Finding aid for the
Ralph Steiner Miscellaneous Collection, 1899-1986
AG 142

Finding aid updated by Paige Hilman, 2018
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AG 142

Creator

This is an artificial collection, compiled to document the career of Steiner from a variety of perspectives.

Abstract

Miscellaneous papers and camera equipment documenting the career of Ralph Steiner, 1899-1986, photographer and filmmaker.

Quantity/Extent

1 linear foot

Language of Materials

English

Biographical/Historical Note

Ralph Steiner studied photography at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire and at the Clarence White School from 1921 to 1922. With White's assistance, Steiner got a job making photogravure plates at the Manhattan Photogravure Company, where Alfred Stieglitz's *Camera Work* was printed. After about a year, he quit to become a freelance advertising and magazine photographer.

Steiner began to make films in the late 1920s. In 1936 he worked with Paul Strand on *The Plow That Broke the Plains*, Pare Lorentz's documentary film about the dust bowl storms. Two years later, Steiner and Willard Van Dyke founded American Documentary Films, Inc., and collaborated on *The City*, a critically acclaimed film about New York. Steiner moved to Hollywood in the 1940s but returned to New York in 1948. There he continued to freelance both as a photographer and cameraman and occasionally taught students. He relocated to Vermont in 1970, where he remained until his death. [http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/artists/1429/ralph-steiner-american-1899-1986/]

Scope and Content Note

The collection was acquired from various sources. The collection consists of five subgroups.

Subgroup one contains various production records, 1968-1992, of *The Joy of Seeing*, including correspondences and project summaries.
Subgroup two contains books from Steiner’s library, many with annotations by Steiner or the author.

Subgroup three contains 25 letters, 1972-1977, with Louis P. Savenelli and camera equipment given to Savenelli by Steiner.

Subgroup four contains one postcard, 1974, from Steiner to B.A. King regarding a visit from Lee Witkin.

Subgroup five contains photocopies of 21 letters, 1980-1985, between Del Zogg and Steiner regarding various exhibitions and presentations.

**Arrangement**

- Subgroup 2: Books, 1 box
- Subgroup 3: Correspondence with Louis P. Savenelli, 1972-1977, 1 box
- Subgroup 4: Correspondence with B.A. King, 1974, 1 postcard
- Subgroup 5: Correspondence with Del Zogg, 1980-1985, 1 box

**Names and Subject Terms**

Steiner, Ralph [http://vocab.getty.edu/ulan/500022058]

**Restrictions**

- **Conditions Governing Access**
  
  Access to this collection requires an appointment with the Volkerding Study Center.

- **Conditions Governing Use**
  
  It is the responsibility of the user to obtain permission from the copyright owner (which could be the institution, the creator of the record, the author or his/her transferees, heirs, legates or literary executors) prior to any copyright-protected uses of the collection.

  The user agrees to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless the Arizona Board of Regents, the University of Arizona, Center of Creative Photography, including its officers, employees, and agents, from and against all claims made relating to copyright or other intellectual property infringement.

**Provenance**

Each group of materials in this collection was acquired from a different source. This is an artificial collection, compiled to document the career of Steiner from a variety of
perspectives. Subgroups were gifts of Barbara Van Dyke, A. Olson, Louis P. Savenelli, Tony King of Black Ice Publishers, and Del Zogg, respectively.

Related Materials

Ralph Steiner Collection, AG68

Preferred Citation

Steiner, Ralph Misc. Collection, 1899-1986. AG142. Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ.

Processing Information


Container List

Series 1: Subgroup One, 1968-1992
Note: Gift of Barbara Van Dyke, 1992

Box  Item
1  1  Production records for *The Joy of Seeing*, 1968
2  Notebooks, letters, and postcards kept by Barbara Van Dyke who worked with Ralph Steiner and Willard Van Dyke on the film *The Joy of Seeing*.
3  Prospectus/summary of project and itemized costs kept by BVD
4  Correspondence with Nicholas Dorsky and Ralph Steiner.

Series 2: Subgroup Two
Note: Gift of A. Olson, 1999

Box  Item
2  1  Books from Ralph Steiner’s library, many with notes by Steiner or annotated by the author. List is with the books.

Series 3: Subgroup Three, 1972-1977
Note: Twenty five letters from Ralph Steiner to Louis P. Savenelli, circa 1972-1977, Gift of Louis P. Savenelli, 2007

Box  Item
3  1  Annotated list of letters by Savenelli (2 pages)
2  Letter from Savenelli to CCP describing his friendship with Steiner (2 pgs)
3  Ralph Steiner exhibition announcement, 1975
4  Camera and lenses belonging to Steiner and give to Savenelli, including
   EXA 35mm single lens reflex camera, Ihagee, Dresden, Germany,
   with f 2.9 50mm
   Meritar lens
   Leather case
   Meyer-Optik Gorlitz Trioplan 1:2.8 100mm lens, serial number 13336660

Series 4: Subgroup Four, 1974
Note: Gift of Tony King, Black Ice Publishers, 2009

Box  Item
1  1  One postcard from Ralph Steiner to B.A. King, January 9, 1974, talking
    about a visit from Lee Witkin, Witkin Gallery.

Series 5: Subgroup Five, 1980-1985
Note: 21 letters between Ralph Steiner and Del Zogg, Gift of Del Zogg, 2015

Box  Item
1  1  “Highlights from the Ralph Steiner Presentation,” undated [photocopy]
2  Witkin Gallery press release, “Ralph Steiner’s Photographs,” October 9 –
   November 9, 1974 [photocopy]
3  Proposal by Ralph Steiner for a Center for Creative Photography in NYC,
   undated [photocopy]
4  Writing about making new photographs look vintage, 1976 [photocopy]
5  ‘A New Approach to Photography Exhibitions: “The Photography in
   Search of Himself”’, undated [photocopy]
6  Abstracts for IMP/GEH symposium on the art history of photography,
   1975 [photocopy]