
Catherine S. Gaines

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Collection Overview

Repository: Archives of American Art  
Title: Jerome Blum papers  
Identifier: AAA.blumjero  
Date: 1915-circa 1969  
(bulk 1919-1935)  
Extent: 3 Linear feet  
Creator: Blum, Jerome, 1884-1956  
Language: English .  
Summary: The papers of Jerome Blum measure 3.0 linear feet and date from 1915 to circa 1969, with the bulk of the material dating from 1919 to 1935. Biographical material, correspondence, writings and notes, printed material, artwork, and photographs document the painter's personal and professional life, and extensive travels.

Administrative Information

Provenance
The majority of the papers were donated or loaned for microfilming between 1965 and 1966 by Blum's widow, Frances Blum. A typescript copy of the final version of Life Answered was received in 1969.

Separated Material
Originals of loaned material, including typescripts of Sherwood Anderson's letters, most of Blum's Theodore Dreiser material, travel in China, scrapbooks, and drafts of portions of Life Answered - "Father and Mother," "Journal of the Last 20 Years," "Lucile," and "Marriage and Divorce" - were returned to Frances Blum after microfilming. Although this material is not technically part of the collection housed in the Archives of American Art, copies are available on microfilm reels D237 and D238.

Alternative Forms Available
The bulk of the collection was digitized in 2016 and is available on the Archives of American Art's website. Materials which have not been scanned include blank pages, blank versos of photographs, and duplicates. In some cases, exhibition catalogs and other publications have had their covers, title pages, and relevant pages scanned.

Processing Information
Portions of the Jerome Blum papers received a preliminary level of processing at some point after donation. Material was typically microfilmed in the order that it was loaned or donated on reels D237-D238 and 2010. The entire collection was fully processed, arranged and described.
by Catherine S. Gaines in 2006. The collection was prepared for digitization by Judy Ng and digitized in 2016.

**Preferred Citation**


**Restrictions on Access**

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 Note**

Jerome Blum (1884-1956) was a world traveler who found artistic inspiration while living in France and traveling to the American west, Hawaii, Japan, China, Cuba, and the South Seas (including a 10 month stay in Tahiti). Blum painted landscapes and seascapes of Southern France, and the many places he visited, as well as still lifes of exotic plants and fruits. He was living in Paris at the height of the Fauve movement and incorporated some of its ideas into his work, first inserting bold colors into his fairly conservative Post-Impressionist style. Later, he used significantly more saturated color, intense light, and bold forms.

Blum studied at the Francis J. Smith Art Academy in his native Chicago, and the Art Institute of Chicago. He went to Paris in 1906 with Lucile Swan, a sculptor and fellow student who eventually became his wife. There, he enrolled in the Ecole des Beaux-Arts for a brief period, studying with Luc Olivier Merson. Blum remained in Paris until 1910, participated in the 1909 and 1910 Salons d'Automne and received exhibition offers from Galerie Sagot, Paris, and Anderson Galleries, New York. While in France, Blum knew expatriates Jo Davidson, Arthur Dove, Samuel Halpert, Alfred Maurer, and John Marin. Halpert became a mentor of sorts, instructing him in painting Post-Impressionist landscapes, to which Blum soon added Fauvist color.

Once back in Chicago, Blum developed close friendships with writers Sherwood Anderson, Theodore Dreiser, and Ben Hecht that lasted for decades. His one-man show at Thurber's Art Gallery in 1911 received very mixed reviews--most likely it was the first time the Fauve palette was seen by Chicagoans, and most thought it too radical. When the mayor purchased a Blum painting from a 1912 Art Institute of Chicago group exhibition, the proceeds enabled Blum to visit the American west. Later that year, Blum and Lucile Swan traveled in Europe. They were married in Paris and took an extended honeymoon, continuing to travel in France until the fall of the following year.

For a period of approximately 20 years, he exhibited extensively and enjoyed critical acclaim. During his many years of foreign residence, Blum returned to the United States periodically for exhibitions and family

Blum returned to New York in 1924 and Lucile filed for divorce. An auction of his work was held at the Anderson Galleries that year; Augustus John, George Biddle, Chester Dale, M. Knoedler, Kraushaar Galleries, and Jo Davidson were among the successful bidders.

