Finding aid for the Man Ray letters and album, 1922-1976

Finding aid prepared by Lynda Bunting, Liska Jacobs.
Descriptive Summary
Title: Man Ray letters and album
Date (inclusive): 1922-1976
Number: 930027
Creator/Collector: Man Ray, 1890-1976
Physical Description: 2.5 linear feet (5 boxes)
Repository: The Getty Research Institute
Special Collections
1200 Getty Center Drive, Suite 1100
Los Angeles, California, 90049-1688
(310) 440-7390
Abstract: A significant ensemble of letters and writings by or addressed to Man Ray and collected by his sister Elsie Ray Siegler and her daughter Naomi Savage. The letters provide a rich chronicle of Man Ray's personal and professional life from 1922 to 1976. Letters to Man Ray are from Dada and surrealist artists and authors, and document the dynamic artistic and literary scenes of the immediate pre- and post-World War II period in the United States. An album of Man Ray's predominately handwritten manuscripts supplements the letters.
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 English and French.
Biographical/Historical Note
American-born photographer, painter, and sculptor who played a key role in the Surrealist and Dada movements. He lived and worked in Paris in the 1920s and 1930s, in Los Angeles in the 1940s, and Paris again until his death in 1976.
Access
Open for use by qualified researchers.
Publication Rights
Contact Library Rights and Reproductions.
Preferred Citation
Man Ray letters and album, 1922-1976, Getty Research Institute, Research Library, Accession no. 930027.
http://hdl.handle.net/10020/cifa930027
Acquisition Information
Acquired in 1993.
Scope and Content of Collection
The Man Ray Letters and Album consists of a significant ensemble of letters and writings by or addressed to Man Ray, collected and safeguarded by his sister Elsie Ray Siegler and her daughter Naomi Savage. The letters from Man Ray are addressed to Siegler and Savage and provide a rich chronicle of his personal and professional life from 1922-1976. Letters to Man Ray are from celebrated Dada and Surrealist artists and authors, and document the dynamic artistic and literary scenes of the immediate pre-and post-World War II period in the United States. An album of predominately handwritten manuscripts supplements the letters by offering Man Ray's thoughts on a range of artistic issues.
Arrangement note
Series I. Letters from Man Ray, 1922-1976

Physical Description: ca. 400 items

Scope and Content Note

Series contains letters and postcards to Siegler and Savage. The letters to his sister date from shortly after he arrived in Paris in 1921 (letters begin in 1922) to her death in 1957. Siegler acted as his New York agent and thus handled many of his business affairs and set prices for some of his works. By the 1950s she was his exclusive U.S. representative. Letters cover these and other matters including tracking, storing and shipping of his works in New York; exhibitions throughout his career; paucity of sales in the early Paris and the Hollywood years; requests for camera equipment and clothing; the war and property he abandoned in France; travels; creation, sale and inventory of chess sets; his preference for painting over photography (see especially letter dated 15 April 1936); the "Sade" painting; and his parent's finances and other family matters.

The letters to his niece begin in 1945 and end in 1976, the year he died. These letters record Savage's vigilance in caring for his works stored in New York. They include topics such as, his encouragement and advice on her photographic work; problems with gallery representation in Europe during his later Paris period; book publications, especially Self Portrait; success and recognition obtained in the 1960s; and his failing health from the mid-1960s onward. This series also includes a small quantity of letters received by Siegler and Savage from galleries and museums concerning loans and shipping, and correspondence with Adrienne Fidelin, Man Ray's lover in France prior to his departure for the U.S. in 1940.

Box 1, Folder 1 Elsie Ray Siegler, 1922-1929
  Physical Description: 23.0 items

Box 1, Folder 2 1930-1939
  Physical Description: 44.0 items

Box 1, Folder 3 1940-1941
  Physical Description: 33.0 items

Box 1, Folder 4 1942-1944
  Physical Description: 24.0 items

Box 1, Folder 5 1945-1949
  Physical Description: 40.0 items

Box 1, Folder 6 1950-1952
  Physical Description: 17.0 items

Box 1, Folder 7 1953-1954
  Physical Description: 35.0 items

Box 1, Folder 8 1956-1958, n.d.
  Physical Description: 33.0 items

Box 1, Folder 9 Naomi Savage, 1945-1959
  Physical Description: 31.0 items

Box 1, Folder 10 1960-1964
  Physical Description: 48.0 items

Box 2, Folder 1 Naomi Savage, 1965-1969
  Physical Description: 39.0 items
Series I. Letters from Man Ray, 1922-1976

Box 2, Folder 2  
**1970-1976**  
Physical Description: 39.0 items

Box 2, Folder 3  
**Letters to Siegler and Savage concerning Man Ray, 1936-1958**  
Physical Description: 25.0 items  
Scope and Content Note  

Box 2, Folder 4  
**Adrienne Fidelin, 1940**  
Physical Description: 6.0 items  
Scope and Content Note  
Love letters in which they request news of each other. Man Ray's letters to Fidelin never reached her and were returned to Siegler. Fidelin's letters reached Siegler after Man Ray left for Hollywood.

