



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Ernest Lawson Papers, 1907-1967, in the Archives of American Art

Jayna M. Josefson

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

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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:	Ernest Lawson papers
Date:	1907-1967
Identifier:	AAA.lawserne
Creator:	Lawson, Ernest, 1873-1939
Extent:	0.5 Linear feet
Language:	The collection is in English
Summary:	The scattered papers of painter Ernest Lawson measure 0.6 linear feet and date from 1907 to 1967. The papers consist of family correspondence with daughter Margaret, and between Margaret and her mother Ella Lawson; a dismantled scrapbook containing exhibition announcements, catalogs, and clippings; and a 1937 photograph of a group of artists at a dinner at the Salmagundi Club honoring Lawson along with a photograph of a work of art by Lawson signed by the numerous artists attending the dinner, including Victor C. Anderson, George Elmer Browne, Gordon Grant, Eugene Higgins, Ivan G. Olinsky, Eugene Speicher, Guy Wiggins, and Keith Shaw Williams, among others.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Margaret Lawson Bensco donated her father's papers in 1976. In 1985, Lawson's granddaughter Alice Simon donated the 1937 photograph of artists at the Salmagundi Club and the photograph of a work of art by Lawson signed by numerous artists.

Available Formats

Portions of the papers were microfilmed on reel 1788, which is available for interlibrary loan. Researchers are advised that the microfilm is incomplete.

Available Formats

The collection is available on 35 mm microfilm reel 1788 at the Archives of American Art offices and through interlibrary loan. Researchers should note that the arrangement of the material described in the container inventory does not reflect the arrangement of the collection on microfilm.

Processing Information

The Ernest Lawson papers were microfilmed upon receipt onto reel 1788. In 2014, Jayna Josefson created a finding aid to the papers with funding provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art.

Preferred Citation

Ernest Lawson papers, 1907-1967. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

Use of original papers requires an appointment and is limited to the Archives' Research Center in Washington, D.C. Contact Reference Services for more information.

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Biographical / Historical

Ernest Lawson (1873-1939) was painter active in New York City and member of the group of American early modernist painters known as "The Eight."

Born in Nova Scotia, Canada and raised in Kansas, Ernest Lawson moved to New York City in the 1880s. There, he studied at the Art Students League and studied under John Twachtman. He also studied at the Cos Cob Connecticut summer art school before moving to Paris in 1893 to study at the Académie Julian. While in Paris he also shared a studio with W. Somerset Maugham, who is believed to have used Lawson as the inspiration for the character "Frederick Lawson" in his 1915 novel *Of Human Bondage*.

Lawson returned to the United States in 1896 and transitioned from his Impressionist style to a Realist style, painting primarily cityscapes. Lawson had his first solo exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 1907 and won a prize for a winter landscape. Lawson joined the group painters that would become known as "The Eight," whose members included Robert Henri, William Glackens, John Sloan, George Luks, Everett Shinn, Arthur B. Davies, and William Prendergast. These painters protested that the exhibition system in New York was a closed system that did not welcome change and modern style. In 1908, Macbeth Galleries staged the seminal show of the "The Eight."

Lawson married Ella Holman and they had two daughters Margaret and Dorothy. Lawson tragically drowned in Florida in 1939.

Scope and Contents

The scattered papers of painter Ernest Lawson measure 0.6 linear feet and date from 1907 to 1967. The papers consist of family correspondence with daughter Margaret, and between Margaret and her mother Ella Lawson; a dismantled scrapbook containing exhibition announcements, catalogs, and clippings; and a 1937 photograph of a group of artists at a dinner at the Salmagundi Club honoring Lawson along with a photograph of a work of art by Lawson signed by the numerous artists attending the dinner, including Victor C. Anderson, George Elmer Browne, Gordon Grant, Eugene Higgins, Ivan G. Olinsky, Eugene Speicher, Guy Wiggins, and Keith Shaw Williams, among others.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 1 series.

Missing Title:

- Series 1: Ernest Lawson papers, 1907-1967 (0.5 linear feet; Box 1, OV's 2-4)
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Names and Subject Terms

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

Types of Materials:

Photographs
Scrapbooks

Names:

Anderson, Victor C. (Victor Coleman), 1882-1937
Bensco, Margaret Lawson, 1895
Brown, George E.
Grant, Gordon, 1875-1962
Higgins, Eugene
Lawson, Ella
Olinsky, Ivan G. (Ivan Gregorewitch), 1878-1962
Salmagundi Club
Speicher, Eugene Edward, 1883-1962
Wiggins, Guy
Williams, Keith Shaw, 1905-1951

Occupations:

Painters

Container Listing

Series 1: Ernest Lawson papers, 1907-1967

0.5 Linear feet (Box 1, OVs 2-4)

Scope and Contents: Scattered family correspondence includes letters from Ernest Lawson to his daughter Margaret and between his daughter Margaret and wife Ella. A dismantled scrapbook of printed material including exhibition announcements and catalogs and clippings. There is one photograph of Ernest Lawson with numerous artists at a Salmagundi Club dinner on March 10, 1937 honoring Lawson and a photo reproduction of a work of art by Lawson signed by the artists attending the dinner at the Samlagundi Club. Artist signatures on the reproduction include Victor Anderson, George Elmer Brown, Roy Henry Brown, Charles Chapman, Bruce Crane, Charles Curran, Arthur Freedlander, Gordon Grant, Walter Granville-Smith, Eugene Higgins, Frederick William Hutchison, LeRoy Ireland, Paul Bernard King, George John Lober, Ivan Olinsky, Ulysses A. Ricci, Orlando Rowland, Chauncey Foster Ryder, James Shaw, Samuel T. Shaw Eugene Speicher, Frederick Warrenm, Guy Wiggins, and Keith Shaw Williams, among others.

Box 1, Folder 1	Family Correspondence, 1939-1956
Box 1, Folder 2	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1943-1945 Notes: Originally part of a scrapbook. Includes material from Ernest Lawson and Theodore Robinson.
Oversize 2	Reproduction of Work of Art, by Lawson, circa 1937
Oversize 3	Clippings, 1907-1967 Notes: Originally part of a scrapbook
Oversize 4	Photo of Artists, 1937 Notes: From a Salmagundi Club dinner in honor of Ernest Lawson

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