



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the René Gimpel Papers,
circa 1890-1966, bulk 1902-1930s,
in the Archives of American Art

Stephanie Ashley

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Archives of American Art
750 9th Street, NW
Victor Building, Suite 2200
Washington, D.C. 20001
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions>
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/>

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	René Gimpel papers
Identifier:	AAA.gimprene
Date:	circa 1890-1966 (bulk 1902-1930s)
Extent:	0.4 Linear feet
Creator:	Gimpel, René
Language:	Some of the collection is in French.
Summary:	The papers of Parisian art dealer, René Gimpel (1881-1945), dating from circa 1890-1966 (bulk 1902-1930s), and measuring 0.4 linear feet, provide a small but significant window into the crucial relationship between American collectors and the art dealers who supplied them, as they amassed some of the most influential art collections of the first half of the twentieth century. Gimpel's work as an art dealer is documented through correspondence with his parents, clients, business associates, and collectors, including Helen Frick and Duveen Brothers, Blake-More Godwin and the Toledo Museum of Art, Florence Libbey, Samuel H. Kress, Silva White, and others, and through printed material, writings by Gimpel, and photographs of René and Ernest Gimpel and others.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

A portion of the collection was donated to the Archives of American Art by Lawrence S. Jeppson in 1971, who received it from Jean Gimpel as research for his book on art dealers. Another gift was donated by Jean Gimpel, René Gimpel's son, in 1972. Loaned material on reels 415-419 was microfilmed in London through Jean Gimpel in 1972.

Separated Materials

The Archives of American Art also holds microfilm of material lent for microfilming on reels 415-419, including diaries, 1918-1945, 22 volumes; ca. 750 letters, 1908-1945, including correspondence with Bernard Berenson, Mary Cassatt, Walter Gay, Malvina Hoffman, Arthur Lee, the Rockefeller family, Marcel Proust, and others; writings; a stockbook and price lists; and exhibition catalogs. Loaned materials were returned to the donor and are not described in the collection container inventory.

Available Formats

Portions of the collection and material lent for microfilming are available on 35mm microfilm reels 270, 918, 1817, and 415-419 at the Archives of American Art offices and through

interlibrary loan. Researchers should note that the arrangement of material described in the container inventory does not reflect the arrangement of the collection on microfilm.

Processing Information

The collection was processed and a finding aid prepared by Stephanie Ashley in 2019.

Preferred Citation

René Gimpel papers, circa 1890-1966. 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

René Gimpel (1881-1945) was an influential Jewish Parisian art dealer with galleries in Paris and New York City, who sought to protect art collections from the Nazis in the 1930s and early 1940s, until he was arrested for Resistance activities and imprisoned at the Neuengamme concentration camp in Germany. He died in captivity in January 1945.

Gimpel played an important role in building American art collections between the two World Wars. His father, Ernest Gimpel, operated E. Gimpel & Wildenstein with Nathan Wildenstein in New York, New York, from 1902-1919, and René Gimpel traveled repeatedly to the United States during this time to facilitate sales to collectors in the United States. Gimpel's core business was initially in 18th-century French art, but he later became a key dealer in Impressionist and other 19th-century works by artists including Monet, Cassatt, Degas, Derain, Renoir, and others.

Scope and Contents

The papers of Parisian art dealer, René Gimpel (1881-1945), dating from circa 1890-1966 (bulk 1902-1930s), and measuring 0.4 linear feet, provide a small but significant window into the crucial relationship between American collectors and the art dealers who supplied them, as they amassed some of the most influential art collections of the first half of the twentieth century. Gimpel's work as an art dealer is documented through correspondence with his parents, clients, business associates, and collectors, including Helen Frick and Duveen Brothers, Blake-More Godwin and the Toledo Museum of Art, Florence Libbey, Samuel H. Kress, Silva White, and others, and through printed material, writings by Gimpel, and photographs of René and Ernest Gimpel and others.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as one series.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Names:

E. Gimpel & Wildenstein
Galerie René Gimpel
Godwin, Blake-More, 1894-
Kress, Samuel H. (Samuel Henry), 1863-1955
Monet, Claude, 1840-1926

Occupations:

Art dealers -- France -- Paris
Art dealers -- New York (State) -- New York

Container Listing

Series 1: René Gimpel Papers, circa 1890-1966

0.4 Linear feet

The series includes an account of Gimpel by a fellow prisoner at Neuengamme concentration camp, and an account of Gimpel's death in 1945. Both accounts are in French.