In 1925, he married Frances Baum, a psychiatric social worker. They settled in Dampierre, France for eight years, and during this period traveled extensively throughout the country. Always an unconventional and fiercely independent person, Blum's mental health was fragile and deteriorated markedly in the early 1930s, during which time his painting output decreased dramatically. The Blums spent part of 1934 at the MacDowell Colony in Petersborough, New Hampshire. Once his fellowship was over, they moved to Key West, Florida, where Blum became increasingly disturbed.

Blum was admitted to the Bloomingdale Hospital, a private psychiatric institution in White Plains, New York, in 1935. But after being diagnosed a "hopeless case," he was transferred to a state hospital. While hospitalized, Blum continued writing copious notes and made many appeals for release. He died at the Hudson River State Hospital, Poughkeepsie, New York, in 1956.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Jerome Blum measure 3.0 linear feet and date from 1915 to circa 1969, with the bulk of the material dating from 1919 to 1935. Biographical material, correspondence, writings and notes, printed material, artwork, and photographs document the painter's personal and professional life, and extensive travels.

Correspondence with friends, relatives, colleagues, publishers, galleries, museums, and collectors document Blum's personal and professional life. Noted correspondents include Sherwood Anderson and Theodore Dreiser.

Blum was an avid writer. He published several short stories, and recorded reminiscences, thoughts, and daily events in a series of notebooks. These notes were the basis for *Life Answered*, an unpublished autobiography (eventually, edited and completed by Frances Blum). Also included are extensive notes and writings on a variety of subjects, including his extensive travels to Tahiti. Writings by other authors consist of critical statements about Jerome Blum and some of Frances Blum's writings on Theodore Dreiser.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 6 series.

- Series 1: Biographical Material, 1915-1933 (4 folders; Box 1)
- Series 2: Correspondence, 1915-1966 (0.4 linear feet; Box 1)
- Series 3: Writings, 1915-circa 1969 (2 linear feet; Boxes 1-3)
- Series 4: Printed Material, 1916-1965 (0.3 linear feet; Box 3)
• Series 5: Artwork, circa 1920-1930 (2 folders; Box 3)
• Series 6: Photographs, circa 1915-1945 (6 folders; Box 3)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:
- Painters -- Illinois -- Chicago
- Painters -- New York (State) -- New York
- Painting, Modern -- 20th century -- New York (State) -- New York

Types of Materials:
- Photographs

Names:
- Anderson, Sherwood, 1876-1941
- Blum, Frances, -1970
- Dreiser, Theodore, 1871-1945

Occupations:
- Authors -- United States
- Expatriate painters -- United States

Geographic Names:
- Tahiti -- Description and Travel
**Container Listing**

**Series 1: Biographical Material, 1915-1933**

4 Folders (Box 1)

This series consists of Jerome Blum and Lucile Swan's marriage certificate, passports, a publishing agreement, and the transcript of a radio broadcast of Thomas L. Stix of *America's Grub Street Speaks* interviewing Jerome Blum on art and the weather.

Materials are arranged by document type.

This series has been scanned in its entirety.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1, Folder 1</th>
<th>Marriage Certificate, Jerome Blum and Lucile Swan, 1919</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>![Image(s)]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 2</td>
<td>Passports, 1915-1920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>![Image(s)]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 3</td>
<td>Transcript of Radio Broadcast, 1933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>![Image(s)]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thomas L. Stix of <em>America's Grub Street Speaks</em> interviews Jerome Blum on art and the weather.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 4</td>
<td>Agreement with Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith, Inc., Publishers, 1929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>![Image(s)]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Return to Table of Contents*
Series 2: Correspondence, 1915-1966

0.4 Linear feet (Box 1)

Correspondence is with friends, relatives, colleagues, publishers, galleries, museums, and collectors documenting Blum's personal and professional life. Noted correspondents include Sherwood Anderson, George Biddle, Kay Boyle, William Bullitt, Mary and Padraic Colum, Theodore Dreiser, Guy Pene DuBois, Max Eastman, John Duncan Ferguson, Buckminster Fuller, Emma Goldman, Frank Harris, Hapgood Hutchinson, Elizabeth Sparhawk-Jones, Rockwell Kent, Alfred Kreymborg, Allan Ross MacDougall, Waldo Peirce, Llewelyn Powys, George Seldes, Doris Stevens, Art Young, and Ossip Zadkine.

