A Finding Aid to the Romaine Brooks Papers, 1910-1973, in the Archives of American Art

Jayna M. Hanson

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

2011 August 26
## Table of Contents

Collection Overview ........................................................................................................ 1  
Administrative Information ............................................................................................. 1  
Biographical/Historical note.............................................................................................. 2  
Scope and Contents note................................................................................................ 3  
Arrangement note............................................................................................................. 3  
Names and Subjects ....................................................................................................... 4  
Container Listing ........................................................................................................... 5  
  Series 1: Biographical Information, circa 1967-1968.................................................. 5  
  Series 3: Correspondence, 1924-1969 (bulk 1950-1969)....................................... 7  
  Series 4: Writings and Notes, circa 1930s-1959.................................................... 11  
  Series 5: Printed Material, 1910-1973................................................................... 13  
  Series 6: Scrapbook, 1910-1931............................................................................ 15  
  Series 7: Photographs, circa 1910-1970s............................................................... 16
Collection Overview

Repository: Archives of American Art
Title: Romaine Brooks papers
Identifier: AAA.brooroma
Date: 1910-1973
Extent: 3 Linear feet
Creator: Brooks, Romaine
Language: Most of the collection is in English and French; some materials are in Italian.
Summary: The papers of painter Romaine Brooks measure 3 linear feet and date from 1910 to 1973. Found are biographical sketches, correspondence, seven journals, writings and notes, printed materials, a scrapbook, and photographs. Most of the materials focus on Brooks' later life while living in Paris and Nice, France and Fiesole, Italy and make little reference to her paintings and portraits.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information
The Romaine Brooks papers were donated by Meryle Secrest, Brooks's biographer, in 1999. Secrest received the letters and notebooks directly from Brooks's estate and compiled the remainder. Additional papers were transferred from the Smithsonian's National Museum of American Art via the Smithsonian Institution Archives in 1986.

Available Formats
The bulk of the collection was digitized in 2012 and is available via the Archives of American Art's website. Duplicates and photographs of works of art have not been scanned. Only the covers, title pages, and relevant pages have been scanned for some printed materials.

Processing Information
The Romaine Brooks papers were previously cataloged as two individual collections and merged upon processing by Jayna Hanson in 2011. The papers were digitized in 2011 with funding provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art.

Preferred Citation

Restrictions
Use of original papers requires an appointment.
Biographical Note

Romaine Brooks (1874-1970) was a wealthy portrait painter who lived abroad for most of her life in Paris, and Nice, France, and Fiesole, Italy.

Beatrice Romaine Goddard was born in Rome, Italy on May 1, 1874 to Ella Waterman and Major Henry Goddard. Although born into wealth and privilege, Romaine did not have a happy childhood. Her mother was abusive to her, but doted on her mentally ill brother. Brooks' mother arranged for her to live with a poor family in a New York City tenement in exchange for meager payments, which were later stopped, while her brother and sister stayed with their mother. Later, she was sent to boarding school.

Eventually, Brooks left for Europe and took voice lessons and studied art in France and Italy. Her brother died in 1901 and her mother became physically ill. Brooks returned to the United States to tend to her mother who died less than a year after her son's death. Upon her mother's death, Brooks and her sister became heiress' to their grandfather, Issac S. Waterman Jr's substantial fortune. Brooks then began to lead a life of wealth and travel.

In 1903, Brooks married a friend, John Ellingham Brooks who was a homosexual. Brooks was bisexual, although according to her biographer Meryl Secrest she may have just enjoyed the companionship of living with someone. They lived together for a year until she left when he disapproved of her public androgynous style of dress.

Romaine first traveled to London and then returned to Paris, where she lived in the 16th arrondissement. She engaged in an elite social life and painted many of the friends in her circle. Brooks chose to paint portraits in a gray color palette, depicting many women in male dress. The somber nearly colorless palette and cross-dress of the sitter gave the paintings an androgynous look. One of her most notable paintings was her own self-portrait that represented this style. Inspired by James McNeill Whistler, Romaine largely ignored the Cubist and Fauvist movements.

