A Finding Aid to the Jack Levine Papers, 1923-1999, in the Archives of American Art

Jean Fitzgerald

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

August 2008
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Collection Overview

Repository: Archives of American Art
Title: Jack Levine papers
Identifier: AAA.levijack
Date: 1923-1999
Extent: 3.2 Linear feet
Creator: Levine, Jack, 1915-2010
Language: English
Summary: The papers of New York social realist painter and printmaker Jack Levine date from 1923-1999, and measure 3.2 linear feet. Levine’s career is documented through biographical material, scattered letters, notes and a speech, writings, student drawings, three scrapbooks, printed material and nearly one linear foot of photographs of Levine, his family, and his colleagues.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Available Formats
The bulk of the collection was digitized in 2015 and is available on the Archives of American Art's website.

Materials which have not been scanned include some photographs with copyright restrictions; some photos of works of art; duplicates; blank versos of photographs; exhibition catalogs of other artists; and some publications. In some cases exhibition catalogs and other publications have had their covers, title pages, and relevant pages scanned.

Processing Information
Accessions were minimally processed upon receipt and portions were microfilmed on reels 4873-4874. Previously microfilmed and unmicrofilmed portions were merged, arranged, and described by Jean Fitzgerald in August 2008.

The collection was prepared for digitization, and the finding aid was updated, by Stephanie Ashley in June 2014 with funding provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art.

Preferred Citation
Restrictions
Use of original papers requires an appointment and limited to the Washington, D.C. Reference Center.

Conditions Governing Use
The Jack Levine papers are owned by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Literary rights as possessed by the donor have been dedicated to public use for research, study, and scholarship. The collection is subject to all copyright laws.

Biographical / Historical

Jack Levine (1915-2010) was born in Boston, Massachusetts and worked as painter and printmaker primarily in New York City. Levine was one of the leading painters and advocates of the Social Realism School of the late 1930s.

Jack Levine was the youngest of the eight children of Lithuanian Jewish parents, Mary Grinker and Samuel Levine. After the family moved from the South End of Boston to Roxbury in 1923, Levine began to study drawing under Harold Zimmerman at the School of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. By 1929, Levine was studying painting under Denman Ross of the Fogg Art Museum.

From 1935-1940, Levine received U.S. government support from the federal Works Progress Administration. His first exhibition of paintings in New York City was at the Museum of Modern Art. In 1937, he painted The Feast of Pure Reason, a satire of Boston political power. Together with Ben Shahn, Levine became a leading exponent of the Social Realism School of the late 1930s. His first one-man show was held at the Downtown Gallery in New York City in 1938.

After serving in the U.S. Army during World War II, Levine was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1945, and a grant from the American Academy of Arts and Letters the following year. Also in 1946, Levine married painter Ruth Gikow and moved to New York City. Between 1950 and 1951, he was a Fulbright Fellow working in Rome where he was inspired by Old Master paintings. In the 1960s Levine's interest in printmaking intensified and he was instructed in creating intaglio prints by Emiliano Sorini, and was introduced to Abe Lublin who was associated with the New York Graphic Society.

Levine taught at the Art Institute of Chicago, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, the American Art School in New York, and the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. His work is in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and the Fogg Art Museum. He was a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters from 1956 on.

The D.C. Moore Gallery in New York City currently represents the Estate of Jack Levine.

Scope and Contents

The papers of New York social realist painter and printmaker Jack Levine date from 1923-1999, and measure 3.2 linear feet. Levine's career is documented through biographical material, scattered letters, notes and a speech, writings, student drawings, three scrapbooks, printed material and nearly one linear foot of photographs of Levine, his family, and his colleagues.
Found within the papers are two driver's licenses and several biographical accounts, and scattered letters from colleagues including one each from John Taylor Arms, Hyman Bloom, Leonard Bocour, René d'Harnoncourt, Lloyd Goodrich, Jacob Lawrence, and Homer Saint-Gaudens discussing various art-related events. There is only one carbon copy of a letter written by Levine. The correspondence includes oversized photographs of the members of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Additional photographs of the members are found in the Photograph series.

Notes and writings are primarily typescripts about Jack Levine written by others. There is also a transcript of one speech, "Jack Levine Speaks Regarding the Donation of 108 of his Drawings to the Archives" delivered by Levine at the Fogg Art Museum.

