



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Lewis W. Rubenstein papers

Archives of American Art
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Lewis W. Rubenstein papers
Identifier:	AAA.rubelewi
Date:	1923-1993
Extent:	5.5 Linear feet
Creator:	Rubenstein, Lewis W. (Lewis William), 1908-2003
Language:	English

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Rubenstein donated the Lebrun drawings 1982-1987, and the remainder in 1993.

Location of Originals

Rico Lebrun letters to Rubenstein (all but about 10): Originals in Syracuse University, George Arents Research Library.

Restrictions

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

Biographical / Historical

Painter, printmaker, educator. Professor of painting at Vassar College. Rubenstein trained in fresco painting with Rico Lebrun in Italy, and retained a lifelong friendship with him. His mural commissions include the Busch-Reisinger Museum and the Fogg Museum at Harvard, the Jewish Center in his hometown of Buffalo, N.Y., and the Wareham, Mass. Post Office for the WPA's Section of Fine Arts in 1940. Rubenstein attended Harvard University. He began his long teaching career at Vassar College in 1939. He began doing "Time Paintings" in late 1940s, executed on long canvases and viewed on special scrolled frames, merging Western and Far Eastern scroll painting styles.

Scope and Contents

Journals, correspondence, writings, sketchbooks, interview, photographs and printed material document Rubenstein's painting career. A series of files relate to Rubenstein's longtime friendship with his teacher, Rico Lebrun.

Scope and Contents

The bulk of the collection consists of 60 v. of journals, 1930-June 1993, in which Rubenstein writes and sketches about his ideas for "time paintings," scrolls, films, his travels as a Fulbright scholar with his wife, Erica, his summers spent in Provincetown, Mass., "gallery pounding" in New York City trying to sell his work, inspirational biblical quotes, and various artist friends and colleagues, including Rico Lebrun, Walter Pach, Hans Hofmann, Ben Shahn, Karl Knaths, Olin Dows, Philip Guston, and Lloyd Goodrich.

Scope and Contents

Correspondence (0.2 ft.) relates to Rubenstein's nomination to the National Academy of Design, 1963, his murals in the Busch-Reisinger Museum and the Fogg Museum at Harvard University, the publication of an article by his wife Erica, regarding their stints as Fulbright scholars in Tokyo, illustrated by Lewis, and correspondence of a general nature from friends, colleagues, and admirers. Among the correspondents are Lynd Ward (Rubenstein's sponsor for the N.A.D. nomination), Derek Bok, president of Harvard, Olin Dows, and Edward Rowan, whose 1940 letter concerns Rubenstein's designs for murals for the Wareham, Mass. Post Office for the Section of Fine Arts.

Scope and Contents

Files on Rico Lebrun (ca. 0.8 ft.), contain several original and extensive photocopies of letters from Lebrun to Rubenstein, and a few letters from Constance Lebrun after her husband's death; a photograph of Lebrun with Constance and photographs of Lebrun's work, 39 drawings, 1933-1949, including studies for "The Crucifixion" and "Portia"; a caricature of Diego Rivera working on a mural, and of John Steuart Curry by Lebrun, exhibition catalogs, clippings, and other printed material, and writings on Lebrun.

Scope and Contents

Art work by Rubenstein includes 9 v. of sketchbooks, 1930-1975, containing ink, pencil and charcoal drawings, and a caricature of Walter Pach.

Scope and Contents

The interview is a partial transcript (7 p.) of Rubenstein conducted by art historian Stanton L. Catlin, 1993, regarding Jose Clemente Orozco and a mural by him commissioned by the Museum of Modern Art, 1940, on which Rubenstein assisted. Also related to Orozco is a notebook containing technical details about the mural.

Scope and Contents

Photographs are mainly of Rubenstein's murals and paintings, but include several of him, and an album of snapshots of the Rubensteins and Lebruns in Europe, 1930-1932.

Scope and Contents

Printed material (1.2 linear ft.), documents exhibitions, awards, and works of art, and consists of exhibition announcements and catalogs, clippings, newsletters, Foreign Service journals, news releases, cartoons by Rubenstein, and postcards of Rubenstein's work. Two scrapbooks of newspaper clippings, 1935-1955, cover exhibitions.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Mural painting and decoration -- 20th century -- United States
Mural painting and decoration, American

Types of Materials:

Sketchbooks

Names:

Busch-Reisinger Museum
Catlin, Stanton L. (Stanton Loomis)
Curry, John Steuart, 1897-1946 -- Caricatures and cartoons
Fogg Art Museum
Lebrun, Rico, 1900-1964
Orozco, José Clemente, 1883-1949
Pach, Walter, 1883-1958 -- Caricatures and cartoons

Occupations:

Muralists