In 1909, she met Gabriele D'Annunzio and engaged in a love affair. Among her other lovers are Ida Rubinstein, the Princess de Polignac, and the American writer, Natalie Barney. Natalie and Romaine were involved for fifty years, despite Barney's various affairs and other lovers. They shared a home with two separate wings, which allowed Brooks to be by herslf while Barney entertained friends.

In 1909, she met Gabriele D'Annunzio and engaged in a love affair. Among her other lovers are Ida Rubinstein, the Princess de Polignac, and the American writer, Natalie Barney. Natalie and Romaine were involved for fifty years, despite Barney's various affairs and other lovers. They shared a home with two separate wings, which allowed Brooks to be by herslf while Barney entertained friends.

In 1909, she met Gabriele D'Annunzio and engaged in a love affair. Among her other lovers are Ida Rubinstein, the Princess de Polignac, and the American writer, Natalie Barney. Natalie and Romaine were involved for fifty years, despite Barney's various affairs and other lovers. They shared a home with two separate wings, which allowed Brooks to be by herslf while Barney entertained friends.

In the 1930s, Brooks abandoned painting and created line drawings, which were featured in Bizarre magazine. After 1935, however, Brooks largely stopped being an active artist. She wrote her autobiography in the 1930s, No Pleasant Memories, as well as an account of her time spent in Italy.

During World War II, Brooks and Barney fled to Italy, where Brooks remained after the war ended. Her later life was marked with self-imposed isolation, even refusing to see Barney during her visits. Romaine Brooks died in 1970 in Nice, France.

Scope and Contents

The papers of painter Romaine Brooks measure 3 linear feet and date from 1910 to 1973. Found are biographical sketches, correspondence, seven journals, writings and notes, printed materials, a scrapbook, and photographs. Most of the materials focus on Brooks' later life while living in Paris and Nice, France and Fiesole, Italy and make little reference to her paintings and portraits.

Biographical information includes biographical sketches and a sound recording of an interview of Brooks.

Personal business records consists of one receipt, in French, for an item purchased by Brooks.

Correspondence is scattered and the bulk of it dates from 1950-1969. About half of the correspondence is in French and includes only a few of Romaine's replies. Notable correspondents include Harold Acten, Laura Barney, Yvon Bizardel, Adelyn Breeskin, Jean-Pierre Castelnau, Louis Gauthier-Villars, Janine Lahovary, Edouard MacAvoy, Nicky Mariano, Donald McClelland, Charles de Noailles, David Scott, Alan Searle, and Uberto Strozzi. Letters make little reference to Brooks's paintings, however some discuss her health and relationship with Natalie Barney. Also found is a small amount of Natalie Barney's personal correspondence dating from 1924-1968.

Writings and notes includes seven handwritten journal notebooks which contain Romaine's thoughts, quotes from poetry and literature, references to museums and works of art throughout Europe, and drafts of letters. Also found is a manuscript of *No Pleasant Memories*, Brooks's autobiography, and *A War Interlude*, a book she wrote describing her life in Italy during World War II.

Printed material includes a copy of Natalie Barney's poetry, a poem by Brooks, a large-format copy of Gabriele D'Anunzio's poem *Sur Une Image de la France Croisse Piente Par Romaine Brooks*; magazines and exhibition catalogs concerning Brooks' art; clippings; and a nameplate for Eyre de Lanux, one of Barney's lovers.

There is one scrapbook which includes newsclippings, the majority of which are in French, concerning Brooks and her artwork from 1910 to 1931.