Artwork consists entirely of Levine's student drawings including anatomical studies, neighborhood genre scenes, copies of Old Masters, and a series of images of symphony musicians. Some of the drawings display themes that are reflected in his later paintings.

Three scrapbooks contain clippings that document Levine's career and reflect his political interests. Additional printed material consists of a comprehensive collection of clippings and exhibition announcements and catalogs. There is also an announcement for a lecture by Levine, press releases, calendars of events, reproductions of artwork, programs, brochures including one for Facing East, a portfolio of Levine's prints, and three books.

Photographs include numerous photographs of Levine throughout his artistic career, including images of his wife, painter Ruth Gikow, their daughter Susanna, and colleagues including Hyman Bloom, Leonard Bocour, Alexander Dobkin, Joachim Probst, and Russian poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko. Especially notable is a series of photographs of Levine printmaking with Emiliano Sorini and Ruth Gikow.

There are photographs of Levine serving on art juries and panels with Eleanor Coen, Joseph Hirsch, Gabor Peterdi, Studs Terkel, and Max Weber, and attending events with Lawrence Fleischman, Betty Friedan, Edith Halpert, Mauricio Lasansky, Gypsy Rose Lee, Pope Paul VI, and Raphael Soyer. A small album contains photographs of Levine and various buildings in Boston. There are also photographs of miscellaneous exhibition installations including Levine's retrospective at the Jewish Museum, and of artwork by Levine and others.

Group photographs of the members of the American Academy of Arts and Letters are found here, and include Will Barnet, Paul Cadmus, Chuck Close, David Levine, George Tooker, and John Updike. Additional group photographs of the members that were originally enclosed with letters are found in the correspondence series.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 7 series:

- Series 1: Biographical Material, 1953-1955 (Box 1; 1 folder)
- Series 2: Letters, 1946-1996 (Boxes 1, 5; 12 folders)
- Series 3: Notes and Writings, 1961-1974 (Box 1; 6 folders)
- Series 4: Artwork, 1923-1931 (Boxes 1, 5, OV 6; 11 folders)
- Series 5: Scrapbooks, 1936-1962 (Boxes 1, 5; 16 folders)
- Series 6: Printed Material, 1938-1999 (Boxes 1-3, 5, OV 6; 1.9 linear feet)
- Series 7: Photographs, 1940-1998 (Boxes 3-5, OV 6; 52 folders)
Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:
- Jewish artists
- Painters -- Massachusetts -- Boston
- Painters -- New York (State) -- New York
- Painting, American
- Painting, Modern -- 20th century -- United States
- Printmakers -- New York (State) -- New York
- Social realism

Types of Materials:
- Drawings
- Photographs
- Scrapbooks
- Student drawings

Names:
- American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters
- Arms, John Taylor, 1887-1953
- Barnet, Will, 1911-2012
- Bloom, Hyman, 1913-
- Bocour, Leonard, 1910-1993
- Cadmus, Paul, 1904-1999
- Close, Chuck, 1940-
- Coen, Eleanor, 1916-
- D'Harnoncourt, Rene, 1901-1968
- Dobkin, Alexander, 1908-
- Fleischman, Lawrence A. (Lawrence Arthur), 1925-1997
- Friedan, Betty
- Gikow, Ruth, 1915-1982
- Goodrich, Lloyd, 1897-1987
- Halpert, Edith Gregor, 1900-1970
- Jewish Museum (New York, N.Y.)
- Lasansky, Mauricio, 1914-
- Lawrence, Jacob, 1917-2000
- Lee, Gypsy Rose, 1914-1970
- Levine, David, 1926-2009
- Paul VI, Pope, 1897-1978
- Peterdi, Gabor
- Probst, Joachim
- Saint-Gaudens, Homer, b. 1880
- Simon, Sidney, 1917-
- Sorini, Emiliano
- Soyer, Raphael, 1899-1987
- Terkel, Studs, 1912-2008
- Tooker, George
- Updike, John
- Weber, Max, 1881-1961
Yevtushenko, Yevgeny Aleksandrovich, 1933-
Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Material, 1953-1955

1 Folder (Box 1)

Biographical material consists of two driver's licenses and several brief biographical accounts.

Series is scanned in entirety.

