



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Jason Seley Papers, 1928-2003, in the Archives of American Art

Ricky Gomez

The processing of this collection received Federal support from the Smithsonian Collections Care and Preservation Fund, administered by the National Collections Program and the Smithsonian Collections Advisory Committee.

2020 October 22

Archives of American Art
750 9th Street, NW
Victor Building, Suite 2200
Washington, D.C. 20001
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions>
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/>

Table of Contents

Collection Overview	1
Administrative Information	1
Scope and Contents.....	2
Biographical / Historical.....	2
Arrangement.....	2
Names and Subjects	2
Container Listing	3
Series 1: Correspondence, 1948-1999.....	3
Series 2: Writings, circa 1976.....	5
Series 3: Professional Activity Files, 1949-1983.....	6
Series 4: Personal Business Records, 1955-1967, 2003.....	8
Series 5: Printed Material, 1948-1984.....	9
Series 6: Artwork, circa 1945-1950.....	10
Series 7: Photographic Material, 1928-1981.....	11

Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Jason Seley papers
Date:	1928-2003 (bulk 1928-1983)
Identifier:	AAA.selejaso
Creator:	Seley, Jason, 1919-1983
Extent:	3 Linear feet
Language:	Some of the material in the Professional Activity Files series is in German.
Summary:	The Jason Seley papers measure 3.0 linear feet and date from 1928 to 2003. The collection documents Seley's career as a sculptor through correspondence with family, colleagues, and art institutions; autobiographical notes, speeches, and other writings; records of an art residency program in Berlin and other professional activity files including sound recordings and a transcript of an interview; personal business records such as ledger books and estate papers; clippings, exhibition catalogs and other printed material; sketches; and photographs and slides of Seley and his sculptures.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The Jason Seley papers were donated in two installments, in 1984-1985 by Clara K. Seley, Seley's widow and in 2013 by Richard Heinrich, Seley's former assistant.

Processing Information

The collection was processed, and a finding aid prepared by Ricky Gomez in 2020.

Preferred Citation

Jason Seley papers, 1928-2003. 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. Researchers interested in accessing born-digital records or audiovisual recordings in this collection must use access copies. Contact References Services for more information.

Conditions Governing Use

The Archives of American Art makes its archival collections available for non-commercial, educational and personal use unless restricted by copyright and/or donor restrictions, including but not limited to access and publication restrictions. AAA makes no representations concerning such rights and restrictions and it is the user's responsibility to determine whether rights or

restrictions exist and to obtain any necessary permission to access, use, reproduce and publish the collections. Please refer to the Smithsonian's Terms of Use for additional information.

Biographical / Historical

Jason Seley (1919-1983) was a sculptor and educator in New York, New York, known for creating sculptures out of chrome automobile bumpers.

From 1943-1945 Seley studied with Ossip Zadkine at the Art Students League in New York, and from 1947-1949 he pursued sculpture and taught in Haiti at Le Centre d'Art. In 1950, he received a Fulbright Scholarship to France. While abroad, he traveled and saw the famous Andrea del Verrocchio statue, "Colleoni," and from 1969-1971 he constructed a replica of the statue made from automobile bumpers.

Seley taught at Hofstra, New York University, and was the dean of the art school at Cornell until his death in 1983.

Scope and Contents

The Jason Seley papers measure 3.0 linear feet and date from 1928 to 2003. The collection documents Seley's career as a sculptor through correspondence with family, colleagues, and art institutions; autobiographical notes, speeches, and other writings; records of an art residency program in Berlin and other professional activity files including sound recordings and a transcript of an interview; personal business records such as ledger books and estate papers; clippings, exhibition catalogs and other printed material; sketches; and photographs and slides of Seley and his sculptures.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into seven series.

