



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to Two Letters from Helen Richardson Relating to Joseph Stella, 1957, 1968, 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.

2023/11/21

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Two letters from Helen Richardson relating to Joseph Stella
Date:	1957-1968
Identifier:	AAA.richhele
Creator:	Richardson, Helen
Extent:	0.01 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	Two letters from Helen Richardson relating to Joseph Stella date from 1957 and 1968 and measure 0.01 linear foot. The letters provide insight into Stella's personal life and career and the creation of some of his most important works, including his first paintings of the Brooklyn Bridge.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The letters were donated to the Archives of American Art in 2006 by the Smithsonian American Art and Portrait Gallery Library.

Related Materials

The Archives of American Art also holds the Joseph Stella Papers, circa 1900-1970.

Available Formats

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

Processing Information

The collection was processed and a finding aid prepared by Stephanie Ashley in 2024 and was digitized in 2024 with funding provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art.

Preferred Citation

Two letters from Helen Richardson relating to Joseph Stella, 1957, 1968. 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

Businesswoman Helen Richardson was born in circa 1887 and met painter Joseph Stella in 1920 after coming from France to New York City with her children. The two entered what Richardson described as a common law pact as Stella had a wife from a previous marriage with whom he had lost contact. Richardson and her children lived with Stella until he left for Europe in 1927, where she subsequently joined him in 1929. Following the death of Stella's brother, Antonio, and the loss of the financial support that Antonio had provided, the two returned to New York and separated in 1929.

Richardson wrote to E. P. Richardson in 1957 offering her assistance in reviving interest in Stella's work by providing what details she could about their time together and her knowledge of his life after their separation.

Scope and Contents

Two letters from Helen Richardson relating to Joseph Stella date from 1957 and 1968 and measure 0.01 linear foot. The letters provide insight into Stella's personal life and career and the creation of some of his most important works, including his first paintings of the Brooklyn Bridge.

The letters include one dated May 23, 1957 to Edgar Preston Richardson (no relation), then director of the Archives of American Art, and one dated February 14, 1968 to Garnett McCoy, then archivist at the Archives of American Art. Richardson discusses Stella's works of art, her life with Stella including their lifestyle and friendships with other artists, art dealers, and patrons, and Stella's relationships with family members and their impact on his income and the handling of his estate after his death.

Arrangement

Due to the small size of the collection the papers 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:

Names:

Stella, Joseph, 1877-1946

Occupations:

Businesspeople -- New York (State) -- New York

Container Listing

Series 1: Two Letters from Helen Richardson Relating to Joseph Stella, 1957, 1968

0.01 Linear feet (Folder 1)

Folder 1

[Two Letters from Helen Richardson Relating to Joseph Stella, 1957, 1968](#)

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