

Center for Creative Photography

The University of Arizona

1030 N. Olive Rd.

P.O. Box 210103

Tucson, AZ 85721

Phone: 520-621-6273

Fax: 520-621-9444

Email: info@ccp.arizona.edu

URL: <http://creativephotography.org>

Finding aid for the
Ralph Steiner collection, 1940s - 1975

AG 68

Ralph Steiner Collection, circa 1940s - 1975

AG 68

Creator

Steiner, Ralph, 1899-1986

Abstract

Papers, negatives, motion picture films and sound tracks, 1940s-1975, of Ralph Steiner (1899-1986), photographer, editor, writer, teacher, and filmmaker. Includes correspondence; black-and-white negatives and color transparencies from Steiner's personal work and commercial work; tearsheets from *PM* (newspaper); 16 mm. original and print footage; 16 mm. negatives; 16 mm. magnetic sound tracks; 16 mm. optical tracks; and 1/4 in. magnetic tracks. Film titles include *Seaweed*, *A Seduction* (1960); *One Man's Island* (1969); *Glory, Glory* (1970-71); *A Look at Laundry* (1971); *Look Park* (1973); *Beyond Niagara* (1975); *Slowdown* (1975); and *Hurrah for Light* (1975).

Quantity/ Extent

24 linear feet

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

This collection consists mainly of motion picture material in the form of 16mm camera originals, prints, A and B rolls, negatives, magnetic tracks, optical tracks, and 1/4 in. magnetic tracks (audiotapes). Steiner's early films *H2O* (1929), *The Plow That Broke the Plains* (1936), *The City* (1939), and others are not represented in this collection. The films that make up this collection all date after 1960 and represent his experimental films that examined the motions and rhythms of the natural world. These films are all part of *The Joy of Seeing* series.

Also included in this collection are outtakes of original and print film which, for Steiner, represented footage not suitable for inclusion in the collection. It was Steiner's hope that these materials would be accessible to qualified film students at the university for use as creative editing projects. There are 90 reels of outtakes varying in length from 100 to 900 ft.

There is a letter from Ansel Adams to Steiner, in which Adams comments on Fred Picker, the zone system, and photographic previsualization. There are tearsheets (in very fragile condition) from *PM* magazine which document Steiner's tenure as picture editor in the early 1940s.

The collection also contains black-and-white negatives and color transparencies made over the course of Steiner's career. The negatives exist in a variety of formats, including 8x10, 6½x8½, 5x7, 4x5-inch and smaller sheet film, and 6x6cm and 4.5x6cm and 35mm roll film. For the most part these are identified with captions or titles, but few are dated. Many negative sleeves have Steiner's printing instructions inscribed on them.

Of particular interest are negatives made by Steiner as a student at Dartmouth College, c. 1919-1921; negatives from class projects at the Clarence White School of Photography, 1921-1922; work from the summer of 1929 which Steiner spent at Yaddo, the artists' and writers' colony in Saratoga Springs, New York; fragments of Steiner's film *Café Universal* (1934), made with members of the Group Theater; stills from the making of *The Plow that Broke the Plains* (1936); and stills by Marion Post Wolcott of Steiner at work on *The People of the Cumberland* (1937). The bulk of the roll film negatives are from Steiner's later photographic projects and include negatives of clouds, trees, grasses, etc. The cloud photographs were published in the book *In Pursuit of Clouds* (1985).

The majority of the negatives are original, but there are also many copy negatives and some enlarged cloud negatives. The roll film negatives are generally numbered and lettered, apparently to correspond to various series of images and to give each negative a unique identifying number. Steiner does not seem, however, to have been consistent in his use of these numbering schemes. Negatives that Steiner selected for printing often have their corners cut or their edges notched.

There are a small number of proof prints included in the collection [see Appendix B for a list]. These are primarily on unfixed printing out paper and so are ephemeral. A few of the proofs are on conventional developing out papers.

Arrangement

Series 1: Motion picture materials, 1960-1975

Series 2: Outtakes from motion picture materials

Series 3: Correspondence

Series 4: Tearsheets

Series 5: Negatives

Series 6: Proof prints

Series 7: Miscellaneous materials

Names and Subject Terms

Steiner, Ralph, 1899-1986 [<https://lcn.loc.gov/n81110573>]

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

This collection began as a gift to the Center for Creative Photography from Ralph Steiner in 1983.

