

Center for Creative Photography

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Finding aid for the
Benjamin Chinn archive, 1947-1952, 1960
AG 251

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AG 251

Creator

Center for Creative Photography

Abstract

Benjamin Chinn was taught photography at a young age and took that knowledge skill into the U.S. Army Air Corps during WWII. Chinn then attended the new fine art photography at the California School of Fine Arts, now the San Francisco Art Institute, where he learned from Minor White and Ansel Adams; during this time he began photographing everyday life in Chinatown. From 1950-1951, Chinn studied in Europe at the Académie Julian and photographed Parisian street life. Images from both periods are represented in this collection; as well as exchange prints made by other photographers.

Quantity/ Extent

6 linear feet

Language of Materials

Not described

Biographical Note

Benjamin Chinn was born on April 30th 1921 in Chinatown San Francisco. His older brother John introduced him to photography and taught him how to develop and print images in their basement darkroom. During WWII, Chinn served in the Pacific as an aerial and public relations photographer in the U.S. Army Air Corps.

After WWII, Chinn was accept into the new fine art photography program at the California School of Fine Arts (CSFA), now the San Francisco Art Institute; where he was groomed as a member of the next generation of the “West Coast School of Photography” by Minor White and Ansel Adams. While at CFSA, Chinn began photographing Chinatown, making intimate portraits of everyday, postwar life.

From 1950-1951, Chinn studied in Europe at the Académie Julian and photographed Parisian street life; he also became friends with Henri Cartier-Bresson during this time. In 1954 *Perceptions*, containing some of Chinn’s Parisian images, was shown at the San Francisco Museum of Art by Minor White.

In 1953 Chinn went to work for the U.S. Sixth Army Photo lab, where he met and trained Paul Caponigro in technical processes. Chinn had a 31 year career at the Army Photo lab, and continued to travel and photograph after his retirement. Chinn died April 25th, 2009.

http://www.benjaminchinn.com/Benjamin_Chinn/Biography.html

Scope and Content Note

This collection contains various sized negatives and prints representing Benjamin Chinn's most influential periods of his artistic work. Negatives include work from Chinn's time in Paris as well as his work photographing in the streets of San Francisco. Negatives and images are from 1947-1952 and 1960, as well as undated.

Names and Subject Terms

Cinn, Benjamin, 1921-2009

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

The Benjamin Chinn archive was donated by the Benjamin Chinn estate to the Center for Creative Photography in 2014.

Preferred Citation

Benjamin Chinn archive, n.d. AG 251. Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ.

Processing Information

Finding aid updated by Meghan Jordan in June 2016.

Container ListBox Folder

Series 1: Photographic Materials

1	1	4x5 Negs: Chinatown N070-N101, N103-N140, and N533-N534 2¼ Negs: Chinatown N102, N141-148 3½ x 4½ Black and White mounted prints (32)
	2	4x5 Negs: Chinatown, N537-593, N1030-N1032, and N1138-N1142 2¼ Negs: Chinatown, N1134-N1137 3½ x 4½ Black and White mounted prints (23)
	3	4x5 Negs: Chinatown, N1162-N1169, N1171-N1306
	4	2½ Negs: Chinatown, N1326-N1422, N1474-N1477, N1482-N1485, N1494-N1514, N15552-1557 4x5 Negs: Chinatown N1423-N1432, N1447-N1455, N1459-N1462
	5	2¼ Negs: Paris, N182-N241, with digital contact prints
	6	2¼ Negs: Paris, N242-N298, with digital contact prints
	7	2¼ Negs: Paris, N299-N364, with digital contact prints
2	1	4x5 Negs: Paris, N365-N368, with digital contact prints 2¼ Negs: Paris, N369-N401, N435-N454, with digital contact prints
	2	2¼ Negs: Paris, N459-N486, with digital contact prints
	3	4x5 Negs: Paris, N487-N530
	4	2¼ Negs: Paris, N595-N696
	5	2¼ Negs: Paris, N697-N779
	6	2¼ Negs: Paris, N780-N878
	7	2¼ Negs: Paris, N879-N943
	8	4x5 Negs: Paris, N946-N1028, N1154-N1161, N1566-N1573, N-1575-N1578 2¼ Negs: N1143-N1148
3	1	Paris Contact Sheets, P2210-P2256
4	1	Exchange Prints: D003, P052-P217, Portraits of Chinn
	2	Exchange Prints: D003, P052-P217, Mounted prints by other photographers
5	1	Exchange Prints: P218-P385, Mounted prints by other photographers
6	1	Chinatown, P233-P2110 [prints]
7	1	Paris: P258-P2209, PM029 [prints]