Box 1, Folder 1  Biographical Material, 1953-1955, undated

Images
Series 2: Letters, 1946-1996

12 Folders (Boxes 1 and 5)

Scattered letters are primarily from colleagues including John Taylor Arms, Hyman Bloom, Leonard Bocour, René d’Harnoncourt, Lloyd Goodrich, Jacob Lawrence, and Homer Saint-Gaudens.

Series is scanned in entirety.

Box 1, Folder 2  Letters, undated

Box 1, Folder 3  Letters, 1946-1958

Box 1, Folder 4  Letters, 1960

Box 1, Folder 5  Letters, 1965-1968

Box 1, Folder 6  Letters, 1970-1974

Box 1, Folder 7  Letters, 1975-1977

Box 1, Folder 8  Letters, 1978-1979

Box 1, Folder 9  Letters, 1980-1985

Box 1, Folder 10 Letters, 1990

Box 1, Folder 11 Letters, 1992-1994

Box 1, Folder 12 Letters, 1996

Oversized material housed in Box 5, Folder 1

Box 5, Folder 1  Oversized Letters scanned with Box 1, Folder 4
Box 5, Folder 1  Oversized Letters scanned with Box 1, Folder 11
Box 5, Folder 1  Oversized Letters scanned with Box 1, Folder 12

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Series 3: Notes and Writings, 1961-1974

6 Folders (Box 1)

Notes and writings primarily consist of typescript theses about Jack Levine. There is also a transcript of a speech given by Levine at the Fogg Art Museum, and miscellaneous notes and writings.

Series is scanned in entirety.

Box 1, Folder 13  Miscellaneou, 1961-1962, undated

Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 14  Typescript of Speech at Fogg Art Museum: "Jack Levine Speaks Regarding the Donation of 108 of his Drawings to the Archives," undated

Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 15  Thesis Typescript "The WPA Paintings of Jack Levine" by Henry Arnold Freedman, 1967

Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 16  Typescript "Jack Levine and the Aesthetics of Discontent" by Aaron Miller, 1967

Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 17  Thesis Typescript "Jack Levine: Career of an American Artist" by Patricia Allen Robbins, 1969

Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 18  Dissertation Typescript "Jack Levine: Painter and Protester" by Henry Freedman, 1974

Image(s)
Series 4: Artwork, 1923-1931

11 Folders (Boxes 1, 5, OV 6)

Artwork consists of Levine's student drawings including anatomical studies, neighborhood genre scenes, and copies of Old Masters.

Series is scanned in entirety.

Box 1, Folder 19  
Drawings, undated

Image(s)

Oversized material housed in Box 5, Folder 2

Box 1, Folder 20  
Drawings, 1923

Image(s)

Oversized material housed in Box 5, Folder 2

Box 1, Folder 21  
Drawings, 1924

Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 22  
Drawings, 1925

Image(s)

Oversized material housed in Box 5, Folder 2

Box 1, Folder 23  
Drawings, 1926

Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 24  
Drawings, 1928-1929

Image(s)

Oversized material housed in Box 5, Folder 2 and OV 6

Box 1, Folder 25  
Drawings, 1930

Image(s)

Oversized material housed in Box 5, Folder 3

Box 1, Folder 26  
Drawings, 1931

Image(s)

Oversized material housed in Box 5, Folder 3

Box 1, Folder 27  
Drawings of Symphony Musicians, 1930-1931

Image(s)

Oversized material housed in Box 5, Folder 3

Box 5, Folder 2  
Oversized Drawings scanned with Box 1, Folder 19

Box 5, Folder 2  
Oversized Drawings scanned with Box 1, Folder 20
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<tr>
<th>Box, Folder</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Box 5, Folder 2</td>
<td>Oversized Drawings scanned with Box 1, Folder 22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Box 5, Folder 2</td>
<td>Oversized Drawings scanned with Box 1, Folder 23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Box 5, Folder 2</td>
<td>Oversized Drawings scanned with Box 1, Folder 24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Box 5, Folder 3</td>
<td>Oversized Drawings scanned with Box 1, Folder 25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Box 5, Folder 3</td>
<td>Oversized Drawings scanned with Box 1, Folder 26</td>
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<tr>
<td>Box 5, Folder 3</td>
<td>Oversized Drawings of Symphony Musicians scanned with Box 1, Folder 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box OV 6</td>
<td>Oversized Drawing scanned with Box 1, Folder 24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Series 5: Scrapbooks, 1936-1962

16 Folders (Boxes 1, 5)

Three scrapbooks include clippings that document Levine’s career and reflect his political interests, as well as photographs of Levine and photographs of artwork, exhibitions and announcements.