Preferred Citation

Ralph Steiner collection, 1940s - 1975. AG 68. Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ.

Processing Information

Processed in 1985 by David Peters. Revised in 1988. The finding aid was updated by Paloma Phelps in 2017.

Container List

Series 1: Motion picture materials, 1960-1975

Quantity: 6.25 linear feet. The reels were arranged by project, then ordered chronologically. Unidentified materials, similar in visual style to the *Joy of Seeing* series, are present in this series.

Note: Look Park and *Hurrah for Light* were restored and new prints made in 2002. The preservation work was done by the Anthology Film Archives, New York. The project was funded by a grant from the National Film Preservation Foundation.

Box	Folder
-----	--------

- | | |
|----|---|
| 1 | Two manuscripts by Ralph Steiner about Photographic Technique, circa 1986 [Both manuscripts are similar but not exact duplicates]
Correspondence with Steiner, David Vestal, James Enyeart, John Schaefer about the manuscripts, 1986 |
| 1A | Unidentified [11 reels], 1960-1975 |
| 2 | Unidentified [5 reels], 1960-75 <i>Seaweed</i> ,
<i>A Seduction</i> [7 reels], 1960
A roll; A track; B roll; B wind optical black-and-white print; unknown type;
1/4 n. magnetic track |
| 3 | <i>One Man's Island</i> [7 reels], 1969
A roll; A wind track; B roll; internegative; unknown type; unknown type;
1/4 in. magnetic track
<i>Glory, Glory</i> [10 reels], 1970-1971
A roll; A roll; A track; B roll; B roll; negative; 16 mm. magnetic track; 1/4
in. magnetic track; electronic music, 15 ips.; 1/4 in. magnetic track; 1/4
in. magnetic track |
| 4 | <i>Look Park</i> , [abstraction meditations], 1973-1974 Audiotapes:
7" reel-to-reel, original, full track
7" reel-to-reel, 1/4" mag. track complete |

7" reel-to-reel, ¼" mag. track
5" reel-to-reel, ¼" mag. track, electronic music
16mm films:
16mm Mag. track
16mm optical track
16mm color negative
16mm comp. color print
16mm answer print, 2002 [this is the exhibition print; has new negative and soundtrack]
16mm color pic negative and track negative [archival print]

- 4A *Hurrah for Light*, [abstraction mediations], 1972
16mm Answer print, 2002 [this is the exhibition print; has new negative and soundtrack]
16mm, Optical Track, A Wind
16mm, Color, internegative, Picture and time Strip
16mm, Color reversal, A and B rolls [original image]
Beyond Niagara [5 reels], 1975
A roll, original; B roll, original; optical track; unknown type; 1/4 in. magnetic track
- 5 *Slowdown* [9 reels], 1975
A track; negative; optical sound; 16 mm. magnetic track, patched--reject; 1/4 in. magnetic track
A Look at Laundry [7 reels], 1971
A roll; A track; B roll; B wind optical track; negative; 16mm magnetic track; 1/4 in. magnetic track, full 7 1/2 ips.

Series 2: Outtakes from motion picture materials

Quantity: 5 linear feet. Due to lack of documentation with this particular series and to the fact that this material was not considered by Steiner to be part of the collection, no arrangement has been placed on this material beyond simply isolating the films from the rest of the collection.

Box	Folder
6	25 reels, [n.d.]
7	20 reels, [n.d.]
8	15 reels, [n.d.]
9	30 reels, [n.d.]

Series 3: Correspondence

Quantity: fraction of a linear foot. Not arranged.

Box Folder

10 Correspondence, 1978

Series 4: Tearsheets

Quantity: 1 linear foot

Box Folder

10 Tearsheets from *PM*, 1940-41

Series 5: Negatives

Arrangement was by the photographer; by format, and generally by subject.