An annotated list including many of these correspondents, with notes on their occupations and their relationship to the Blums, was supplied by Frances Blum and can be found at the beginning of this series.

Materials are arranged alphabetically by correspondent.

This series has been scanned in its entirety.

Box 1, Folder 5  Annotated List with Notes on Correspondents Supplied by Frances Blum, circa 1965-1966

Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 6  A, circa 1920-1955

Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 7  Adams, "Frankie", circa 1935

Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 8  Anderson, Sherwood and Eleanor, 1920-1941

Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 9  B, circa 1920-1955

Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 10  Biddle, George and Helene, circa 1934-1939

Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 11  Blum, Frances, circa 1925-1956

Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 12  Blum, Frances, circa 1957-1965

Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 13  Blum, Lucile, 1920-1921

Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 14  C, circa 1920-1955
Box 1, Folder 15  Cappick, Marie, 1935-1940
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 16  Colum, Padraic, circa 1928-1935
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 17  D, circa 1920-1955
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 18  Dreiser, Theodore and Helen, 1936-1938
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 19  Du Bois, Guy Péne, circa 1952-1958
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 20  E-F, circa 1920-1955
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 21  Fuller, Buckminster, circa 1958-1965
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 22  G, circa 1920-1955
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 23  Gump, Robert L., 1936
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 24  H, circa 1920-1955
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 25  Harmsworth, Desmond, 1932-1935
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 26  I-M, circa 1920-1955
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 27  McDougall, Allan Ross ("Dougie"), 1935-1955
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 28  Mitchell, Jonathan, 1934-1935
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 29  N-P, circa 1920-1955
Box 1, Folder 30  Powys, Llewelyn, 1922-1940  
Includes request from widow to borrow letters for publication.

Box 1, Folder 31  Q-S, circa 1920-1955

Box 1, Folder 32  Seldes, George and Helen - Stevens, Doris, circa 1935-1939

Box 1, Folder 33  Sparhawk-Jones, Elizabeth, circa 1925-1935

Box 1, Folder 34  Stevens, Doris, circa 1927-1936

Box 1, Folder 35  T, circa 1920-1955

Box 1, Folder 36  Torrence, Olivia, circa 1934-1935

Box 1, Folder 37  U-W, circa 1920-1955

Box 1, Folder 38  Worthington, Marjorie and Willie, circa 1932-1935

Box 1, Folder 39  X-Y, circa 1920-1955

Box 1, Folder 40  Young, Art, 1929, 1942-1943

Box 1, Folder 41  Z, circa 1920-1955

Box 1, Folder 42  Miscellaneous and Unidentified, circa 1922-1963

Box 1, Folder 43  Obituaries and Condolence Letters upon the Death of Jerome Blum, 1956
Series 3: Writings, 1915-circa 1969

2 Linear feet (Boxes 1-3)

This series includes notebooks which Blum used to record his daily thoughts and activities, and on which he based his unpublished autobiography *Life Answered*. Frances Blum relied heavily on the notebooks to expand the manuscript, eventually completing it in circa 1969.

This series is arranged as 2 subseries. Materials are arranged by document type and retain their order within each folder.

- 3.1: Writings by Jerome Blum, circa 1920-1955
- 3.2: Writings by Other Authors, circa 1920-1950

This series has been scanned in its entirety.