Series II. **Letters to Man Ray, 1940-1950**  
Physical Description: ca. 375 items  
Scope and Content Note  
Series contains letters and postcards of a personal and professional nature from artists, authors, museum personnel, collectors, publishers, and gallery owners, spanning Man Ray's years in Hollywood. The letters from artists and authors document friendships, collaborations, works in progress, emigrations from France, and exhibitions. Notable correspondents are Salvador Dali, Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst and Dorothea Tanning, Henry Miller, Gilbert Neiman, Mary Reynolds, Hans Richter, James Thrall Soby, and Yves Tanguy.

Box 2, Folder 5  
**Dali, Salvador, 1941**  
Physical Description: 2.0 letters  
Scope and Content Note  
Letters requesting photographs for his book, with mentions of travel, expositions, and other personal matters.

Box 2, Folder 6  
**Dreier, Katherine (Société Anonyme) 1945-1948**  
Physical Description: 6.0 items  
Scope and Content Note  
Includes letter asking Man Ray to become Vice President of the society since Kandinsky died (1945); 3 letters, one of which has a note from Duchamp (1948), concerning the Yale University Art Gallery exhibit and donation of The Promenade; and postcard about Schwitters for an exhibition at the Pinacotheca (1947).

Box 2, Folder 7  
**Duchamp, Marcel, 1940-1941, 1943-1950**  
Physical Description: 29.0 items  
Scope and Content Note  
Personal letters concerning his and other artists' plans for leaving France; much on chess and the creation of chess sets and boards; about an exhibition of rotoreliefs with sketches on how to install (948 Apr 10); and about the creation and sale of his boxes; with news of Mary Reynolds and one letter written by the two of them. (See also Mary Reynolds letters in Box 2, folder 19, previously unidentified).
Box 2, Folder 8  
**Ernst, Max and Dorothea Tanning, 1948, n.d.**  
**Physical Description:** 12.0 letters  
**Scope and Content Note**  
Chatty letters concerning personal matters with some comments about work and exhibitions. Includes 1 letter from Tanning about touching up some portrait photographs Man Ray sent and her photogenic qualities (Mar 24). Most dated without years, 2 dated 1948.

Box 2, Folder 9  
**Ford, Charles-Henri, 1943**  
**Physical Description:** 2.0 postcards

Box 2, Folder 10  
**Miller, Henry, 1945-1948, n.d.**  
**Physical Description:** 19.0 items  
**Scope and Content Note**  
Personal letters and postcards mentioning friends (several references to Gilbert Neiman), books, Sade, and photographs for Miller's postcard stationary. Also includes long discussions on the duality of man, and suggests that Man Ray create portraits based on phrenology (Feb 9, Mar 24).

Box 2, Folder 11  
**Motherwell, Robert, 1948**  
**Physical Description:** 2.0 letters  
**Scope and Content Note**  
Regarding Dada painters and poets. One letter written by George Wittenborn.

Box 2, Folder 12  
**Neiman, Gilbert, 1943-1948, 1950**  
**Physical Description:** 29.0 letters  
**Scope and Content Note**  
Witty, personal letters contain much literary gossip, including his thoughts on the work of Eluard, Breton, Céline, their mutual friend Henry Miller and many other writers and publishers. Included are discussions of his own writings and his struggles to publish. With a 4 p. poem "Twist the Face of Time" (sent with a letter dated 1944 Sep 8) and two 1 p. poems, "A Communication" and "Enocomics" (both ca. 1946).

Box 2, Folder 13-14  
**Richter, Hans, 1942-1950**  
**Scope and Content Note**  
Three letters give news of himself and others, among other things, 1948, 1950. Another folder contains 12 letters (1942, 1945-1946, 1948), clippings, catalog and announcement concerning his film Dreams that money can buy. The letters chronicle Richter's difficulty interpreting Man Ray's story onto film, his thoughts on how it should be done, the type of critics who are interested in reviewing the film, and the Hollywood opening. The verso of one of the letters contains a typed statement by Man Ray detailing his approach to art, which was edited down for the catalog. (See also Special Collections accession nos. 880428 and 970021 for more on Dreams that money can buy.)