One folder of letters to Gimpel contains copies and transcripts of letters from Bernard Berenson, Mary Cassatt, Claude Monet, Chaim Soutine, and Paul Verlaine. Correspondence includes original incoming letters and handwritten drafts and typescripts of Gimpel's outgoing letters with associates, collectors, and dealers. The correspondence documents certain sales and prospective sales, and Gimpel's efforts to maintain and further relationships with important clients such as Samuel H. Kress and Florence Libby, in considerable detail. Gimpel's letters to his parents in 1902-1904 are in French, and often contain family gossip or accounts of his day-to-day activities, but also refer to business interests and activities.

Lists comprise five lists of artwork with some prices and dimensions.

There are five photos of Gimpel, and three Gimpel family group photos. There are photos of Ernest Gimpel, including of him outside the Gimpel gallery storefront, and a photo of 3 men outside E. Gimpel & Wildenstein in 1919. Photos of others include Rose Adler, Parisian art dealer Jeanne Bucher, a Duveen family group, and Auguste Renoir, circa 1921. Photographs are copy prints.

Also found are photographs of artwork handled by Gimpel, photos of an unidentified exhibition, photos of the interior of an unidentified London gallery, and one of the interior of Rose Adler's apartment. There is also a photo from a Gimpel exhibition of *Modern Book Bindings*.

Printed material includes two exhibition catalogs, one at Galerie René Gimpel in circa 1937-1939, and one for a Monet exhibition at the Arts Council of Great Britain, 1957, that includes a description of Monet's *Poplars on the Epte* as told to Gimpel. Other printed material consists of a book club bulletin with an advertisement for and selection from Gimpel's *Diary of an Art Dealer*, first published in 1966.

Writings are by Gimpel and include typescripts for three plays, "Noblesse Oblige," "La Deco," and "Notre Dame de la Belle Verriere." There is also a list of Gimpel's "Aphorisms" on art.

Box 1, Folder 1	Account of Gimpel's Death and Fellow War Prisoner's Description of Gimpel, 1944-1945
Box 1, Folder 2	Correspondence, circa 1910-circa 1931
Box 1, Folder 3	Correspondence, circa 1909
Box 1, Folder 4	Correspondence, 1923-1924, 1927-1928
Box 1, Folder 5-6	Correspondence, 1929-1931
Box 1, Folder 7	Letters to Gimpel, circa 1917-circa 1924
Box 1, Folder 8-12	Letters to Parents from Gimpel, 1903-1904

Box 2, Folder 1	Lists, circa 1930s
Box 2, Folder 2	Photographs of Artwork Handled by Gimpel, circa 1920s-circa 1930s
Box 2, Folder 3	Photographs of Ernest Gimpel and Gallery, 1919
Box 2, Folder 4	Photographs of Miscellaneous Artwork and Exhibitions, circa 1910-circa 1930s
Box 2, Folder 5	Photographs of Others, circa 1890-circa 1930s
Box 2, Folder 6	Photographs of René Gimpel, circa 1914-circa 1937
Box 2, Folder 7	Photographs of René Gimpel and Others, circa 1890-circa 1915
Box 2, Folder 8	Printed Material, Catalogue of René Gimpel Collections, "Tableaux et Sculptures (Art Ancien)", circa 1930s
Box 2, Folder 9	Printed Material, Exhibition and Other Catalogs, circa 1937-1939, 1966
Box 2, Folder 10	Writings, Aphorisms on Art, undated
Box 2, Folder 11	Writings, Typescripts of Plays, 1919-1920
Box 2, Folder 12	Writings, Typescripts of Plays, 1928 November-1933 January

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