



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Beniamino Bufano papers, circa 1910-1972, in the Archives of American Art

Christopher DeMairo

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Beniamino Bufano papers
Date:	circa 1910-1972
Identifier:	AAA.bufabeni
Creator:	Bufano, Beniamino, 1898-1970
Extent:	2.7 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	The papers of sculptor Beniamino Bufano measure 2.7 linear feet and date from circa 1910 to 1972. The collection sheds light on the artist's career through personal and professional papers, printed materials, photographic materials, and scrapbooks that contain primarily letters, clippings, and photographs.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The collection was donated by Pauline B. Goetz in 1997.

Processing Information

The collection was processed and a finding aid prepared by Christopher DeMairo in 2023.

Preferred Citation

Beniamino Bufano papers, circa 1910-1972. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

This collection is open for research. Access to original papers requires an appointment and is limited to the Archives' Washington, D.C. Research Center.

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Biographical / Historical

Italian-born sculptor Beniamino Bufano (1898-1970) was active primarily in San Francisco for most of his career. Bufano was known for his large-scale monuments and modernist work which often featured smooth and rounded animal forms.

Bufano was born in San Fele, Italy, and moved to New York in 1901. He studied at the Art Students' League under James Fraser, Herbert Adams, and Paul Manship. In 1914, Manship invited Bufano and Robert Treat Paine to work in San Francisco on sculptures for the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, and in 1915 Bufano won first prize in an art exhibition held by Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney. Bufano married in 1918 and moved to California where he met art patrons Sara Bard Field and Charles Erskine Scott Wood. This patronage allowed Bufano to travel to China, where he studied glazing and became friends with Sun Yat-Sen, India, Cambodia, and elsewhere for the next several years; he was profoundly influenced by his experiences on this and subsequent trips.

Bufano returned to San Francisco in 1921 and taught at the San Francisco Art Institute until 1923 when he founded the short-lived Davinci School of Allied Arts. In 1925 he launched a solo exhibition at the City of Paris Galleries which, over the next eight years, traveled to other locations in the United States and abroad including Paris, London, Berlin, and Moscow.

During this time, Bufano spent two years in Paris where he completed *St. Francis of Assisi*, which he intended to give to the City of San Francisco and which became perhaps his best known and most controversial work.

In the 1930s Bufano was employed by the Works Progress Administration's Federal Arts Project, during which time he completed some of his abstracted bronze and stone animals and a statue of Sun Yat-sen. In 1946 he established Bufano Studios Inc., also known as Bufano Society for the Arts, with a nine-person board of directors.

Also an educator, Bufano lectured on art over the radio and in classrooms, and in the 1960s taught at the University of California at Berkeley and the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland. He held a position on the San Francisco Arts Commission from 1944-1948, serving as commissioner in 1947.

Scope and Contents

The papers of sculptor Beniamino Bufano measure 2.7 linear feet and date from circa 1910 to 1972. The collection sheds light on the artist's career through personal and professional papers, printed materials, photographic materials, and scrapbooks that contain primarily letters, clippings, and photographs.

Personal and professional papers include scant biographical materials, letters of approval and disapproval regarding the placement of *St. Francis of Assisi* in California, a framed letter from Bufano to Soviet Premier Nikolai Bulganin, writings by Bufano on peace, and a proposal for the San Francisco Art Commission's Open Air Art Exhibit that was drafted by Bufano while serving as commissioner. This series also includes photographs, negatives, and transparencies of Bufano, his studio, and artwork.

Printed materials include articles and clippings about Bufano's art, controversies he was involved in, and his lifestyle; reproductions of Bufano's work; travel ephemera; and miscellaneous printed materials including topics of interest to Bufano.

Scrapbooks were compiled after Bufano's death by his friend and volunteer assistant William Goetz. They include clippings and writings about Bufano, letters, writings by Bufano, press releases for unveiling ceremonies, fact sheets relating to Bufano's travels, and photographs of Bufano working, his artwork around the San Francisco area, scenes from his studio, and Bufano working with others, including Goetz.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 3 series.

