
Finding aid for the Lettrist movement papers, 1949-1988

Finding aid prepared by Laura Schroffel and Annette Leddy

Descriptive Summary

Title: Lettrist movement papers

Date (inclusive): 1949-1988

Number: 900263

Creator/Collector: Mouvement lettriste

Physical Description: 5.75 linear feet(3 boxes, 2 flatfile folders)

Repository:

The Getty Research Institute

Special Collections

1200 Getty Center Drive, Suite 1100

Los Angeles, California, 90049-1688

(310) 440-7390

Abstract: Assorted material from the Lettrist movement, including manuscripts, printed essays and tracts, and exhibition ephemera.

Request Materials: Request access to the physical materials described in this inventory through the [catalog record](#) for this collection. Click here for the [access policy](#) .

Language: Collection material is in French.

Biographical/Historical Note

Lettrism was founded in 1945 by Romanian poet Isidore Isou who, with the help of Gabriel Pomerand, distributed leaflets in Paris announcing that letters had superseded words as the avant-garde's preferred medium. In 1946 the first Lettrist manifesto was published. In the same year the first exhibition was held, featuring drawings, paintings and sculptures made of Roman letters. In 1949 Isou published a tract advocating sexual promiscuity, *La Mécanique des femmes*, for which he was briefly incarcerated, and over the subsequent twenty years, Lettrism's scope included everything from art and literature to film, social mores and electoral politics. Various offshoots of the movement developed, including Lettrism International, formed when Guy Debord broke with Isou; Debord subsequently founded the Situationist International.

Access

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Preferred Citation

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Processing History

In 2009 with grant funding from the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR), Laura Schroffel processed the collection and made an inventory under the supervision of Ann Harrison, while Annette Leddy helped devise the arrangement and wrote the descriptive notes.

Separated Materials

In 1990 the Getty Research Institute acquired a collection of circa 200 items documenting the history and activities of the Lettrist movement. This collection was subsequently separated. The published material from the collection, that is the books and serials, circa 150 items, were cataloged by the library as the Lettrist Movement Collection. The unpublished material, circa 50 items, forms the Lettrist Movement papers.

Scope and Content of Collection

This assembled archive of approximately 50 assorted items is a portion of a larger acquisition documenting the development of the Lettrist movement. Included here are manuscripts, tracts, exhibition catalogs, posters and printed ephemera relating to Isidore Isou, the founder of the movement, and other key members such as Maurice Lemaître, Alain Satié, and Jean-Louis Brau, as well as a range of collaborative works.

The archive includes eight items by Isou mostly from the 1970s and 1980s, one regarding the "brain-pollution" of a former colleague, another a "communiqué" to President Giscard d'Estaing. There are nine items by Isou's compatriot, Maurice Lemaître, including a tract arguing that Isou should be awarded the Nobel Prize. A collection highlight is a set of brilliantly colored issues of *Revue littéraire letteriste*, each one of which is a poster-size visual "novel" by a different artist/writer. There is also an art object, *Les mots parlent* (1971) which consists of a partially opened sardine can containing an

advertisement for wine that has been cut into pieces like a jigsaw puzzle.

Arrangement

Materials by individual artists/authors are grouped together, followed by a list of materials from collaborative projects.

Subjects - Topics

Lettrism

Literature, Experimental

Genres and Forms of Material

Art objects

Manuscripts

Posters

Printed ephemera

Tracts (documents)

