



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Paul Cadmus letters to Webster
Aitken, 1945-1979, in the Archives of American Art

Judy Ng

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

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Archives of American Art
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Paul Cadmus letters to Webster Aitken
Identifier:	AAA.cadmpaul
Date:	1945-1979
Extent:	0.02 Linear feet
Creator:	Cadmus, Paul, 1904-1999
Language:	The collection is in English.
Summary:	The letters of Paul Cadmus to Webster Aitken measure 0.02 linear feet and date from 1945-1979. Found within the collection are letters, notes, and postcards from Cadmus to Aitken regarding music, composers, musicians, mutual friends, Cadmus's sister and brother-in-law Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln Kirstein, travels, and Cadmus's work, art processes, and personal reflections on life events.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The letters were donated in 1981 by Cadmus' long-time friend and Aitken's wife, Lilian Gilbert Aitken.

Related Materials

Also found in the Archives of American Art are the Paul Cadmus letters to Edgar Munhall and an oral history interview with Paul Cadmus conducted by Judd Tully, March 22, 1988. The University of Texas at Austin holds the Webster Aitken Collection, 1899-1985.

Available Formats

The collection was digitized in its entirety in 2016 and is available on the Archives of American Art's website.

Processing Information

Materials received a preliminary level of arrangement after donation and the collection was microfilmed onto reel 2786. The collection was prepared for digitization and described by Judy Ng in 2016, with funding provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art.

Preferred Citation

Paul Cadmus letters to Webster Aitken, 1945-1979. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

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 / Historical

Painter Paul Cadmus (1904-1999) lived and worked in New York, N.Y. and Weston, Connecticut and was known for realist works of New York public life and the social lives of men. Cadmus was born in New York City to lithographer and watercolorist Egbert Cadmus and his wife, Maria Latasa, a fellow artist and book illustrator. With the support of his family, Cadmus entered the National Academy of Design at the age of 15 where he excelled in life drawing and printmaking classes. After graduating from the Academy in 1926, he continued his studies at the Art Students League where he met fellow artists Jared French and George Tooker. Throughout the 1920s, Cadmus found work as a commercial illustrator and layout artist for various agencies, including the *New York Herald-Tribune*.

In 1933, after two years of travel through France and Spain with Jared French, Cadmus returned to New York and was one of the first artists to be accepted into the federal Public Works of Art Project. Throughout the 1930s, his depictions of sailors and New Yorkers in public life were seen as controversial, beginning with the 1934 ejection of his painting *The Fleet's In!* from the Corcoran Gallery and continuing into 1940 with objections to the showing of *Sailors and Floozies* at the San Francisco Golden Gate International Exposition. Cadmus met his partner Jon Anderson in 1964 and featured him as a model for many of his subsequent works. Cadmus was a member of the National Academy of Design and the American Academy of Arts and Letters and died in his home in 1999.

Pianist and educator Webster Aitken (1908-1981) lived and worked in Santa Fe, New Mexico. A student of Emil Sauer and Artur Schnabel, Aitken studied at the Curtis Institute and had his recital debut in Vienna in 1929 and his American debut in New York's Town Hall in 1935. He is known for his 1938 London and New York performances of Schubert's sonatas, and a series of programs on the late works of Beethoven performed at American universities. Aitken taught at the Carnegie Institute, the University of Illinois, and the University of Texas. He died in his home in 1981.

Scope and Contents

The letters of Paul Cadmus to Webster Aitken measure 0.02 linear feet and date from 1945-1979. Found within the collection are 49 letters, notes, and postcards from Cadmus to Aitken regarding classical music, composers, musicians, mutual friends, Cadmus's sister and brother-in-law Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln Kirstein, travels, and Cadmus's work, art processes, and personal reflections on life events.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 1 series:

- Series 1: Paul Cadmus Letters to Webster Aitken, 1945-1979 (0.2 linear feet; Box 1)
-

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Art -- Technique
Musicians
Pianists

Names:

Aitken, Webster, 1904-
Kirstein, Fidelma
Kirstein, Lincoln, 1907-

Occupations:

Painters -- New York (State)

Container Listing

Series 1: Paul Cadmus Letters to Webster Aitken, 1945-1979

0.1 Linear feet (Box 1)

The letters of Paul Cadmus to Webster Aitken measure 0.1 linear feet and date from 1945-1979. Found within the collection are 49 letters, notes, and postcards from Cadmus to Aitken regarding classical music, composers, musicians, mutual friends, Cadmus's sister and brother-in-law Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln Kirstein, travels, and Cadmus's work, art processes, and personal reflections on life events.

Materials are arranged chronologically.

This series has been scanned in its entirety.

Folder 1, Folder 1 Correspondence, 1945-1979
[Image\(s\)](#)

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