- Series 1: Correspondence, 1948-1999 (0.7 linear feet; Box 1)
 - Series 2: Writings, circa 1976 (0.1 linear feet; Box 1)
 - Series 3: Professional Activity Files, 1949-1983 (0.4 linear feet; Boxes 1-2)
 - Series 4: Personal Business Records, 1955-1967, 2003 (0.1 linear feet; Box 2)
 - Series 5: Printed Material, 1948-1984 (0.2 linear feet; Box 2)
 - Series 6: Artwork, circa 1945-1950 (0.2 linear feet; Box 2, OV 5)
 - Series 7: Photographic Material, 1928-1981 (1.3 linear feet; Boxes 2-4, OV 6)
-

Names and Subject Terms

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

Types of Materials:

Interviews
Sound recordings

Occupations:

Educators -- New York (State) -- New York
Sculptors -- New York (State) -- New York

Container Listing

Series 1: Correspondence, 1948-1999

0.7 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Correspondence is with Seley's wife Clara, his brother Stephen, his friend Clive Crocker, and various friends, colleagues, and students concerning his family and art-related activities.

Box 1, Folder 1	Clara Seley, 1948
Box 1, Folder 2-15	Stephen Seley, 1964-1982
Box 1, Folder 16	Richard Heinrich, 1970-1982
Box 1, Folder 17	Clive Crocker, 1974-1983
Box 1, Folder 18	Re: Seley Lunch, 1996, 1999
Box 1, Folder 19	Proposed Seley Exhibition, 1997
Box 1, Folder 20	Correspondence, undated, 1949
Box 1, Folder 21	Correspondence, 1965
Box 1, Folder 22-23	Correspondence, 1966
Box 1, Folder 24-25	Correspondence, 1967
Box 1, Folder 26	Correspondence, 1968
Box 1, Folder 27	Correspondence, 1969
Box 1, Folder 28	Correspondence, 1970
Box 1, Folder 29-30	Correspondence, 1971
Box 1, Folder 31-32	Correspondence, 1972
Box 1, Folder 33	Correspondence, 1973
Box 1, Folder 34-37	Correspondence, 1974
Box 1, Folder 38-41	Correspondence, 1975
Box 1, Folder 42	Correspondence, 1976-1977

Box 1, Folder 43	Correspondence, 1978
Box 1, Folder 44-45	Correspondence, 1979
Box 1, Folder 46	Correspondence, 1980
Box 1, Folder 47	Correspondence, 1981
Box 1, Folder 48	Correspondence, 1982
Box 1, Folder 49	Correspondence, 1983

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 2: Writings, circa 1976

0.1 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Writings consist of miscellaneous notes, autobiographical notes, lecture notes, and speeches.

Box 1, Folder 50	Autobiography Notes, undated
Box 1, Folder 51	The Equestrian Statue: Colleoni II, undated
Box 1, Folder 52	Notes for "The Bumper Book", undated
Box 1, Folder 53	Speeches, Southeastern College Art Conference, 1976
Box 1, Folder 54	Miscellaneous, undated

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 3: Professional Activity Files, 1949-1983

0.4 Linear feet (Boxes 1-2)

Scope and Contents: Professional activity files include letters, printed material, and photographs related to Seley's work and projects. Also found are sound recordings which document a lecture Seley gave at Cornell on "Aspects of Modern Sculpture" (1967), a discussion between Seley and Jennings (1967), a tape catalog of the "Sound Show" (1969-1970), and Seley's memorial service in 1983.

Arrangement: Files are arranged in rough chronological order.

Box 1, Folder 55	Haitian Art, 1949-1983
Box 1, Folder 56-57	Notebook, 1951-1952
Box 1, Folder 58	New Sculpture Group, 1958-1959
Box 1, Folder 59	Guggenheim Fellowship, 1964
Box 1, Folder 60	Transcript of Interview with Jason Seley, 1965
Box 1, Folder 61, Item 1	AINY Seley & Jennings, 1967 March 20 1 Sound tape reel
Box 1, Folder 61, Item 2	Aspects of Modern Sculpture, 1967 July 26 1 Sound tape reel
Box 1, Folder 62	Tape Catalog of Sound Show, 1969-1970 2 Sound tape reels
Box 2, Folder 1-2	Berliner Kunstlerprogram, 1969-1974 Language: Some of the documents are in German.
Box 2, Folder 3	Casper Community College, 1969-1970
Box 2, Folder 4	Mexico, 1973
Box 2, Folder 5	Tennessee Painting & Sculpture Competition, 1973
Box 2, Folder 6	United States Information Agency, 1973-1975
Box 2, Folder 7	Spokane Expo, 1974
Box 2, Folder 8	New Jersey Cultural Council, 1974
Box 2, Folder 9	Palm Beach Competition, 1974
Box 2, Folder 10	Sheldon Machlin, 1975

