



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Ruth Reeves papers, circa
1880-1967, in the Archives of American Art

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Archives of American Art
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<https://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions>
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Ruth Reeves Papers
Identifier:	AAA.reevruth
Date:	circa 1880-1967
Extent:	1.1 Linear feet
Creator:	Reeves, Ruth, 1892-1966
Language:	English
Summary:	The papers of textile designer Ruth Reeves measure 1.1 linear feet and date from circa 1880 to 1967. Found are biographical materials, scattered correspondence, writings on textile design, printed material, artwork, photographs, and scrapbooks.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The Ruth Reeves papers were donated by her daughter, Judith Baker Katzman in 1971 and 1972.

Available Formats

Portions of the collection are available on 35 mm microfilm reels 136 and 3099 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 collection was arranged and microfilmed upon receipt. It was processed and a finding aid prepared by Jayna Josefson in 2018.

Preferred Citation

Ruth Reeves papers, circa 1880-1967. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

Use of original papers requires an appointment and is limited to the Archives' Washington, D.C., Research Center.

Biographical / Historical

Ruth Reeves (1892-1966) was a textile designer, educator, and painter active in New York City, New York and India. She is known for having designed rugs for Radio City Music Hall.

Ruth Reeves was born in Redlands, California in 1892 to John Chapenou and Jennie Martafel Reeves. First, she studied art in California but moved to New York City to attend Pratt Institute in 1911. In 1913, she earned a scholarship to the Art Students League. Her formal art education focused on painting but due to finances, Ruth left school and took freelance jobs as an illustrator and textile designer. In Paris, she worked as an illustrator for Fairchild Publications and remained in Paris to study under Fernand Léger.

Reeves' first exhibition was with The American Designers' Gallery where she showed textiles. She experimented using screen print and vat dye techniques to create household textiles. In addition to her design career, Reeves served as national supervisor for the Index of American Design under the Federal Art Project and taught at the Cooper Union. In 1956, she accepted a Fulbright grant and moved to India to study Indian textile techniques.

Ruth Reeves married Donald Robert Baker, with whom she had three daughters. Ruth Reeves died in 1966 in New Delhi, India.

Scope and Contents

The papers of textile designer Ruth Reeves measure 1.1 linear feet and date from circa 1880 to 1967. Found are biographical material, scattered correspondence, writings on textile design, printed material, artwork, photographs, and scrapbooks.

Biographical records include biographical sketches, travel papers, and divorce records. Correspondence is scattered but includes letters from Ruth Reeves to her daughter Judith. Most of Reeves' general correspondence is from family and friends. A teaching file for a course on textile design at The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art contains notes, lecture drafts, and sketches. Writings by Ruth Reeves are on textile design and may include drafts with handwritten notes. Artworks include painted sketches and prints by Ruth Reeves. Photographs include portraits of Reeves, snapshots of her family and travel photos. Of note is a portrait of cartoonist Art Young by Berenice Abbott.

Arrangement

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

- Series 1: Ruth Reeves Papers, circa 1880-1967 (Box 1-2; 1.3 linear feet)

Container Listing

Series 1: Ruth Reeves papers, circa 1880-1967

1.3 Linear feet (Box 1-2)

Biographical materials include address books, biographical sketches and resumes, a death notice and will, and passports for Ruth Reeves and Donald Robert Baker. Also found is a divorce record from 1922 of Reeves' first marriage to Leland Olds. Correspondence is scattered and is largely unsigned or with nicknames and initials. A letter from the Girl Scouts of America to Reeves regards a manuscript written by Reeves on textiles. Other letters are from Reeves to her daughter Judith and condolence letters written to her family.

Writings by Ruth Reeves largely concern textiles, designs, and inspiration. An excerpt of a writing entitled "On Designing Textiles" (1935) appeared in *Art Education Today*. A teaching file contains lecture notes, outlines, and sketches for a course taught at the Cooper Union in the 1940s. Artwork contains painted sketches, three prints, and an ink sketch by Ruth Reeves. Photographs are of Reeves, family, friends, vacation, works of art, and India. Tourist albums are mass produced and of sights in Europe. Of note is a portrait of cartoonist Art Young by Berenice Abbott. Two unbound mixed media scrapbooks serve as a portfolio of Reeves' career as a designer, educator, and writer.

Box 1, Folder 1	Address Books, circa 1940-circa 1960
Box 1, Folder 2	Biographical Sketches and Resumes, circa 1940-circa 1960
Box 1, Folder 3	Death Records and Will, 1967
Box 1, Folder 4	Divorce Records, 1922
Box 1, Folder 5	Passports, Donald Robert Baker, 1919-1925
Box 1, Folder 6	Passports, Ruth Reeves Baker, 1922-1966
Box 1, Folder 7	Correspondence, General, 1919-1966
Box 1, Folder 8	Correspondence, from Ruth Reeves to Judith Baker Katzman, 1966
Box 1, Folder 9	Correspondence, Condolence Letters, 1966-1967
Box 1, Folder 10	"Design in Occupational Therapy," by Ruth Reeves, circa 1940
Box 1, Folder 11	"The Pre-Columbian Fabrics of Peru: Perennial Souce of Textile Design Literacy," by Ruth Reeves, circa 1940
Box 1, Folder 12	"What Creative Design Means to Me," by Ruth Reeves, circa 1950

Box 1, Folder 13	"Why the Modern Designer Goes to Primitive Sources for Inspiration," by Ruth Reeves, circa 1950
Box 1, Folder 14	Excerpt, "On Designing Textiles," by Ruth Reeves, 1935
Box 1, Folder 15	Outline for a Book on Textile Design, circa 1950
Box 1, Folder 16	Writing, Untitled, Maybe a Lecture, 1938 October
Box 1, Folder 17	Writings, General, circa 1920-circa 1940
Box 1, Folder 18	Teaching File, Textile Design, circa 1940
Box 1, Folder 19	Receipts, 1951, 1965
Box 1, Folder 20	Clippings, circa 1920-1952
Box 1, Folder 21	Exhibition Catalogs, 1930-1939
Box 1, Folder 22-24	Magazines, Newsletters, and Periodicals, 1930-1966
Box 1, Folder 25	Postcards, circa 1930-1950
Box 1, Folder 26	Sketches, circa 1930
Box 1, Folder 27	Prints, 1920-circa 1930
Box 1, Folder 28	Painted Sketches, circa 1920-circa 1940
Box 1, Folder 29	Photographs, Portraits of Ruth Reeves, circa 1900-circa 1966
Box 1, Folder 30	Photographs, Snapshots with Family and Friends, circa 1920-circa 1920-1960
Box 1, Folder 31	Photographs, Portraits of Family and Friends, circa 1880-1966
Box 1, Folder 32	Photographs, Vacation and Travel, circa 1930
Box 1, Folder 33	Photo Album, Family Snapshots, circa 1950
Box 1, Folder 34-35	Photographs, of India, circa 1966
Box 1, Folder 36	Photographs, Tourist Albums, circa 1940

Box 1, Folder 37	Photographs, Works of Art, circa 1940s-circa 1960s
Box 1, Folder 38	Slides, circa 1960
Box 1, Folder 39	Negatives, circa 1930s
Box 2, Folder 1	Oversized Portraits of Ruth Reeves, circa 1950
Box 2, Folder 2-3	Scrapbooks, circa 1920-circa 1950

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