Photographs are of Brooks, of Brooks in her studio surrounded by her art; prints of photos of Brooks's mother and family; photographs of works of art including a photo of Brooks's portrait on John Cocteau hanging in the Louvre. Notable photographers include Carl Van Vechten and Perou.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 7 series:

- Series 1: Biographical Information, circa 1967-1968 (Box 1; 2 folders)
- Series 2: Personal Business Records, 1967 (Box 1; 1 folder)
- Series 3: Correspondence, 1924-1969, bulk 1950-1969 (Boxes 1-3; 0.8 linear feet)
- Series 4: Writings and Notes, circa 1930s-1959 (Boxes 3-4; 0.3 linear feet)
- Series 5: Printed Material, 1910-1973 (Boxes 4-6; 0.3 linear feet)
- Series 6: Scrapbook, 1910-1931 (Box 6; 1 folder)
- Series 7: Photographs, circa 1910-1970s (Box 5-6, OV7-8; 0.3 linear feet)
Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:
- Artists' studios -- Photographs
- Portrait painting -- 20th century
- Women painters -- France
- World War, 1939-1945 -- Italy

Types of Materials:
- Diaries
- Interviews
- Manuscripts
- Notes
- Photographs
- Poems
- Scrapbooks
- Sound recordings

Names:
- Acten, Harold
- Barney, Natalie Clifford
- Bizardel, Yvon
- Breeskin, Adelyn Dohme, 1896-1986
- Brooks, Romaine
- Castelnou, Jean-Pierre
- Dreyfus-Barney, Laura
- Gauthier-Villars, Louis
- Lahovary, Janine
- Mac'Avoy, Edouard, 1905-
- Mariano, Nicky
- McClelland, Donald
- Noailles, Charles, vicomte de
- Strozzi, Uberto
- Van Vechten, Carl, 1880-1964

Occupations:
- Portrait painters -- France
Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Information, circa 1967-1968

2 Folders (Box 1)
This series contains chronologies and a recorded interview.
This series has been partially scanned.

Box 1, Folder 1  Chronologies, circa 1967
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 2  Interview of Brooks, circa 1968

Return to Table of Contents
Series 2: Personal Business Records, 1967

1 Folder (Box 1)

This series contains one receipt for an item purchased by Brooks.

This series has been scanned in its entirety.

Box 1, Folder 3
Receipt, 1967

Image(s)

Return to Table of Contents

0.9 Linear feet (Boxes 1-3)

Correspondence is scattered and the bulk of it dates from 1950-1969. Notable correspondents include Harold Acten, Laura Barney, Yvon Bizardel, Adelyn Breeskin, Jean-Pierre Castelnau, Louis Gauthier-Villars, Janine Lahovary, Edouard MacAvoy, Nicky Mariano, Donald McClelland, Charles de Noailles, David Scott, Alan Searle, and Uberto Strozzi. Letters from Breeskin, Scott, and McClelland concern Brooks's relationship with the National Collection of Fine Arts. Also found is a small amount of Natalie Barney's personal correspondence dating from 1924-1968.

This series is arranged alphabetically by correspondent. Illegible letters and Natalie Barney's correspondence are arranged chronologically.

This series has been scanned in its entirety.

