



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Rubens Peale Diaries, 1855-1865, in the Archives of American Art

Stephanie Ashley

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

2023/03/21

Table of Contents

Collection Overview	
Administrative Information	1
Biographical / Historical	2
Scope and Contents	2
Arrangement	2
Names and Subjects	
Container Listing	
Series 1: Rubens Peale Diaries, 1855-1865	3

Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Rubens Peale diaries
Date:	1855-1865
Identifier:	AAA.pealrube
Creator:	Peale, Rubens, 1784-1865
Extent:	0.2 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	The Rubens Peale diaries date from 1855-1865 and measure 0.2 linear feet. The collection consists of four bound diaries with daily entries made during the last ten years of Peale's life when he turned seriously to painting, primarily producing still life and animal paintings. While entries frequently concern farm and family activities, there are also many references to his painting. Entries from April 1865 describe the news of Abraham Lincoln's assassination and funeral procession.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The collection was donated to the Archives of American Art in 1959 by Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence A. Fleischman.

Available Formats

The collection was digitized in 2023 and is available on the Archives of American Art website.

Processing Information

The collection was microfilmed after receipt on Reel D10. The diaries were processed and a finding aid prepared by Stephanie Ashley in 2023 with funding provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art and The Walton Family Foundation.

Preferred Citation

Rubens Peale diaries, 1855-1865. 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

Philadelphia born museum director and painter Rubens Peale is known for his still life paintings and was the son of artist and naturalist Charles Willson Peale.

During his twenties and thirties Peale was director of his father's museum in Philadelphia and then of the Peale Museum in Baltimore. He opened his own museum in New York in 1825 but ultimately sold his collection to P.T. Barnum in 1843.

Meanwhile, in 1837, he moved to the estate of his father-in-law, George Patterson, near Schuylkill Haven, Pennsylvania. In October 1855 he began keeping a journal and turned to still life painting as an extension of his interest in natural history. He continued learning and developing as an artist and one year before his death returned to Philadelphia to study landscape painting with Edward Moran. In the final decade of his life Peale produced 130 paintings.

Scope and Contents

The Rubens Peale diaries date from 1855-1865 and measure 0.2 linear feet. The collection consists of four bound diaries with daily entries made during the last ten years of Peale's life when he turned seriously to painting, primarily producing still life and animal paintings. While entries frequently concern farm and family activities, there are also many references to his painting. Entries from April 1865 describe the news of Abraham Lincoln's assassination and funeral procession.

Arrangement

Due to the small size of this collection the diaries are arranged as one series.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Types of Materials:

Diaries

Occupations:

Museum administrators

Painters -- Pennsylvania

Container Listing

Series 1: Rubens Peale Diaries, 1855-1865

0.2 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Diary entries date from October 1855 until the day before Peale's death in 1865. While many of the entries deal with day-to-day farm life, Peale's dedication to and enthusiasm for painting are much in evidence, with many of the entries beginning with the words "I painted all the morning" and noting the number of the painting he is working on. There are references to the Civil War and Lincoln's assassination, and entries in 1864-1865 describe his time in Philadelphia studying with Edward Moran. Peale appeared to be packing to return from Philadelphia when he became ill in July 1865. Up until the day before his death he was stretching canvas for his next painting.

Box 1, Folder 1	Diary, 1855-1858
Box 1, Folder 2	Diary, 1858-1859
Box 1, Folder 3	Diary, 1860-1862
Box 1, Folder 4	Diary, 1862-1865

[Return to Table of Contents](#)