3.1: Writings by Jerome Blum

Box 1  

**Autobiography, *Life Answered***

Box 1, Folder 44  

Drafts, Deleted Portions, and Fragments, circa 1925-1930  

Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 45  

Drafts, Deleted Portions, and Fragments, circa 1925-1930  

Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 46  

Drafts, Deleted Portions, and Fragments, circa 1925-1930  

Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 47  

Drafts, Deleted Portions, and Fragments, circa 1925-1930  

Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 48  

Drafts, Deleted Portions, and Fragments, circa 1925-1930  

Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 49  

Notes, circa 1925-1930  

Image(s)

Narrative-life, little pieces of narrative to be worked into book.

Box 1, Folder 50  

Manuscript by Jerome and Frances E. Blum (1 of 3), circa 1969  

Image(s)

Copyrighted 1967 by Frances E. Blum.

Box 1, Folder 51  

Manuscript by Jerome and Frances E. Blum (2 of 3), circa 1969  

Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 52  

Manuscript by Jerome and Frances E. Blum (3 of 3), circa 1969
Box 1, Folder 53  Diaries and Journals (1 vol.), 1935

Box 1, Folder 54  Diaries and Journals (2 vols.), 1936-1937

Box 1, Folder 55  Diaries and Journals (3 vols.), 1942

Box 1, Folder 56  Lists, circa 1915-1930

Box 2, Folder 1  Notebooks , 1919-1942
Includes source material for *Life Answered*; 1 volume.

Box 2, Folder 2  Notebooks , 1919-1942
Includes source material for *Life Answered*; 3 volumes.

Box 2, Folder 3  Notebooks, 1919-1942
Includes source material for *Life Answered*; 2 volumes.

Box 2, Folder 4  Notebooks , undated
Includes source material for *Life Answered*; 2 volumes.

Box 2, Folder 5  Notebooks
Includes source material for *Life Answered*; 2 volumes.

Box 2, Folder 6  Notebooks
Includes source material for *Life Answered*; 4 volumes.

Box 2, Folder 7  Notebooks , circa 1920-1930
Includes source material for *Life Answered*; 3 volumes.

Box 2, Folder 8  Notebooks
Includes source material for *Life Answered*; 4 volumes.
Box 2, Folder 9  Notebooks
Image(s)
Includes source material for *Life Answered*; 4 volumes.

Box 2, Folder 10  Notebooks, circa 1920-1930
Image(s)
Includes source material for *Life Answered*; 3 volumes.

Box 2, Folder 11  Notebooks
Image(s)
Includes source material for *Life Answered*; 2 volumes.

Box 2, Folder 12  Notebooks, circa 1920-1930
Image(s)
Includes source material for *Life Answered*; 4 volumes.

Box 2, Folder 13  Notebooks
Image(s)
Includes source material for *Life Answered*; 3 volumes.

Box 2, Folder 14  Notes and Fragments, circa 1920-1930
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 15  Notes and Fragments, circa 1920-1930
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 16  Notes and Fragments, circa 1920-1930
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 17  Notes and Fragments, circa 1920-1930
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 18  Notes and Fragments, circa 1920-1930
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 19  Notes and Fragments, circa 1920-1930
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 20  Notes and Fragments, circa 1920-1930
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 21  Notes and Fragments, circa 1920-1930
Image(s)

Box 3, Folder 1  Notes and Fragments, circa 1920-1930
| Box 3, Folder 2 | Notes and Fragments, circa 1920-1930 Image(s) |
| Box 3, Folder 3 | Notes and Fragments, circa 1920-1930 Image(s) |
| Box 3, Folder 4 | Notes and Fragments, circa 1935-1940 Image(s) |
| Box 3, Folder 5 | Notes and Fragments, circa 1935-1940 Image(s) |
| Box 3, Folder 6 | Notes and Fragments, circa 1935-1940 Image(s) |
| Box 3 | Short Writings |
| Box 3, Folder 7 | "At Sea", circa 1920-1930 Image(s) |
| Box 3, Folder 8 | "Chicago Sunday Afternoon", circa 1920-1930 Image(s) |
| Box 3, Folder 9 | "The Fox-Spirit", circa 1920-1930 Image(s) |
| Box 3, Folder 10 | "Resurrection", circa 1920-1930 Image(s) Also titled "Dark Virgin"; with untitled draft. |
| Box 3, Folder 11 | On Tahiti, circa 1920 Image(s) |
| Box 3, Folder 12 | On Tahiti, circa 1920-1930 Image(s) |
| Box 3, Folder 13 | Tahiti Material, circa 1920-1952 Image(s) Clippings, rubbings, sketches. |
| Box 3, Folder 14 | "To an Image of a Black Goddess from the Ivory Coast", undated Image(s) |
| Box 3, Folder 15 | Telephone Numbers, circa 1920-1930 Image(s) |
3.2: Writings by Other Authors, 1920-1950