Box 1, Folder 4  Acton, Harold, 1960-1962
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 5  Acton, Hortense, 1960-circa 1962
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 6  Barney, Laura (Dreyfus), 1955-1966
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 7  Berthe, Mme., 1965-1968
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 8  Bizardel, Yvon, 1963-1965
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 9  Bizardel, Yvon, 1966
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 10  Bizardel, Yvon, 1967-1969
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 11  Bizardel, Yvon, circa 1960s
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 12  Breeskin, Adelyn D., 1968
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 13  Canart (?), Louise, 1956
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 14  Cassou (?), Jean, 1968
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1, Folder 15</th>
<th>Castelnau, Jean-Pierre, 1967</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 16</td>
<td>Cholon, Jean, 1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 17</td>
<td>DesGruezes, Michel, 1966-67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 18</td>
<td>Ellas (?), 1957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 19</td>
<td>Gailly de Tourines, Jean, 1966-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 20</td>
<td>Gallup, Donald, 1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 21</td>
<td>Gaubier-Viginen, Louis, 1964-68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 22</td>
<td>Gugnonot, Pierre, 1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 23</td>
<td>Hennessy, Aileen, circa 1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 24</td>
<td>Huisman, Ph., 1956-1958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 25</td>
<td>Lahouary, Mme. Nicholas (Janine), 1956-67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 26</td>
<td>Lot, Guruaim, 1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 27</td>
<td>Luciano, Josephine, 1957-58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 2, Folder 1</td>
<td>MacAvoy, Edouard, 1957-58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 2, Folder 2</td>
<td>MacAvoy, Edouard, 1964-66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Box 2, Folder 3  MacAvoy, Edouard, 1967-1969
Box 2, Folder 4  MacAvoy, Edouard, circa 1960s
Box 2, Folder 5  Marino, Nicky, 1964-1968
Box 2, Folder 6  McClelland, Donald R., 1964
Box 2, Folder 7  de Noailles, Charles, 1957-1958
Box 2, Folder 8  Olds, Alys, circa 1960
Box 2, Folder 9  Rosenberg, Paul, 1954-1955
Box 2, Folder 10  Scott, David W., 1966-1968
Box 2, Folder 11  Searle, Alan, 1958
Box 2, Folder 12  Strozzi, Uberto, 1951-1955
Box 2, Folder 13  Strozzi, Uberto, 1956-1959
Box 2, Folder 14  Strozzi, Uberto, 1960-1965
Box 2, Folder 15  Strozzi, Uberto, 1966-1967
Box 2, Folder 16  Strozzi, Uberto, circa 1950s-1960s
Box 2, Folder 17  Strozzi, Uberto, 1951-1967
Box 2, Folder 18  
Taurines, J., 1964-1968  
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 19  
Winwar, Frances, 1955-1956  
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 20  
Image(s)

Box 3, Folder 1  
Miscellaneous, 1940-1968, undated  
Image(s)  
unsigned, illegible

Box 3, Folder 2  
Natalie Barney's Correspondence, 1955-1968, 1924-1925  
Image(s)
Series 4: Writings and Notes, circa 1930s-1959

0.3 Linear feet (Boxes 3-4)

Writings and notes includes seven handwritten journal notebooks that contain Romaine’s thoughts, quotes from poetry and literature, references to museums and works of art throughout Europe, and drafts of letters. Also found is a manuscript of *No Pleasant Memories*, Brooks's autobiography, and of *A War Interlude*, a book she wrote describing her life in Italy during World War II.

This series has been scanned in its entirety.

**Box 3, Folder 3**  Journal Notebook, 1954-1956
- Image(s)
- contains lists and Romaine's thoughts

**Box 3, Folder 4**  Journal Notebook, 1958
- Image(s)
- contains thoughts and quotes

**Box 3, Folder 5**  Journal Notebook, 1959
- Image(s)
- contains copies of letters

**Box 3, Folder 6**  Journal Notebook, circa 1930s
- Image(s)
- contains references to museums and works of art throughout Europe; mythology writings

**Box 3, Folder 7**  Journal Notebook, circa 1950s
- Image(s)
- contains thoughts and quotes

**Box 3, Folder 8**  Journal Notebook, circa 1950s
- Image(s)
- contains letters to a professor concerning a book

**Box 3, Folder 9**  Journal Notebook, circa 1950s
- Image(s)
- contains quotes from poetry and literature

**Box 3, Folder 10**  Original Folder that Housed Journal Notebooks, circa 1950s

**Box 3, Folder 11**  Manuscript, *No Pleasant Memories*, circa 1930s
- Image(s)

**Box 3, Folder 12**  Manuscript, *No Pleasant Memories*, circa 1930s
Box 4, Folder 1  
Manuscript, *No Pleasant Memories*, circa 1930s  
Image(s)

Box 4, Folder 2  
Manuscript, *A War Interlude*, circa 1940s  
Image(s)

*Return to Table of Contents*
Series 5: Printed Material, 1910-1973

0.3 Linear feet (Boxes 4-6)

Printed material includes published works by Barney and Brooks, magazines and clippings concerning Brooks and her artwork, and exhibition catalogs from Brooks’ solo shows. This series includes a copy of Natalie Barney's *Poems and Poemes Autres Alliances*, published in 1920, which includes a poem by Brooks. Also found is a large-format copy of Gabriele D’Anunzio's poem *Sur Une Image de la France Croisée Piente Par Romaine Brooks*. A copy of *Life and Letters To-Day* features an excerpt from Brooks’s autobiography. There is also a nameplate of Eyre de Lanux, one of Barney’s lovers.