Contributors

Brau, Jean Louis

Isou, Isidore

Lemaître, Maurice, 1926-

Satié, Alain, 1944-

Lettrist movement papers

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|-----------------|--|
| Box 1, 3* | Isou, Isidore, 1949-1988, undated |
| Box 1, Folder 1 | "Pour une meilleure législation en matière de littérature érotique ou défense de la littérature érotique," circa 1949 |
| | Scope and Content Note |
| | Reprographic copy. Also includes copy of "Défense d'Isidore Isou" with signatories: Neveux, Pauwels, Roussin, Maurois, Achard, Arout, Aymé, Bessy, Breton, Cocteau, Gance, Hébertot, Jeanson, de Montherlant, Ragon, Rousselot, Salacrou, Soupault, Torrès, Tzara, de Waroquier, Cassou, and Lemaître. |
| Box 1, Folder 2 | Manuscript of press release regarding Isou's film <i>Le Traité de bave et d'éternité</i>, circa January 1952 |
| Box 1, Folder 3 | "Réponse d'Isidore Isou à propos de brain-pollution de Jean-Louis Brau," 1972 |
| | Scope and Content Note |
| | Manuscript and two typescript drafts. |
| Box 1, Folder 4 | "M. Giscard d'Estaing dilapide l'argent des Français," 1978 |
| | Scope and Content Note |
| | Manuscript and typescript. |
| Box 1, Folder 5 | "Réunir les moyens pour prolonger et améliorer la vie de ceux qui combattent dans la plupart des domaines du savoir et du quotidien pour une Société et une existence meilleures...," 1985 |
| | Scope and Content Note |
| | Manuscript and three corrected typescript drafts. |
| Box 1, Folder 6 | "Mes opinions sur les désaccords entre le group 'L' et les groupes 'A'. 'F'.," 1984 |
| | Scope and Content Note |
| | Manuscript and corrected typescript drafts. |
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- Box 1, Folder 7 **"Il ne faut pas transformer Paris en une jungle...," 1987-1988**
 Scope and Content Note
 Photocopy of corrected typescript.
- Box 3*, Folder 1
Box 1, Folder 8-14 **"Invitation à l'art d'avant-garde et au lettrisme par Isidore Isou," undated**
 Lemaître, Maurice, 1951-1977
 Scope and Content Note
 Also in flatfile 1**.
- Flatfile 1**
Box 1, Folder 8 ***Le Film est déjà commencé?* poster, 1951**
 ***Aphorismes et lettries hypergraphiques*, 1954**
 Scope and Content Note
 Catalog of the first exhibition by Lemaître.
- Box 1, Folder 9 ***Mauvaises toiles de Lemaître et autres chefs-d'oeuvre*, 1966**
 Scope and Content Note
 Exhibition catalog from Librairie Galerie Anglaise.
- Flatfile 1** **"Manifeste," 1966**
 Scope and Content Note
 Poster denouncing the manner in which Lettrist works are presented.
- Box 1, Folder 10 **"Note à tous les letteristes et sympathisants," 1967**
 Scope and Content Note
 Reprographic copy of typed tract.
- Box 1, Folder 11 **"Maurice Bismuth dit Lemaître Union de la jeunesse et de l'externité, pourquoi je**
me présente," 1967
 Scope and Content Note
 Printed tract relating to the elections of March 1967.
- Box 1, Folder 12 ***Retrospective Lemaître*, 1967**
 Scope and Content Note
 Exhibition catalog from Marché expérimental d'art.
- Box 1, Folder 13 **"Le roman de Marcelle," 1970-1971**
 Scope and Content Note
 Poster from *Revue littéraire lettriste* and photocopy of manuscript of unpublished
 preface "Pour une nécrologie créatrice."
- Box 1, Folder 14 **"Un prix Nobel de littérature pour Isidore Isou," 1977**
 Scope and Content Note
 Reprographic copy of a typewritten tract.
- Box 3*, Folder 2 **Brau, Jean-Louis, 1959**
 Scope and Content Note
 Tract: *Ptotal'asymptotel'asymptotel'. La méthode et ce qui ne l'est pas!*
- Box 2 **Satié, Alain, 1971**
 Scope and Content Note
 Art object titled *Les mots parlent*.
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Box 1, 3*	Collaborative projects, 1963-1987 Scope and Content Note Also in flatfile folder 1**-2**.
Box 3*, Folder 3	<i>La lettre et le signe dans la peinture contemporaine, 1963</i> Scope and Content Note Two exhibition posters, printed on newspaper pages, from Galerie Valérie Schmidt.
Box 1, Folder 15	"Limelight," 1964 Scope and Content Note Reprographic copy of typewritten tract by Brau, Dufrière and Wolman.
Box 1, Folder 16	"Arguments lettristes no. 1," 1964 Scope and Content Note Text written by the director Isou and editorial committee: Altmann, Lemaître, Sabatier, Spacagna, Studeny, and Roberdhay.
Flatfile 1**	Le mouvement lettriste presente la semaine de l'art moderne, 1965 Scope and Content Note Poster with schedule of events.
Box 1, Folder 17	<i>Lettrisme et hypergraphie, 1966</i> Scope and Content Note Exhibition catalog from Galerie Europa in Berlin featuring the work of Altmann, Hachette, Isou, Jessemin, Lemaître, Sabatier, Spacagna and others.
Box 1, Folder 18	<i>Onze Lettristes, 1966</i> Scope and Content Note Exhibition catalog from Galerie Stadler featuring the work of de la Tour, Jessemin, Spacagna, Isou, Sabatier, Lemaître and others.
Box 1, Folder 19	<i>Hypergraphies, 1967</i> Scope and Content Note Catalog of Spacagna exhibition at Galerie Stadler.
Box 1, Folder 20	"Halte au gang des escrocs et des cuistres nécrophages de Dada et pillards du Lettrisme," 1967 Scope and Content Note Reprographic copy of typewritten tract by Front de la jeunesse/Groupe d'action lettriste.
Flatfile 1**	Pour un front culturel, 1968 Scope and Content Note Poster.
Flatfile 2**	Jeune Peinture, assemblée générale, 1968 Scope and Content Note Poster with agenda for the meeting.

Box 1, Folder 21

"Un malade dangereux: Jean Hughes," 1969

Scope and Content Note

Reprographic copy of typewritten tract by Broutin, Canal, Conrart, Curtay, Gillard, Hebert, Hachette, Jones, Lemaitre, Mallet, Monod, Poyet, Raimond, Sabatier, Satié, Tarkieltaub, and Virgnaud.

Box 1, Folder 22

Aujourd'hui le lettrisme et l'hypergraphie, 1969

Scope and Content Note

Exhibition catalog is from Galerie Stadler and features the work of Broutin, Poyet, Allain Gillard, Altman, Isou, Curtay, Satié, Sabatier and others.

Box 3*, Folder 4

Revue littéraire letteriste, 1970-1972

Scope and Content Note

Contains posters for *Revue littéraire letteriste*, featuring work by artists Satié, Isou, Sabatier, Spacagna, Broutin, Poyet, Lemaître, Gillard, Hachette, and Curtay.

Box 1, Folder 23

"Halte aux épiciers de la littérature," 1971

Scope and Content Note

Reprographic copy of typewritten tract by the Groupe Lettriste commenting on the Prix Goncourt award jury.

Box 1, Folder 24

La vérité lettriste 1945-1973, 1973

Scope and Content Note

Invitation to exhibition at Galerie Suzanne Visat.

Box 1, Folder 25

Le Lettrisme, École de Paris, 1976

Scope and Content Note

Exhibition catalog from Galerie Strunskaja featuring the work of Lemaître, Isou, Satié, Sabatier, Rose, Grimaud, Hachette and others.

Box 1, Folder 26

Le mouvement lettriste 1987, 1987

Scope and Content Note

Exhibition catalog from Atelier Ste Anne featuring the work of Canal, Dupont, Isou, Lemaître, Letailleur, Pommerand, Poyet, Roehmer, Satié, and Sabatier.