



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Bolton Coit Brown Papers in the Archives of American Art

Judy Ng

Processing of this collection was funded by the Terra Foundation for American Art
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Collection Overview

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Repository: | Archives of American Art |
| Title: | Bolton Coit Brown papers |
| Date: | 1882-1987 (bulk 1882-1936) |
| Identifier: | AAA.browbolt |
| Creator: | Brown, Bolton, 1864-1936 |
| Extent: | 1.7 Linear feet |
| Language: | The collection is in English. |
| Summary: | The papers of lithographer, educator, and author Bolton Coit Brown measure 1.7 linear feet and date from 1882 to 1987 with the bulk of the material dating from 1882 to 1936. Found within the papers are biographical material; extensive personal correspondence with family members and friends; writings, including drafts of <i>Art of Art Study</i> and <i>Lithography Since Whistler</i> , and printed material. |

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The Bolton Coit Brown papers were donated in 1987 and 1991 by Brown's granddaughter, Marian Sweeney. Brown's great granddaughter, Barbara Bandy, donated additional materials in 1989.

Related Materials

The Archives borrowed Bolton Coit Brown papers held by Bryn Mawr College Library, Special Collections in 1990 and microfilmed them on reels 3654-3655 as part of the Archives' Philadelphia Arts Documentation Project.

Processing Information

Materials received a preliminary level of processing at some point after donation. All materials were merged, processed, and described by Judy Ng in 2013 with funding provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art.

Preferred Citation

Bolton Coit Brown papers, 1882-1987, bulk 1882-1936. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

Use of original papers requires an appointment.

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Biographical / Historical

Lithographer, educator, and author Bolton Coit Brown (1864-1936) lived and worked in Woodstock and New York City, New York, and Stanford, California. He is known for his extensive writings on lithography technique, and for his interest in tonalism effects in painting and printmaking.

Brown was born in Dresden, New York to Edmund Woodward Brown, a minister of the Presbyterian church, and his wife Martha Coit Brown. His early aptitude in art was supported by his family and he received a Bachelor's and Master's degree in painting from Syracuse University. Upon graduation, Brown taught art at Cornell University, became principal of the Toronto Government Art School, and was invited to head the newly formed art department at Stanford University from 1891 to 1902. During his tenure at Stanford, his proximity to the Sierra Nevada ranges inspired him to climb the mountains and he published several articles, line drawings, and maps that document his explorations in the *Sierra Club Bulletin*.

In 1901, Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead, an aristocrat and progressive idealist, approached Brown with the idea of developing an arts and crafts colony based on the utopian ideals of John Ruskin. Brown agreed to the project and worked with Whitehead and Hervey White to establish Byrdcliffe Colony near the village of Woodstock, New York. After a break from Whitehead over management of the Colony, Brown focused his energies on landscape paintings and worked out of studios located in Woodstock and New York City.

Many of his paintings experimented with tonalism, and interest in this style led him to explore the gradational effects and mechanics of lithography. In 1915, he traveled to England and spent a year studying with the lithographer F. Ernest Jackson. When he returned home, he continued to document his experiments and technical findings in detailed journals. Many of these discoveries were published in several books and essays on the topic, including *Lithography Since Whistler*. He printed over 400 of his own lithographs and printed the artworks of George Bellows, John Sloan, and Rockwell Kent, among others. Brown died in Woodstock, New York in 1936.

Scope and Contents

The papers of lithographer, educator, and author Bolton Coit Brown measure 1.7 linear feet and date from 1882 to 1987 with the bulk of the material dating from 1882 to 1936. Found within the papers are biographical material; extensive personal correspondence with family members and friends; writings, including drafts of *Art of Art Study* and *Lithography Since Whistler*; and printed material.

Biographical information consists of a curriculum vitae, job application, list of artworks, and a photograph of Bolton Coit Brown.

Correspondence is primarily with Brown's immediate and extended family and with friends. The series includes extensive correspondence to his mother, Martha C. Brown, his sister, Ellen Coit Elliott, and letter drafts to his wife Lucy Fletcher Brown. Letters to Brown's family dating from 1887 to 1888 document his travels to Europe as an art student and include pen and ink and color washes of historical sites, art deco details, and illustrative scenes.

Writings include essays on lithography and the artist J.J. Lankes; typescripts of *Art of Art Study* and *Lithography Since Whistler*; and miscellaneous notes and writings on lithography. There is also a copy of a short play by Brown titled *Spoiled Meat*.

Printed material includes articles by and on Bolton Coit Brown, clippings, exhibition catalogs, and periodicals.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 4 series.