Box 2, Folder 11-12	Colleoni II, 1971-1982
Box 2, Folder 13	Cornell Then, Sculpture Now, 1977-1978
Box 2, Folder 14	Allentown, 1981-1982
Box 2, Folder 15	Farnese, Hercules II, 1982
Box 2, Folder 16	Memorial Service for Jason Seley, 1983 1 Sound cassette

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 4: Personal Business Records, 1955-1967, 2003

0.1 Linear feet (Box 2)

Scope and Contents: Personal business records include five ledgers record expenses (1955-1967) and the estate papers for his Seley's wife, Clara Seley.

Box 2, Folder 17-19	Ledger Books, 1955-1967
---------------------	-------------------------

Box 2, Folder 20	Estate of Clara Seley, 2003
Notes:	Also included is a xerox copy of Jason Seley's will.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 5: Printed Material, 1948-1984

0.2 Linear feet (Box 2)

Scope and Contents: Printed material includes clippings, exhibition announcements, catalogs, obituaries, and a memorial service program documenting Seley's life and career.

Box 2, Folder 21-23 Clippings, 1949-1983

Box 2, Folder 24-26 Exhibition Catalogs, 1948-1984

Box 2, Folder 27 Memorial Service Program and Obituaries, 1983

Box 2, Folder 28 Miscellaneous, 1972-1984

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 6: Artwork, circa 1945-1950

0.2 Linear feet (Box 2, OV 5)

Scope and Art works consist of 166 drawings and sketches.

Contents:

Box 2, Folder 29-40	Drawings, circa 1945-1950
---------------------	---------------------------

Oversize OV 5	Sketches, circa 1945-1950
---------------	---------------------------

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 7: Photographic Material, 1928-1981

1.3 Linear feet (Boxes 2-4, OV 6)

Scope and Contents: Photographic material, including approximately 1000 slides, shows Seley, his family, assistants working in the studio, and his artworks.

Arrangement: Photos and slides are arranged in rough chronological order.

Box 2, Folder 41-42	Personal, 1928-1973
Box 2, Folder 43-44	At Work, 1928-1973
Box 2, Folder 45	Works, 1969
Oversize OV 6	Works, 1969-1973
Box 2, Folder 46	Slides of Gibian Car, undated
Box 2, Folder 47	Slides, Cornell University, undated
Box 2, Folder 48	Slides, Car at Watkins Glen, undated
Box 2, Folder 49	Slides, Colleoni in Newark, 1969
Box 2, Folder 50	Slides, "Horse and Rider", 1970 June
Box 2, Folder 51	Slides, Horse Alone, 1970 June
Box 2, Folder 52	Slides, Horse Hightower, 1971
Box 2, Folder 53	Slides, Details of "Colleoni II", 1971
Box 3, Folder 1	Slides, Side Views "Horse and Rider", 1971
Box 3, Folder 2	Slides, Partial "Horse and Rider", 1971 July
Box 3, Folder 3	Slides, Ric Reverend "Colleoni", 1971
Box 3, Folder 4	Slides, Details and Partial of "Colleoni II", 1971 July
Box 3, Folder 5	Slides, Charles Uht Originals of Car in Progress, 1972
Box 3, Folder 6	Slides, Libertone, 1973
Box 3, Folder 7	Slides, Car, 1973
Box 3, Folder 8	Slides, Seley and Recent Works, 1976 May
Box 3, Folder 9-10	Slides, Clara Everson, 1976-1977

Box 3, Folder 11	Slides, Seley at Work, 1977
Box 3, Folder 12	Slides, For Louis Mezgar, 1977
Box 3, Folder 13	Slides, Erect Theme Variation I, 1978
Box 3, Folder 14	Slides, Duplicates, 1978
Box 4, Folder 1-9	Slides, Works, 1968-1981

[Return to Table of Contents](#)