Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Hilaire Hiler papers, circa 1898-1969, in the Archives of American Art

Allessandra Liberati

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Hilaire Hiler papers
Date:	circa 1898-1969
Identifier:	AAA.hilehila
Creator:	Hiler, Hilaire, 1898-1966
Extent:	3.8 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	The Hilaire Hiler papers measure 3.8 linear feet and date from circa 1898-1969. They illustrate his career through biographical materials, correspondence, writings, personal business records, printed material, and artwork.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Papers were donated 1967-1968 by Hilaire Hiler.

Related Materials

The archives also hold three articles by Hiler: "The Aquatic Park Murals", November 5, 1938; "Color in Architecture", and "An Approach to Mural Decoration" as well as a letter from Hiler to Joe Allen, State Supervisor, Federal Art Project, San Francisco and an announcement of a seminar on color directed by Hiler.

Available Formats

Material lent for microfilming is available on 35mm microfilm reel(s) D302-D302a and 611-614 at Archives of American Art offices and through interlibrary loan.

Processing Information

This collection was processed, and a finding aid prepared, by Allessandra Liberati in 2023.

Preferred Citation

Hilaire Hiler papers, circa 1898-1969 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

Hilaire Hiler (1898-1966) was a mural painter, designer, decorator, and writer who worked mainly in New York and Paris.

Hilaire Hiler was born in St. Paul, Minnesota and grew up in Providence, Rhode Island. Hiler attended the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Pennsylvania School of Industrial Art, the University of Pennsylvania, University of Denver, University of Paris, and Golden State University. While living in Paris as an expatriate, he became friends with Henry Miller, Sinclair Lewis, Ernest Hemingway, and Anais Nin. After returning to the United States, he was named art director of the bathhouse building at the San Francisco Aquatic Park (1936-1939) which was a major Works Progress Administration (WPA) project.

Hiler was best know for his combining of his artistic and psychoanalytical training to create an original perspective on color. Throughout his career Hiler moved towards abstract imagery and by the 1940s his theories on color and abstraction developed into a movement he called "Structuralism".

Hiler died on January 20, 1966 at the age of sixty-nine.

Scope and Contents

The Hilaire Hiler papers measure 3.8 linear feet and date from circa 1898-1969. Biographical material includes identification documents, certificates, licenses, membership cards, and a biographical sketch. Correspondents include Faber Birren, Kay Boyle, Marc Connelly, Caresse Crosby, Nancy Cunard, Ben Cunningham (to Hiler's daughter), John Ferren, Al Hirschfeld, Carl Holty, Robert Bruce Inverarity, Gyorgy Kepes, Katharine Kuh, Rico Lebrun, Fernand Leger, Albert W. Levi, Paul Mathews, Henry Miller, Abraham Rattner, Man Ray, Ad Reinhardt, Meyer Schapiro, Charles P. Snow, Edgar Varese, Herbert G. Wells, O'Brien Boldt, Jerome Flax, the Foundation for Integrated Education, Jay H. Herz, Charles Lavell, Jim Moran, Henry Schnakenberg, George Wittenborn, and William Carlos Williams. Also included is correspondence from Hiler's time spent in Paris in the 1920s. In the five Holty letters, Holty comments on aesthetics, color theory, the work of Abraham Rattner, Holty's painting, the history of modern art after World War Two, and his trip across America with Henry Miller and Rattner.

Writings includes several titled writings by Hiler as well as miscellaneous notes and writings and three notebooks. Also included are manuscripts for Hiler's autobiography and a manuscript for *Color and Design: A Structuralist Approach* (1955) which includes thirty-seven illustrations and diagrams. Writings by others are also present. Personal business records include multiple card files, materials for a course on color design, three photographs of artworks and a sales receipt, and various bills and receipts. Printed material includes clippings, one hundred nineteen miscellaneous items relating to color and design, published articles by Hiler titled "Costumes and Ideologies," "Some Associative Aspects of Color," "Structuralism," "The Search for a Method of Graphic Expression," and "The Origin and Development of Structural Design", materials related to exhibitions, and miscellaneous printed material. Artwork includes two sketchbooks, and seventeen loose sketches.

Arrangement

This collection consists of six series.