Box 3, Folder 16  Critical Statements about Jerome Blum, circa 1921-1950
Image(s)

Box 3, Folder 17  "Theodore Dreiser" by Frances Blum, circa 1920-1950
Image(s)

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Series 4: Printed Material, 1916-1965

0.3 Linear feet (Box 3)

This series includes articles, a book, clippings, catalogs, and press releases. Clippings include obituaries of friends, book reviews, and articles about general art topics and world events. Many of the articles about, or mentioning, Blum contain reproductions of his work. Miscellaneous items include *Key West, A Free Port: Survey and Report*, a concert program, and a map of Ulster County, New York.

Materials are arranged by document type.

The bulk of this series has been scanned. In some cases exhibition catalogs and other publications have had their covers, title pages, and relevant pages scanned.

Box 3, Folder 18  Article, "Nobody's Home" by Sherwood Anderson, 1935
Image(s)

Box 3, Folder 19  Book, *Verdict of Bridlegoose* by Llewelyn Powys with Obituary of the Author, 1926, 1939
Image(s)

Box 3, Folder 20  Clippings, 1916-1962
Image(s)

Box 3, Folder 21  Clippings, 1929-1962
Image(s)

Box 3, Folder 22  Exhibition Catalogs, Jerome Blum, circa 1918-1965
Image(s)

Box 3, Folder 23  Exhibition Catalogs and Press Release, Jerome Blum, 1918-1965
Image(s)

Box 3, Folder 24  Exhibition Catalog, Harry Shokler, 1928
Image(s)
Foreword by Blum.

Box 3, Folder 25  Periodical, *This Quarter*, 1929-1930
Image(s)
Vol. 2, no. 1 and vol. 3, no. 2; with stories by Blum.

Box 3, Folder 26  Periodicals, 1935, 1944
Image(s)
*Mundo* (vol. 8) and *Nation* (no. 3645).

Box 3, Folder 27  Miscellaneous Items, 1934-1961
Image(s)

*Key West, A Free Port: Survey and Report;* NYC concert program, *Town Hall;* map of Ulster County, New York.

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Series 5: Artwork, circa 1920-1930

2 Folders (Box 3)

Artwork by Blum consists of ten pencil sketches. Artwork by others consists of two prints by Warton Esherick, inscribed to Blum, and two samples of Chinese calligraphy.

Materials are arranged by creator.

This series has been scanned in its entirety.

Box 3, Folder 28  Artwork by Jerome Blum, circa 1920-1930
Image(s)

Box 3, Folder 29  Artwork by Others, circa 1930
Image(s)
Series 6: Photographs, circa 1915-1945

6 Folders (Box 3)

Photographs are of Joseph Blum, his wife Frances, and unidentified individuals and places. There are also black and white and color photographs of Blum's paintings of people, towns, still lifes, and landscapes.

Materials are arranged by subject.

This series has been scanned in its entirety.

Box 3, Folder 30  People, Jerome and Frances Blum, circa 1920-1930
Image(s)

Box 3, Folder 31  People, Unidentified , circa 1915-1945
Image(s)

Box 3, Folder 32  Places, Unidentified House and Well, circa 1920-1945
Image(s)

Box 3, Folder 33  Artwork by Jerome Blum, People and Towns, circa 1920-1945
Image(s)

Box 3, Folder 34  Artwork by Jerome Blum, Portraits, circa 1920-1945
Image(s)

Box 3, Folder 35  Artwork by Jerome Blum, Still Lifes and Landscapes, circa 1920-1945
Image(s)