



Smithsonian
National Museum of American History
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Guide to the Simon Lissim Papers

NMAH.AC.1276

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title:	Simon Lissim Papers
Identifier:	NMAH.AC.1276
Date:	1924 - 1981
Extent:	1.5 Cubic feet
Creator:	Lissim, Simon, 1900-1981
Language:	English .

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

These materials were donated to Cooper-Hewitt by the museum's former Curator of Drawings and Prints, Elaine Evans Dee, in 1996. Transferred to the Archives Center in 2012.

Related Archival Materials

Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, Applied Arts Department

A Lenox vase, plates, cups, and saucers. A sterling silver pin, paperweight, and cutlery.

Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, Department of Drawings and Prints

Designs for plates, vases, and other porcelain pieces, silver cutlery, stage designs, playing cards, and greeting cards. Drawings of commencement robes, a gavel, and a mace designed for City College. Poster for the Musée Céramique de Sévres.

Additional archival materials can be found at The New York Public Library, Theater Division; City University of New York, City College Archives; and Columbia University Libraries, Bakhmeteff Archive, New York City.

Porcelains designed by Lissim are in the collections of the following museums: Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris; The Victoria and Albert Museum, London; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City; The Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, New York; and The Museum of the City of New York, New York City, among others.

Processing Information

Collection is unprocessed.

Preferred Citation

Simon Lissim Papers, 1924-1981, Archives Center, National Museum of American History.

Restrictions on Access

Collection is open for research but is stored off-site and special arrangements must be made to work with it. Contact the Archives Center for information at archivescenter@si.edu or 202-633-3270.

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Biographical / Historical

Porcelain, theater, and metalwork designer. Born, Kiev, Russia, 1900. Lissim left Russia in 1919 and moved to Paris where he resided until 1940. In all of Lissim's designs, his appreciation for nature is apparent in his use of fish, birds, flowers, and other motifs.

In 1921, he began designing scenery and costumes for the Theatre de l'Oeuvre in Paris. In 1924, he created his first designs for the Sevres porcelain factory. His relationship with Sevres lasted for more than 40 years and some of his designs are still being produced. His work achieved a gold medal at the 1929 Exposition Internationale Des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes in Barcelona. Lissim made his first journey to the United States in 1935, and by 1936, his designs for the theater were featured in exhibitions in this country. His porcelains were featured in exhibitions at The Smith College Museum of Art, 1939, and Georg Jensen, Inc., 1941.

Lissim became Head of the Art Education Project at the New York Public Library in 1942. In 1947 he began teaching at the City University of New York's City College campus, where he also designed commencement costumes for the Chancellor, President, and Chief Marshal. In 1952, Lissim became an art consultant for Castleton China, Inc. in New Castle, Pennsylvania. His work was featured in the exhibition, "A Designer's Interpretation of Nature", held at the American Museum of Natural History in New York in 1953. In 1954, Lissim created his first silver pieces of jewelry and flatware manufactured by Carl Sorensen & Son, Copenhagen, Denmark. In the early 60s, Lissim created three designs for plates that were executed by Claude Boulme. He continued to work and hold exhibitions at his studio in Dobbs Ferry, New York, until his death in 1981.

Scope and Contents

This collection covers the period 1924-81 and consists of exhibition catalogs, correspondence, photographs, slides, drawings, photostats, contracts, book proofs, and related biographical material on Lissim. Extensive material on the designer's work for the Sevres porcelain factory includes correspondence, original contracts, photographs of porcelains and designs for porcelains, slides, drawings, and invoices.

Most of the material relating to Sevres is in French. A copy of the brochure for the Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes, 1925, is included, which features many of his designs. Also included are his designs for commencement caps and gowns, and other related ephemera for the City University of New York's City College.

The collection contains a mock-up of his 1952 publication, "How to be an Artist", which describes different techniques and how to apply them to greeting cards, porcelains, and textiles. Copies of the introduction and biographical sections of his book "An Artist's Interpretation of Nature", published in 1958 are included.

A scrapbook consists of articles, reviews, personal correspondence, press releases, and brochures. Among Lissim's personal correspondence are letters exchanged with Prince Philip of England, an avid collector of his work. Material on Lissim's work for the theater consists of exhibition brochures, correspondence, and lists of institutions in possession of his work. In addition, the collection contains photographs of Lissim's designs for jewelry, flatware, and textiles.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Designers -- Porcelain
- Porcelain design -- History -- 20th century -- France
- Theater design -- History -- 20th century
- Theater designers

Types of Materials:

- Brochures
- Catalogs
- Clippings
- Contracts
- Correspondence
- Drawings
- Invoices
- Photographs -- 20th century
- Photostats
- Press releases
- Scrapbooks
- Slides

Names:

- Boulme, Claude
- Carl Sorensen & Son
- Castleton China, Inc.
- City University of New York. City College
- Claude Boulme, Inc.
- Cooper-Hewitt Design Archive
- Cooper-Hewitt Design Archive
- Dee, Elaine Evans
- Georg Jensen, Inc.
- Jonals & Co.
- Lenox China (Firm)
- Manufacture nationale de Sèvres
- Philip, Prince, consort of Elizabeth II, Queen of Great Britain, 1921-

Container Listing

Box 1	Artifacts - scrapbook
Box 2	Business files
Box 3	Exhibitions
Box 4	External articles/essays
Box 5	Notes and writings
Box 6	Project files
Box 7	Visual materials
Box 8	Visual materials
Box 9	Photograph album
Box 10	Notes and writings