- Series 1: Biographical Material, circa 1927-1967 (.2 Linear feet: Box 1)

- Series 2: Correspondence, circa 1923-1966 (.4 Linear feet: Box 1)
- Series 3: Writings, circa 1928-1969 (1.4 Linear feet: Boxes 1-2)
- Series 4: Personal Business Records, circa 1898-1965 (1 Linear foot: Boxes 3-4)
- Series 5: Printed Material, circa 1916-1966 (.7 Linear feet: Box 3, OV 5-7)
- Series 6: Artwork, circa 1954-1965 (.1 Linear feet: Box 3)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Types of Materials:

Sketchbooks

Names:

Hiler, Hilaire, 1898-1966

Occupations:

Artists -- France -- Paris
Muralists -- United States
Psychologists

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Material, circa 1927-1967

.2 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Biographical material includes identification documents, certificates, licenses, membership cards, and a biographical sketch.

Box 1, Folder 1	Biographical Sketch, circa 1959
Box 1, Folder 2	Panorama Cultural, Interview, circa 1955
Box 1, Folder 3	Identification Documents, circa 1933-1965
Box 1, Folder 4	Certificates, circa 1934-1958
Box 1, Folder 5	Licenses, circa 1947-1957
Box 1, Folder 6	Membership Cards, circa 1927-1967

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Series 2: Correspondence, circa 1923-1966

.4 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Correspondents include Faber Birren, Kay Boyle, Marc Connelly, Caresse Crosby, Nancy Cunard, Ben Cunningham (to Hiler's daughter), John Ferren, Al Hirschfeld, Carl Holty, Robert Bruce Inverarity, Gyorgy Kepes, Katharine Kuh, Rico Lebrun, Fernand Leger, Albert W. Levi, Paul Mathews, Henry Miller, Abraham Rattner, Man Ray, Ad Reinhardt, Meyer Schapiro, Charles P. Snow, Edgar Varese, Herbert G. Wells, O'Brien Boldt, Jerome Flax, the Foundation for Integrated Education, Jay H. Herz, Charles Lavell, Jim Moran, Henry Schnakenberg, George Wittenborn, and William Carlos Williams.

Also included is correspondence from Hiler's time spent in Paris in the 1920s. In the five Holty letters, Holty comments on aesthetics, color theory, the work of Abraham Rattner, Holty's painting, the history of modern art after WWII, and his trip across America with Henry Miller and Rattner.

Box 1, Folder 7	Correspondence (1920s), circa 1929
Box 1, Folder 8	Correspondence (1930s), circa 1931-1939
Box 1, Folder 9	Correspondence (1940s), circa 1940-1949
Box 1, Folder 10	Correspondence (1950s), circa 1950-1957
Box 1, Folder 11	Correspondence (1950s), circa 1958-1959
Box 1, Folder 12	Correspondence (1960s), circa 1960-1961
Box 1, Folder 13	Correspondence (1960s), circa 1962-1964
Box 1, Folder 14	Correspondence (1960s), circa 1965-1966
Box 1, Folder 15	Undated Correspondence, circa 1929-1966
Box 1, Folder 16	Personal Correspondence, circa 1930-1965
Box 1, Folder 17	Carl Holty, circa 1940-1962
Box 1, Folder 18	Henry Miller, circa 1925-1961
Box 1, Folder 19	Painting, circa 1955-1965
Box 1, Folder 20	Writings, circa 1961-1962
Box 1, Folder 21	Envelopes, circa 1923-1960

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Series 3: Writings, circa 1928-1969

1.4 Linear feet (Boxes 1-2)

Scope and Contents: Writings includes several titled writings by Hiler as well as miscellaneous notes and writings and three notebooks. Also included are manuscripts for Hiler's autobiography and a manuscript for *Color and Design: A Structuralist Approach* (1955) which includes thirty-seven illustrations and diagrams. Writings by others are also present.

	By Hiler
Box 1, Folder 22-27	Autobiography, Manuscript, circa 1940-1960
	Color and Design: A Structuralist Approach (1955)
Box 2, Folder 1-6	Manuscript, circa 1955
Box 2, Folder 7	Illustrations, circa 1955
Box 2, Folder 8	Notes, circa 1955
	Titled Writings
Box 2, Folder 9	"About Castles", circa 1945
Box 2, Folder 10	"Cafes", circa 1943
Box 2, Folder 11	"The Casino De La Gaite: A Theatrical Theatre", circa 1942
Box 2, Folder 12	"Color, Harmony, and the Artist", circa 1950
Box 2, Folder 13	"Design and Scientific Method", circa 1946
Box 2, Folder 14	"In Vino Dubitas", circa 1945
Box 2, Folder 15	"Jesus Helps", circa 1946
Box 2, Folder 16	"Knights of the Knight", circa 1959
Box 2, Folder 17	"Le Theatre Du Chatelet", circa 1942
Box 2, Folder 18	"Mental Process of the Primitive", circa 1945
Box 2, Folder 19	"Mexico As I Did Not See It", circa 1950
Box 2, Folder 20	"Modern Art and Schizophrenia", circa 1945
Box 2, Folder 21	"No Fools No Fun", circa 1945