- Series 1: Biographical materials, circa 1914-1936 (4 folders; Box 1)
 - Series 2: Correspondence, circa 1882-1949 (0.9 linear feet; Box 1, 3)
 - Series 3: Writings, circa 1914-1933 (0.4 linear feet; Box 1-2)
 - Series 4: Printed Material, 1882-1987 (0.3 linear feet; Box 2)
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Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Art -- Study and teaching
Lithographers -- New York (State)
Lithography

Types of Materials:

Illustrated letters
Photographs
Sketches

Names:

Coit, Martha Day, 1840-1920
Elliott, Ellen Coit
Lankes, Julius J., 1884-1960

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Materials, circa 1914-1936

4 Folders (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Biographical information consists of a curriculum vitae, job application to the Carnegie Foundation, list of artworks, and a photograph of Bolton Coit Brown.

Arrangement: Materials are arranged by document type.

Box 1, Folder 1 Application for Carnegie Foundation, circa 1914-1933

Box 1, Folder 2 Curriculum Vitae, circa 1930

Box 1, Folder 3 List of Artworks, circa 1914-1933

Box 1, Folder 4 Photograph of Bolton Coit Brown, circa 1915-1936

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Series 2: Correspondence, circa 1882-1949

0.9 Linear feet (Box 1, 3)

Scope and Contents: Correspondence is primarily with Brown's immediate and extended family and with friends. The series includes extensive correspondence to his mother, Martha C. Brown, his sister, Ellen Coit Elliott, and letter drafts to his wife Lucy Fletcher Brown that were written from South Carolina. Letters to Brown's family dating from 1887 to 1888 document his travels to Europe as an art student and include pen and ink and color washes of historical sites, art deco details, and illustrative scenes. These letters were transcribed by Brown at a later date. Correspondence from other family members and friends include letters from the artist John Taylor Arms and historical research on other members of the Brown family.

Arrangement: Correspondence is arranged in rough chronological order and by recipient.

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Box 1, Folder 5 | To Family, circa 1882-1907 |
| Box 1, Folder 6-10 | To Family, 1882-1886 |
| Box 1, Folder 11-14 | To Family, 1887-1888 |
| Box 1, Folder 15-18 | To Family, Transcriptions, 1887 |
| Box 1, Folder 19-22 | To Family, Transcriptions, 1888 |
| Box 1, Folder 23-26 | To Family, 1889-1907 |
| Box 1, Folder 27-31 | To Martha C. Brown (mother), 1907-1911 |
| Box 1, Folder 32-35 | To Ellen Coit Elliott (sister), 1908-1935 |
| Box 1, Folder 36 | Letter Drafts From South Carolina, 1932-1935 Notes: Oversized material housed in Box 3, Folder 1-3. |
| Box 1, Folder 37 | From Other Family Members and Friends, 1933-1949 |
| Box 3, Folder 1-3 | Oversized Letter Drafts From South Carolina From Box 1, Folder 36, 1932-1935 |

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Series 3: Writings, circa 1914-1933

0.4 Linear feet (Box 1-2)

Scope and Contents: Writings include essays on lithography and the artist J.J. Lankes; typescripts of *Art of Art Study* and *Lithography Since Whistler*; and miscellaneous notes and writings on lithography. There is also a copy of a short play by Brown titled *Spoiled Meat*.

Arrangement: Materials are arranged alphabetically by title.

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Box 1, Folder 38-41 | Art of Art Study, 1914 |
| Box 1, Folder 42-43 | "Experiences with Lithography", circa 1933 |
| Box 1, Folder 44 | "J.J. Lankes: Painter-Graver on Wood", 1921 |
| Box 1, Folder 45-47 | Lithography Since Whistler, 1933 |
| Box 1, Folder 48 | Notes on Lithography, circa 1914-1933 |
| Box 2, Folder 1-2 | On Lithography, 1925 |
| Box 2, Folder 3 | Spoiled Meat (short play), 1932 |

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Series 4: Printed Material, 1882-1987

0.3 Linear feet (Box 2)

Scope and Contents: Printed material consists of articles by and on Bolton Coit Brown, newspaper clippings, exhibition announcements and catalogs, periodicals, and miscellaneous printed materials. The majority of periodicals include articles by or about Brown.

Arrangement: Materials are arranged by document type.

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Box 2, Folder 4 | Articles by Bolton Coit Brown, 1892-1923 |
| Box 2, Folder 5-6 | Articles on Bolton Coit Brown, 1911-1937 |
| Box 2, Folder 7 | Clippings, 1909-1987 |
| Box 2, Folder 8 | Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1912-1943 |
| Box 2, Folder 9 | Periodical, International Studio, 1920, 1923 |
| Box 2, Folder 10 | Periodical, Pencil Points, 1923 |
| Box 2, Folder 11 | Periodical, Plowshare, 1916 |
| Box 2, Folder 12 | Periodical, Print Connoisseur, 1924 |
| Box 2, Folder 13 | Periodical, Sierra Club Bulletin, 1896 |
| Box 2, Folder 14 | Periodical, Tamarind Papers, 1979, 1981-1982 |
| Box 2, Folder 15 | Periodical, University Herald, 1882 |
| Box 2, Folder 16 | Miscellaneous Printed Material, circa 1890-1936 |

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