This series has been partially scanned. Only relevant pages of published materials have been scanned.

Box 4, Folder 3  
*Poems and Poemes Autres Alliances*, by Natalie Barney, 1920  
Image(s)

Box 4, Folder 4  
*Sur Une Image de la France Croisée Piente Par Romaine Brooks*, by Gabriele d'Anunzio, circa 1920  
Image(s)  
Oversized material housed in Box 6

Box 4, Folder 5  
*L’Art et Les Artistes*, 1923 May  
Image(s)

Box 4, Folder 6  
*International Studio*, 1926 February  
Image(s)

Box 4, Folder 7  
*Life and Letters To-Day*, 1938 Summer  
Image(s)

Box 4, Folder 8  
*Bizarre*, 1968 March  
Image(s)

Exhibition Catalogs

Box 4, Folder 9  
Tableaux par Romaine Brooks, 1910 May  
Image(s)

Box 5, Folder 1  
Romain Brooks Solo Shows, 1926-1971  
Image(s)

Box 5, Folder 2  
Romaine Brooks Solo Shows, Duplicates, 1926-1971

Box 5, Folder 3  
Other Artists, 1973  
Image(s)

Box 5, Folder 4  
Clippings, 1925-1968
Image(s)

Box 5, Folder 5  
Eyre (Elizabeth) de Lanux Nameplate, circa 1950

Image(s)

Box 6, Folder 1  
Oversized Work by Gabriele D'Anunzio, circa 1914
Oversized material scanned with Box 4, F4

Return to Table of Contents
Series 6: Scrapbook, 1910-1931

1 Folder (Box 6)

This series consists of one scrapbook containing news clippings concerning Romaine Brooks's artwork and exhibitions dating from 1910-1931. Many of the clippings are in French.

This series has been scanned in its entirety.
Series 7: Photographs, circa 1910-1970s

0.3 Linear feet (Boxes 5-6, OV 7-8)

Photographs are of Brooks, of Brooks in her studio with artworks, prints of photos of Brooks's family, and photographs of works of art. Notable photographs include portraits of Brooks by Carl Van Vecten and Perou and a photo of Brooks's portrait of John Cocteau hanging in The Louvre.

The bulk of this series has been scanned. Photographs of works of art and duplicates have not been scanned.

Box 5, Folder 6  
Photographs of Romaine Brooks, circa 1930s-1970s

- Image(s)

  Includes photos by Carl Van Vecten and Perou. Oversized material housed in Box 6 and OV 8

Box 5, Folder 7  
Family Portraits, circa 1910

- Image(s)

  Prints from 1874 photographs

Box 5, Folder 8  
Photographs of Works of Art by Romaine Brooks, In Situ, circa 1920

- Image(s)

  Portrait of John Cocteau hanging in Pavillon de Marsan, Louvre

Box 5, Folder 9  
Photographs of Works of Art, circa 1920s

Oversized material housed in OV7

Box 5, Folder 10  
Photographs of Works of Art, 1920

- Image(s)

  Oversized material housed in OV7

Box 5, Folder 11  
Duplicates, circa 1970s

Box 6, Folder 2  
Oversized Photographs of Romaine Brooks with her Artwork, circa 1950s

Oversized material scanned with Box 5, F6

Box OV 7  
Oversized Photographs of Works of Art, circa 1920s

Oversized material from Box 5, F9-10

Box OV 8  
Oversized Portrait of Brooks by Van Vecten, circa 1935

Oversized material scanned with Box 5, F6

Return to Table of Contents