Scrapbooks have been scanned in entirety.

Box 1, Folder 28-33

Scrapbook 1, 1936-1949

Image(s)

Image(s)

Image(s)

Image(s)

Image(s)

Image(s)

Oversized material housed in Box 5, Folder 4

Box 1, Folder 34-38

Scrapbook 2, 1950-1960

Image(s)

Image(s)

Image(s)

Image(s)

Image(s)

Image(s)

Oversized material housed in Box 5, Folder 5

Box 1, Folder 39-40

Scrapbook 3, 1960-1962

Image(s)

Image(s)

Oversized material housed in Box 5, Folder 6

Box 5, Folder 4

Oversized Pages from Scrapbook 1 scanned with Box 1, Folders 28-33

Box 5, Folder 5

Oversized Pages from Scrapbook 2 scanned with Box 1, Folders 34-38

Box 5, Folder 6

Oversized Pages from Scrapbook 3 scanned with Box 1, Folders 39-40
Series 6: Printed Material, 1938-1999

1.9 Linear feet (Boxes 1-3, 5)

Printed material includes clippings, primarily of articles about Levine, exhibition announcements and catalogs, an announcement for a lecture by Levine, press releases, calendars of events, reproductions of artwork, programs, brochures, and books.

The bulk of this series has been scanned. For most publications and exhibition catalogs of artists other than Levine, only the covers, title pages, and relevant pages have been scanned.

Box 1, Folder 41  Clippings, undated

Image(s)

Oversized material housed in Box 5, Folder 7

Box 1, Folder 42  Clippings, 1938-1941

Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 43  Clippings, 1943-1945

Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 44  Clippings, 1946

Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 45-46  Clippings, 1947

Image(s)

Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 47  Clippings, 1948-1949

Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 48  Clippings, 1950-1953

Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 49  Clippings, 1954-1955

Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 50  Clippings, 1956

Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 51  Clippings, 1957-1958

Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 52  Clippings, 1959

Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 53  Clippings, 1960 January-May
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<th>Clippings, 1960 July</th>
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<td>Box 1, Folder 61</td>
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<td>Clippings, 1966</td>
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<td>Box 1, Folder 63</td>
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<td>Box 1, Folder 67-68</td>
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<td>Box 1, Folder 69</td>
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<td>Box 1, Folder 70</td>
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<td>Box 1, Folder 71</td>
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<td>Box 1, Folder 72</td>
<td>Clippings, 1973-1976</td>
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<td>Box 1, Folder 73</td>
<td>Clippings, 1977</td>
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<td>Box 1, Folder 74</td>
<td>Clippings, 1978</td>
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<td>Clippings, 1980-1985</td>
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<td>Box 2, Folder 2-3</td>
<td>Clippings, 1986</td>
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<td>Clippings, 1987</td>
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<td>Box 2, Folder 7</td>
<td>Clippings, 1990-1994</td>
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<td>Image(s)</td>
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<td>Box 2, Folder 8</td>
<td>Clippings, 1995-1996</td>
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<td>Image(s)</td>
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<td>Box 2, Folder 9</td>
<td>Clippings, 1997-1998</td>
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<td>Image(s)</td>
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<td>Box 2, Folder 11</td>
<td>Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1939</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Image(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Box 2, Folder 12</td>
<td>Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1945</td>
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<td>Image(s)</td>
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Box 2, Folder 13  
Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1947
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 14-15  
Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1948
Image(s)
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 16  
Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1949
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 17-18  
Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1950
Image(s)
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 19  
Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1951-1952
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 20-22  
Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1955
Image(s)
Image(s)
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 23  
Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1956
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 24  
Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1957
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 25-26  
Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1959
Image(s)
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 27  
Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1960-1961
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 28  
Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1962
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 29-30  
Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1963
Image(s)
Image(s)

Box 2, Folder 31-32  
Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1964
Image(s)
Box 2, Folder 33 Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1965

