



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Jerome Blum Papers, 1915-circa 1969, bulk 1919-1935, in the Archives of American Art

Catherine S. Gaines

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Archives of American Art
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Jerome Blum papers
Date:	1915-circa 1969 (bulk 1919-1935)
Identifier:	AAA.blumjero
Creator:	Blum, Jerome, 1884-1956
Extent:	3 Linear feet
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

Jerome Blum papers, 1915-circa 1969, bulk 1919-1935. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian 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.

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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 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; Montclair 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.

Missing Title:

- 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

Places:

Tahiti -- Description and Travel

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Material, 1915-1933

4 Folders (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: 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.

Arrangement: Materials are arranged by document type.

Available: This series has been scanned in its entirety.

Formats:

Box 1, Folder 1 [Marriage Certificate, Jerome Blum and Lucile Swan, 1919](#)

Box 1, Folder 2 [Passports, 1915-1920](#)

Box 1, Folder 3 [Transcript of Radio Broadcast, 1933](#)

Notes: 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](#)

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Series 2: Correspondence, 1915-1966

0.4 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: 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 Kreyborg, 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.

Arrangement: Materials are arranged alphabetically by correspondent.

Available: This series has been scanned in its entirety.

Formats:

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
Box 1, Folder 15	Cappick, Marie, 1935-1940
Box 1, Folder 16	Colum, Padraic, circa 1928-1935
Box 1, Folder 17	D, circa 1920-1955
Box 1, Folder 18	Dreiser, Theodore and Helen, 1936-1938
Box 1, Folder 19	Du Bois, Guy Péne, circa 1952-1958

Box 1, Folder 20	E-F, circa 1920-1955
Box 1, Folder 21	Fuller, Buckminster, circa 1958-1965
Box 1, Folder 22	G, circa 1920-1955
Box 1, Folder 23	Gump, Robert L., 1936
Box 1, Folder 24	H, circa 1920-1955
Box 1, Folder 25	Harmsworth, Desmond, 1932-1935
Box 1, Folder 26	I-M, circa 1920-1955
Box 1, Folder 27	McDougall, Allan Ross ("Dougie"), 1935-1955
Box 1, Folder 28	Mitchell, Jonathan, 1934-1935
Box 1, Folder 29	N-P, circa 1920-1955
Box 1, Folder 30	Powys, Llewelyn, 1922-1940 Notes: 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

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Series 3: Writings, 1915-circa 1969

2 Linear feet (Boxes 1-3)

Scope and Contents: 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.

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

Missing Title:

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

Available Formats: 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
Box 1, Folder 45	Drafts, Deleted Portions, and Fragments, circa 1925-1930
Box 1, Folder 46	Drafts, Deleted Portions, and Fragments, circa 1925-1930
Box 1, Folder 47	Drafts, Deleted Portions, and Fragments, circa 1925-1930
Box 1, Folder 48	Drafts, Deleted Portions, and Fragments, circa 1925-1930
Box 1, Folder 49	Notes, circa 1925-1930 Notes: 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 Notes: Copyrighted 1967 by Frances E. Blum.
Box 1, Folder 51	Manuscript by Jerome and Frances E. Blum (2 of 3), circa 1969
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