- Series 1: Personal and Professional Papers, circa 1943-1970 (Box 1; 8 folders)
 - Series 2: Printed Materials, 1922-1972 (Box 1, 4; 0.3 linear feet)
 - Series 3: Scrapbooks, circa 1910-1972 (Box 1-4; 2.2 linear feet)
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Names and Subject Terms

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

Names:

Federal Art Project
Goetz, William, 1931-1988
Manship, Paul, 1885-1966

Occupations:

Sculptors -- California -- San Francisco

Container Listing

Series 1: Personal and Professional Papers, circa 1943-1970

8 Folders (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Found here are biographical materials that include writings by others, a copy of Bufano's death certificate, and scant information about his career; letters of approval and disapproval of the placement of St. Francis in California; scant writings by Bufano on peace; and a proposal for the San Francisco Art Commission's Open Air Art Exhibit, drafted by Bufano while he was serving as commissioner. The Bulganin letter concerns Bufano's stainless steel statue, *A Little Child Shall Lead Them*, which Bufano hoped to have installed at the United Nations headquarters in New York as a gift from Russia. Also found here are photographs, negatives, and transparencies of Bufano, his studio, and artwork. Additional photographs can be found in Series 3, Scrapbook 3.

Box 1, Folder 1	Biographical Materials and Writings, circa 1943-1970
Box 1, Folder 2	Bufano Invitation, "Needed: Artists, Writers, Others", undated
Box 1, Folder 3	Letter from Bufano to Nikolai Bulganin, 15 June 1956
Box 1, Folder 4	Letters Concerning St. Francis of Assisi, 1960-1961
Box 1, Folder 5	List of Names, undated
Box 1, Folder 6	Photographs, 1950s-1960s
Box 1, Folder 7	Proposal for the 1947 Open Air Exhibit, San Francisco, 3 January 1947
Box 1, Folder 8	Mixed Papers and Addresses, 1957, 1964, undated
Box 1, Folder 9	Writings by Bufano, undated

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Series 2: Printed Materials, 1922-1972

0.5 Linear feet (Boxes 1, 4)

Scope and Contents: Found here are articles and clippings about Bufano's art, controversies, and lifestyle; reproductions of his work, particularly the cat he completed for the Press and Union League of San Francisco; travel ephemera from Italy, France, and Israel including museum brochures, maps, and other ephemera; and miscellaneous printed materials consisting of writings about art, philosophy, science, current global affairs, and other topics of interest to Bufano.

Box 1, Folder 10	Art Publications, 1940s-1960s
Box 1, Folder 11-12	Articles and Clippings about Bufano, circa 1940s-1970s
Box 4, Folder 1	Bufano (1956), 1956
Box 4, Folder 2	Bufano: Sculpture, Mosaics, Drawings (1968), 1968
Box 1, Folder 13	KPFA Programs, Bufano Talks, 1958
Box 1, Folder 14	Renaissance 4, 1962
Box 1, Folder 15	Reproductions of Bufano's Artwork, 1950s-1960s
Box 1, Folder 16	Poems and Prayers for St. Francis, 1969, 1972
Box 1, Folder 17	Tourism and Travel, Ephemera, 1940s-1971
Box 1, Folder 18-20	Miscellaneous Clippings and Pamphlets of Interest, 1922, 1945-1969

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Series 3: Scrapbooks, circa 1910-1972

2 Linear feet (Boxes 1-4)

Scope and Contents: Scrapbooks include clippings and writings about Bufano, letters, writings by Bufano, press releases for unveiling ceremonies, and fact sheets related to his travels. Scrapbook 3 is mainly comprised of photographs of Bufano, his artwork around the San Francisco area, his studio, and his friend and volunteer assistant William Goetz, along with Goetz's family. The scrapbooks were compiled by Goetz after Bufano's death.

Box 1, Folder 21-24	Scrapbook 1, 1960s, undated
Box 1, Folder 25-28	Scrapbook 2, 1910s-1960
Box 2, Folder 1-3	Scrapbook 3, 1963, 1970, undated
Box 2, Folder 4-7	Scrapbook 4, 1960s
Box 2, Folder 8-9	Scrapbook 5, 1960-1970
Box 2, Folder 10-11	Telegrams, Letters, Articles, 1957-1968
Box 2, Folder 12-14	St. Francis of Assisi Materials, 1960s
Box 2, Folder 15-16	News Articles, Copies and Originals, 1948-1970
Box 3, Folder 1	News Articles, Copies and Originals, 1948-1970
Box 3, Folder 2-5	Scrapbooks, 1941-1970, undated
Box 3, Folder 6	Scrapbook and Sketch, circa 1960s-1972
Box 4, Folder 3	Scrapbook, 1957-1975

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