
Catherine S. Gaines

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2006
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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
Institution.

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.

Ownership and Literary Rights
The Jerome Blum papers are owned by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
Literary rights as possessed by the donor have been dedicated to public use for research,
study, and scholarship. The collection is subject to all copyright laws.

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
visits. He participated in a large number of solo exhibitions and group shows in the United States and
France, including: Art Institute of Chicago, Arts Club of Chicago, O'Brien Galleries, and Albert Roullier Art
Galleries in Chicago; Ainslie Galleries, Brooklyn Museum, Delphic Studios, Katz Gallery, M. Knoedler and
Co., Whitney Museum of American Art, and Whitney Studio Club in New York; Worcester Art Museum and
Boston Art Club in Massachusetts; Montlcair Art Museum in New Jersey; Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia; and Galerie de la Renaissance in Paris. Blum is represented in the permanent collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Smithsonian Institution, and the Whitney Museum of American Art.

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.

Box 1, Folder 1  Marriage Certificate, Jerome Blum and Lucile Swan, 1919
  Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 2  Passports, 1915-1920
  Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 3  Transcript of Radio Broadcast, 1933
  Image(s)
  Thomas L. Stix of *America's Grub Street Speaks* interviews Jerome Blum on art and the weather.

Box 1, Folder 4  Agreement with Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith, Inc., Publishers, 1929
  Image(s)

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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

Box 1, Folder 6  A, circa 1920-1955

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

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

Box 1, Folder 9  B, circa 1920-1955

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

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

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

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

Box 1, Folder 14 C, circa 1920-1955
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1, Folder</th>
<th>Name and Dates</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Cappick, Marie, 1935-1940</td>
<td>Image(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Colum, Padraic, circa 1928-1935</td>
<td>Image(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>D, circa 1920-1955</td>
<td>Image(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Dreiser, Theodore and Helen, 1936-1938</td>
<td>Image(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Du Bois, Guy Péne, circa 1952-1958</td>
<td>Image(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>E-F, circa 1920-1955</td>
<td>Image(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Fuller, Buckminster, circa 1958-1965</td>
<td>Image(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>G, circa 1920-1955</td>
<td>Image(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Gump, Robert L., 1936</td>
<td>Image(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>H, circa 1920-1955</td>
<td>Image(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Harmsworth, Desmond, 1932-1935</td>
<td>Image(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>I-M, circa 1920-1955</td>
<td>Image(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>McDougall, Allan Ross (&quot;Dougie&quot;), 1935-1955</td>
<td>Image(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Mitchell, Jonathan, 1934-1935</td>
<td>Image(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>N-P, circa 1920-1955</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1</th>
<th>Autobiography, <em>Life Answered</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 44</td>
<td>Drafts, Deleted Portions, and Fragments, circa 1925-1930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 45</td>
<td>Drafts, Deleted Portions, and Fragments, circa 1925-1930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 46</td>
<td>Drafts, Deleted Portions, and Fragments, circa 1925-1930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 47</td>
<td>Drafts, Deleted Portions, and Fragments, circa 1925-1930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 48</td>
<td>Drafts, Deleted Portions, and Fragments, circa 1925-1930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 49</td>
<td>Notes, circa 1925-1930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 50</td>
<td>Manuscript by Jerome and Frances E. Blum (1 of 3), circa 1969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 51</td>
<td>Manuscript by Jerome and Frances E. Blum (2 of 3), circa 1969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 52</td>
<td>Manuscript by Jerome and Frances E. Blum (3 of 3), circa 1969</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 53  Diaries and Journals (1 vol.), 1935
Image(s)

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

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

Box 1, Folder 56  Lists, circa 1915-1930
Image(s)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Box 2, Folder 8  Notebooks
Image(s)
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

Box 3, Folder 3  Notes and Fragments, circa 1920-1930

Box 3, Folder 4  Notes and Fragments, circa 1935-1940

Box 3, Folder 5  Notes and Fragments, circa 1935-1940

Box 3, Folder 6  Notes and Fragments, circa 1935-1940

Box 3  Short Writings

Box 3, Folder 7  "At Sea", circa 1920-1930

Box 3, Folder 8  "Chicago Sunday Afternoon", circa 1920-1930

Box 3, Folder 9  "The Fox-Spirit", circa 1920-1930

Box 3, Folder 10  "Resurrection", circa 1920-1930

Box 3, Folder 11  On Tahiti, circa 1920

Box 3, Folder 12  On Tahiti, circa 1920-1930

Box 3, Folder 13  Tahiti Material, circa 1920-1952

Box 3, Folder 14  "To an Image of a Black Goddess from the Ivory Coast", undated

Box 3, Folder 15  Telephone Numbers, circa 1920-1930
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)

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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)

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