box 1	New York
Box 1, Folder 20	Standard Bearer for Pan-American Exposition, Buffalo, circa 1910
Box 1, Folder 21	Andrew D. White, Seated, Cornell, circa 1910 Notes: Plaster Model
Box 1, Folder 22-23	All Angels Church, New York City, circa 1910

Box 1, Folder 24-25	St. Paul Building Caryatids, New York City, circa 1958
Box 1, Folder 26	Franz Sigel Equestrian Statue, New York City, circa 1910
Box 1, Folder 27	Villard Memorial, Sleepy Hollow, circa 1910
Box 1	Ohio
Box 1, Folder 28-29	Alexander Hamilton and Lord Mansfield, Cleveland, circa 1910 Notes: Oversized material housed in OV 7.
Box 1	Vermont
Box 1, Folder 30	John Erastus Hubbard Memorial, circa 1910
Box 1, Folder 31	Mrs. C. R. Crane and Child, Portrait Relief, circa 1910
Box 1, Folder 32	Robert Curtis Ogden, Tablet, circa 1910
Box 1, Folder 33	Fritz Schwyzer Memorial, circa 1910
Box 1, Folder 34	Relief Bust, circa 1910
Box 1, Folder 35	Negatives, circa 1960s
Box 2	Glass Plate Lantern Slides
Box 2, Folder 1	Karl Bitter, Portraits, circa 1890-1915
Box 2, Folder 2	Karl Bitter, with Family and Friends, circa 1890-circa 1915
Box 2, Folder 3	Karl Bitter, with Works of Art in Studio, circa 1890-1915
Box 2, Folder 4	Studio, New York City, circa 1890
Box 2, Folder 5	Studio, Weehawken, New Jersey, circa 1890
Box 2, Folder 6	Homes, Adirondacks, New York, circa 1890
Box 2, Folder 7	Works of Art, circa 1890-1910
Box 3, Folder 3-5	Oversized Photo Album Materials scanned with Box 1, Folders 11-12, 14, 1887-1914
Box 4	Oversized Photo Album scanned with Box 1, Folder 11, 1887-1914
Box 5	Oversized Photo Album scanned with Box 1, Folder 13, 1887-1914

Box OV 7

Oversized Photographs of Works of Art scanned with Box 1, Folder 28-29, circa
1908

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Series 6: Artwork and Artifacts, 1890-1915

1 Linear foot (Box 1, 3, 6)

Scope and Contents: Found is a sketchbook, a bound sketchbook of drawings of the Depew Foundatin, a print by Blanche Stollson, and 11 commemorative medals.

Available: This series has been scanned in its entirety.

Formats:

Arrangement: Materials are arranged by document type.

Box 1, Folder 36	Sketchbook, circa 1890
Box 1, Folder 37	Sketchbook, Depew Fountain (Dismantled), 1914-1915 Notes: Oversized material housed in Box 6.
Box 1, Folder 38	"The Depew Fountain," by Blanche Stollson, after 1915 Notes: Oversized material housed in Box 3, Folder 2.
Box 1	Commemorative Medals
Box 1, Folder 39	World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, Illinois (1892), 1892
Box 1, Folder 40	Exposition Universelle Internationale, Paris, France (1900), 1900 Notes: Two medals, one to K. Bitter and another to C. Bitter.
Box 1, Folder 41	Pan-American Exposition, Buffalo, New York (1901), 1901
Box 1, Folder 42	South Carolina Interstate and West Indian Exposition (1901), 1901-1902
Box 1, Folder 43	Universal Exposition, St. Louis, Missouri (1904), 1904
Box 1, Folder 44	Universal Exposition, St. Louis, Missouri (1904), 1904 Notes: Plaque
Box 1, Folder 45	Panama-Pacific International Exposition, San Francisco, California (1915), 1915
Box 1, Folder 46	Panama-Pacific International Exposition, San Francisco, California (1915), 1915 Notes: Placquette
Box 1, Folder 47	Panama-Pacific International Exposition, San Francisco, California (1915), 1915 Notes: Division of Works, Chief of Sculpture Award
Box 1, Folder 48	Unidentified, circa 1900
Box 3, Folder 2	Oversized Etching scanned with Box 1, Folder 38, after 1915

Box 6

Oversized Sketchbook scanned with Box 1, Folder 37, 1914-1915

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