Box 2, Folder 34 Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1966

Box 2, Folder 35-36 Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1967

Box 2, Folder 37-38 Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1968

Box 2, Folder 39 Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1969

Box 2, Folder 40 Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1972

Box 3, Folder 1 Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1977-1979

Box 3, Folder 2 Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1983-1987

Box 3, Folder 3 Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1990-1992

Box 3, Folder 4 Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1993

Box 3, Folder 5 Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1995-1998

Box 3, Folder 6 Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs for Others, 1960-1980

Box 3, Folder 7 Lecture Announcement, 1962

Box 3, Folder 8 Press Releases, 1960-1979
Box 3, Folder 9  Calendars of Events, 1968-1999
  Image(s)

Box 3, Folder 10  Reproductions of Artwork, undated
  Image(s)
  Oversized material housed in Box 5, Folder 8

Box 3, Folder 11  Programs, 1966-1999
  Image(s)

Box 3, Folder 12  Brochures for Facing East Portfolio of Levine's Prints, 1972
  Image(s)
  Oversized material housed in Box 5, Folder 8

Box 3, Folder 13-14  Miscellaneous Brochures, 1959-1972, undated
  Image(s)
  Image(s)

Box 3, Folder 15  Book Americans 1942 Published by the Museum of Modern Art, 1942
  Image(s)

Box 3, Folder 16  Book Painting and Sculpture in the Museum of Modern Art, 1942
  Image(s)

Box 3, Folder 17  Book The Jew: Quest 2, 1964
  Image(s)

Box 5, Folder 7  Oversized Clippings scanned with Box 1, Folder 41

Box 5, Folder 7  Oversized Clippings scanned with Box 2, Folder 3

Box 5, Folder 8  Oversized Reproductions of Artwork scanned with Box 3, Folder 10

Box 5, Folder 8  Oversized Brochure for Facing East Portfolio of Levine's Prints scanned with Box 3, Folder 12

Box OV 6  Oversized Announcement for Lecture by Levine scanned with Box 3, Folder 7

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Series 7: Photographs, 1940-1998

52 Folders (Boxes 3-5, OV 6)

Photographs are of Levine, his wife Ruth Gikow, their daughter Susanna, and colleagues and friends including Hyman Bloom, Leonard Bocour, Eleanor Coen, Alexander Dobkin, Lawrence Fleischman, Betty Friedan, Edith Halpert, Joseph Hirsch, Mauricio Lasansky, Gypsy Rose Lee, Gabor Peterdi, Pope Paul VI, Joachim Probst, Sidney Simon, Raphael Soyer, Studs Terkel, John Updike, and Russian poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko. There is a series of photographs of Levine printmaking with Emiliano Sorini and Ruth Gikow. Photographs of members of the American Academy of Arts and Letters include Will Barnet, Paul Cadmus, Chuck Close, David Levine, and George Tooker. Additional group photographs of the members that were originally enclosed with letters are found in the correspondence series. An album contains photographs of Levine and various buildings in Boston. There are also photographs of exhibition installations and of artwork by Levine and others.

The bulk of this series has been scanned. Items which have not been scanned include photographs with copyright restrictions; blank versos of photos; some photos of works of art; and duplicates.

Box 3, Folder 18  Photographs of Jack Levine, circa 1940-1947, undated
Image(s)
Oversized material housed in Box 5, Folder 9

Box 3, Folder 19  Photographs of Jack Levine, circa 1948-1949, undated
Image(s)

Box 3, Folder 20  Photographs of Jack Levine, circa 1950-1952, undated
Image(s)

Box 3, Folder 21  Photographs of Jack Levine, circa 1953
Image(s)

Box 3, Folder 22  Photographs of Jack Levine, circa 1958
Image(s)
Oversized material housed in Box 5, Folder 9

Box 3, Folder 23  Photographs of Jack Levine, circa 1959
Image(s)

Box 3, Folder 24  Photographs of Jack Levine, circa 1960-1967
Image(s)
Oversized material housed in Box 5, Folder 9

Box 4, Folder 1  Photographs of Jack Levine, 1968-1969
Image(s)

Box 4, Folder 2  Photographs of Jack Levine, 1971
Image(s)

Box 4, Folder 3  Photographs of Jack Levine, circa 1972-1979
Box 4, Folder 4  Photographs of Jack Levine, 1982
Image(s)

Box 4, Folder 5  Photographs of Jack Levine, 1985
Image(s)

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Image(s)
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