Box 2, Folder 22	"Structuralism", circa 1957
Box 2, Folder 23	"Structuralism: Science and Design", circa 1957-1965
Box 2, Folder 24	"Why Structuralism? Explanation with Comparison with Music", Paris, circa 1957
Box 2, Folder 25	Notes on Teaching , circa 1953-1959
Box 2, Folder 26-27	Miscellaneous Writings, circa 1928-1969
Box 2, Folder 28	Miscellaneous Notes, circa 1959-1961
Box 2, Folder 29	"Paris", Notebook, circa 1957
Box 2, Folder 30	Notebook, circa 1957
Box 2, Folder 31	Notebooks, circa 1965
	By Others
Box 2, Folder 32	"The Creative Attitude", Abraham H. Maslow, circa 1963
Box 2, Folder 33	"A Non-Aristotelian Approach to Design", Norman T. Newton, circa 1947
Box 2, Folder 34	Miscellaneous Writings, circa 1945

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Series 4: Personal Business Records, circa 1898-1965

1 Linear foot (Boxes 3-4)

Scope and Contents: Personal business records include multiple card files, materials for a course on color design, three photographs of artworks and a sales receipt, and various bills and receipts.

Box 3, Folder 1	Color and Design Course, Notes, circa 1947
	Card Files
	Places and Things
Box 3, Folder 2	Painting; Village, Paris, New York; Copenhagen-Berlin-Paris-Turkey; London-British Museum Trips-Brussels Antwerp, circa 1960-1962
Box 3, Folder 3	Spain-Portugal-Paris-Cagnes; Cagnes; Narcotics; Dingo; Psychoanalysis and Institute; New York in the Early 30's, circa 1929-1960
Box 3, Folder 4	Tehuantepec, Salina Cruz, D.F.; Hollywood, Sana Fe; Chicago, Santa Fe; San Francisco, London; Puebla; Paris and New York; New York-Atlantic Highlands, circa 1935-1960
Box 3, Folder 5	Philosophy, circa 1960-1961
Box 3, Folder 6	Creature, circa 1956-1959
Box 3, Folder 7	Long Meadow-Balto-Providence; Morris Heights, camps,Kewapin; Philadelphia, Pennsilvania-Salvation Lass.; Moses Brown-Long Meadow, circa 1904-1960
	People
Box 3, Folder 8	B-M, circa 1954-1962
Box 3, Folder 9	O-W, circa 1954-1962
Box 4	Writings and Painting, circa 1940-1960
Box 3, Folder 10	Artwork and Supplies, Bills and Receipts, circa 1932-1965
Box 3, Folder 11	Photographs of Artwork and Sales Records, circa 1898-1920

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Series 5: Printed Material, circa 1916-1966

.7 Linear feet (Box 3, OV 5-7)

Scope and Contents: Printed material includes clippings, one hundred nineteen miscellaneous items relating to color and design, published articles by Hiler titled "Costumes and Ideologies," "Some Associative Aspects of Color," "Structuralism," "The Search for a Method of Graphic Expression," and "The Origin and Development of Structural Design", materials related to exhibitions, and miscellaneous printed material.

Box 3, Folder 12	Color, circa 1949-1956
Box 3, Folder 13	Fremont University, 1947-1950
Box 3, Folder 14	Main Currents in Modern Thought, circa 1960-1961
Box 3, Folder 15	North America: A Continent in Conjecture (1929), circa 1929
Box 3, Folder 16	Art Publications, circa 1939
Box 3, Folder 17	Brochures, circa 1936
Box 3, Folder 18	Clippings, circa 1958
Oversize 5	Clippings, circa 1928-1965
Oversize 6	Clippings, Scrapbook , circa 1925-1930
Oversize 7	Clippings, Scrapbook, circa 1935-1966
Box 3, Folder 19	Exhibitions, circa 1947-1962
Box 3, Folder 20	Press Releases, circa 1950-1966
Box 3, Folder 21	Miscellaneous Publications, circa 1947-1963
Box 3, Folder 22	Miscellaneous Printed Material, circa 1916-1959

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Series 6: Artwork, circa 1954-1965

.1 Linear feet (Box 3)

Scope and Contents: Artwork includes two sketchbooks, and seventeen loose sketches.

Box 3, Folder 23	Sketches, circa 1954-1965
Box 3, Folder 24	Sketchbooks, circa 1954-1965

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