Box 2, Folder 15  
**Soby, James Thrall, 1939, 1941-1943, 1948-1949**  
**Physical Description:** 8.0 letters  
**Scope and Content Note**  
Letters in which Soby discusses the following topics (among others): his thoughts about donating Man Ray's photographs that Soby published to the museum in Hartford; his collection of art, including a drawing by Picasso of Man Ray which Soby has but knows he should return to Man Ray; the album sales; the task of locating photographs of Duchamp's works for a book; his thoughts on the art business in NYC; his request for photographs for the Army Camps show; and reassurances to Man Ray about the exhibit of his photographs in Monroe Wheeler's portrait show.
Box 2, Folder 16  **Tanguy, Yves, 1940, 1950, undated**  
Physical Description: 3.0 items  
Scope and Content Note  
2 letters (one of which is illustrated on the verso) updating Man Ray on emigration plans of their artist friends; with a note.

Box 2, Folder 17  **Miscellaneous letters A-L**  
Physical Description: ca. 55 items  
Scope and Content Note  
Letters from artists, museum staff, gallery owners, collectors, publishers, and friends concerning a variety of topics. Correspondents include Antonin Artaud, Leo Castelli, Leonor Fini, Seymour Hacker, John Laughlin, Julien Levy, among others.

Box 2, Folder 18  **Miscellaneous letters M-Z**  
Physical Description: ca. 55 items  
Scope and Content Note  

Box 2, Folder 19  **Unidentified**  
Physical Description: ca. 20 items  
Scope and Content Note  
Includes letters from Mary Reynolds to Man Ray (Mary Louise Hubachek Reynolds, 1891-1950), signed only "Mary", and previously unidentified. In one letter she refers to her brother, Frank Brookes Hubachek.

Box 2, Folder 20  **Miscellaneous**  
Physical Description: 5 items

**Series III. Hollywood album, 1940-1948**
Physical Description: 3 boxes  
Scope and Content Note  
The Hollywood album holds handwritten and typescript writings, most of one page, on art and aesthetics, written and assembled by Man Ray, 1940-1948. The album pages have been re-housed in boxes 3-4.  
Loose items, including handwritten notes, photographs, drawings, a manuscript, and a catalog, originally accompanied the notebook but are now housed separately, with the original notebook binder, in box 5.

**Box 3-4**  
**Album**  
Scope and Content Note  
Hollywood album is composed of 12 sections of manuscripts, by topic.

**Box 3**  
**Music and Cinema**  
Scope and Content Note  
On the cinema, ideas for films, the superiority of painting and drawing over film.

**Box 3**  
**Painting and Photography (P&P)**

**Box 3**  
**Art and Science (A&S)**

**Box 3**  
**Objects**
Box 3

**In Time**

Scope and Content Note
On the subject of time.

Box 3

**Sade**

Scope and Content Note
About the marquis de Sade.

Box 3

**Influences**

Scope and Content Note
Influences in art.

Box 3

**Words**

Scope and Content Note
On the study of words, writing and writers. Includes "Portraits" or "Men I have Known."

Box 4

**Nature and the Man**

Scope and Content Note
On the human form, imitation and nature.

Box 4

**Dream**

Scope and Content Note
Significance of dreams as subjects in art. Includes "Apprentices and pupils."

Box 4

**Image**

**Calm Diatribe**

Scope and Content Note
Poem in handwritten and typed form.

Box 5

**Material accompanying the Album**

Scope and Content Note
Materials originally inside cover of a Julian Levy Gallery catalog.

Box 5, Folder 1

**Manuscripts**

"Revolving Doors"
"Math & Butterflies"
"A Note on the Shakespearean Equations"
"Equations for Shakespear [sic]"
"Photography in Reverse"
"Statement on Surrealism"
"Inevitability of Modern Art"
"The World We Make Believe"

Box 5, Folder 1

**Drawings**

Physical Description: 3.0 items
Scope and Content Note
Ink drawing of a camera; 2 pencil drawings.

Box 5, Folder 1

**Photograph of group, Hollywood, 1948**

Scope and Content Note
Alfred Lewin, Millie Lewin, Juliet Man Ray, Hans Richter, Man Ray, Florence Homulka in front of poster for *Dreams that Money can Buy* (film opening?).

Box 5, Folder 1

**Astrological chart for Man Ray**

**Julian Levy Gallery catalog, 1945**
Box 5, Folder 2

**Original notebook for Album**

**Scope and Content Note**

Cover includes photograph of Man Ray signed by Man Ray and Savage, 1948.