	Notes:	Includes source material for <i>Life Answered</i> ; 1 volume.
Box 2, Folder 2	Notebooks, 1919-1942 Notes:	Includes source material for <i>Life Answered</i> ; 3 volumes.
Box 2, Folder 3	Notebooks, 1919-1942 Notes:	Includes source material for <i>Life Answered</i> ; 2 volumes.
Box 2, Folder 4	Notebooks, undated Notes:	Includes source material for <i>Life Answered</i> ; 2 volumes.
Box 2, Folder 5	Notebooks Notes:	Includes source material for <i>Life Answered</i> ; 2 volumes.
Box 2, Folder 6	Notebooks Notes:	Includes source material for <i>Life Answered</i> ; 4 volumes.
Box 2, Folder 7	Notebooks, circa 1920-1930 Notes:	Includes source material for <i>Life Answered</i> ; 3 volumes.
Box 2, Folder 8	Notebooks Notes:	Includes source material for <i>Life Answered</i> ; 4 volumes.
Box 2, Folder 9	Notebooks Notes:	Includes source material for <i>Life Answered</i> ; 4 volumes.
Box 2, Folder 10	Notebooks, circa 1920-1930 Notes:	Includes source material for <i>Life Answered</i> ; 3 volumes.
Box 2, Folder 11	Notebooks Notes:	Includes source material for <i>Life Answered</i> ; 2 volumes.
Box 2, Folder 12	Notebooks, circa 1920-1930 Notes:	Includes source material for <i>Life Answered</i> ; 4 volumes.
Box 2, Folder 13	Notebooks Notes:	Includes source material for <i>Life Answered</i> ; 3 volumes.
Box 2, Folder 14	Notes and Fragments, circa 1920-1930	
Box 2, Folder 15	Notes and Fragments, circa 1920-1930	
Box 2, Folder 16	Notes and Fragments, circa 1920-1930	
Box 2, Folder 17	Notes and Fragments, circa 1920-1930	
Box 2, Folder 18	Notes and Fragments, circa 1920-1930	
Box 2, Folder 19	Notes and Fragments, circa 1920-1930	

Box 2, Folder 20	Notes and Fragments, circa 1920-1930
Box 2, Folder 21	Notes and Fragments, circa 1920-1930
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 Notes: Also titled "Dark Virgin"; with untitled draft.
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 Notes: Clippings, rubbings, sketches.
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
Box 3, Folder 17	"Theodore Dreiser" by Frances Blum, circa 1920-1950

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Series 4: Printed Material, 1916-1965

0.3 Linear feet (Box 3)

Scope and Contents: 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.

Arrangement: Materials are arranged by document type.

Available Formats: 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
Box 3, Folder 19	Book, Verdict of Bridlegoose by Llewelyn Powys with Obituary of the Author, 1926, 1939
Box 3, Folder 20	Clippings, 1916-1962
Box 3, Folder 21	Clippings, 1929-1962
Box 3, Folder 22	Exhibition Catalogs, Jerome Blum, circa 1918-1965
Box 3, Folder 23	Exhibition Catalogs and Press Release, Jerome Blum, 1918-1965
Box 3, Folder 24	Exhibition Catalog, Harry Shokler, 1928 Notes: Foreword by Blum.
Box 3, Folder 25	Periodical, This Quarter, 1929-1930 Notes: Vol. 2, no. 1 and vol. 3, no. 2; with stories by Blum.
Box 3, Folder 26	Periodicals, 1935, 1944 Notes: <i>Mundo</i> (vol. 8) and <i>Nation</i> (no. 3645).
Box 3, Folder 27	Miscellaneous Items, 1934-1961 Notes: <i>Key West, A Free Port: Survey and Report</i> ; NYC concert program, <i>Town Hall</i> ; map of Ulster County, New York.

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Series 5: Artwork, circa 1920-1930

2 Folders (Box 3)

Scope and Contents: 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.

Arrangement: Materials are arranged by creator.

Available: This series has been scanned in its entirety.

Formats:

Box 3, Folder 28 [Artwork by Jerome Blum, circa 1920-1930](#)

Box 3, Folder 29 [Artwork by Others, circa 1930](#)

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Series 6: Photographs, circa 1915-1945

6 Folders (Box 3)

Scope and Contents: 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.

Arrangement: Materials are arranged by subject.

Available: This series has been scanned in its entirety.

Formats:

Box 3, Folder 30	People, Jerome and Frances Blum, circa 1920-1930
Box 3, Folder 31	People, Unidentified, circa 1915-1945
Box 3, Folder 32	Places, Unidentified House and Well, circa 1920-1945
Box 3, Folder 33	Artwork by Jerome Blum, People and Towns, circa 1920-1945
Box 3, Folder 34	Artwork by Jerome Blum, Portraits, circa 1920-1945
Box 3, Folder 35	Artwork by Jerome Blum, Still Lifes and Landscapes, circa 1920-1945

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