Box Folder

11 Glass plate negatives [3]

12 Black-and-white negatives: 8x10-inch and smaller sheet film
[See Appendix A]

13 Black-and-white negatives: 8x10-inch and smaller sheet film

14 Black-and-white negatives: 8x10-inch and smaller sheet film

15 Black-and-white negatives and color transparencies: 8x10 and
smaller sheet film

16 Black-and-white negatives: 4x5-inch and smaller [Boxes A-C]

17 Black-and-white negatives: Roll film and 35mm: Clouds [Box A]

18 Black-and-white negatives: Roll film and 35mm: Clouds, etc. [Box B]

19 Black-and-white negatives: Roll film and 35mm: Portraits, clouds,
Monhegan

20 Black-and-white negatives: Roll film and 35mm: Saba, NYC, Oaxaca, trees

21 Black-and-white negatives: Roll film and 35mm: Trees, book illustrations
[Boxes

Series 6: Proof prints

Box Folder

22 Proof prints [See Appendix B for a list of proof prints]

Series 7: Miscellaneous materials

Box Folder

23 8x10-inch negative sleeves

24 4x5-inch, roll film and 35mm negative sleeves

25 Four 16 mm film cans [empty]

Appendix A: 8x10 negatives (Box 12)

Row of Houses, Albany, 1929

Whitfield Cook [c. 1949; copy neg.]

Coconut Factory

"U" Shaped Doorway, Mechanicsville, NY, [1929]

C.up. Electric Wires [copy neg.]

Mid-Hudson Bridge, [c. 1931]

"One Talking Picture" or Winter Garden Now, 1929

Curves Ahead, [c. 1950; copy negs.]

[Industrial scene; copy negs.]

Broad Street and Broadway

Shirley Ayers, [c. 1950; copy negs.]

Electrical Switches, [c. 1930]

Ford Side (Looking toward front), [c. 1929]

Mozart [POV, pl. ;enlarged copy neg.]

N.Y. City Old Post Office [City Hall Square, c. 1930]

Nehi in Field [A. Daingneault--Nehi Sign, 1929]

[Trees]

[Trees]

Self-Portrait with 4x5 Korona View [1930]

Warm Friends--Saratoga Coal [1929]

Ham & Eggs--Horizontal [c. 1934]

Electric Wires [c. 1930; copy negs.; Cf. C.up. Electric Wires]

Flat Side of Old Ford, [1929]

Peacock Smith [enlarged copy neg.]

Ford Front [c. 1929]

Nehi--Esposito [A. Esposito--Nehi Sign, 1929]

Porch Rocker [American Rural Baroque, 1930]

Merry Xmas [Butcher Shop; copy neg.]

Nude [with Mannequin]

[Clouds with trees; POV, pl. 89; enlarged copy neg.]

[Clouds with horizon; IPC, pl. 23; enlarged copy neg.]

Henry Billings, [1930]

[S. J. Perelmann, 1935; copy negs.]

[S. J. Perelmann, 1935; copy negs.]

[S. J. Perelmann, 1935; copy negs.]

[S. J.] Perelmann, [1935]

[S. J.] Perelmann, [1935]

[S. J.] Perelmann, [1935]

[S. J.] Perelmann, [1935]

[S. J. Perelmann, 1935]

[S. J.] Perelmann--Shooting Bird, [1935]

Appendix A: 8x10 negatives (Box 13)

[Louis Lozowick Before Erie Canal Lock Gears, 1929; copy neg.]

[Hanging Laundry]

[Frame enlargements from H2O and Mechanical Principles]

180 New York Series [enlarged negs.]

180 New York Series [enlarged negs.]

180 New York Series [enlarged negs.]

180 New York Series [enlarged negs.]

180 New York Series [enlarged negs.]

180 New York Series [enlarged negs.]

180 New York Series [enlarged negs.]

180 New York Series [enlarged negs.]

180 New York Series [enlarged negs.]

180 New York Series [enlarged negs.]

180 New York Series [enlarged negs.]

180 New York Series [enlarged negs.]

180 New York Series [enlarged negs.]

180 New York Series [enlarged negs.]

[New York Buildings ?]

[Louis Lozowick Before Erie Canal Lock Gears, 1929; copy negs. #1-4]

[Laundry on Clothesline; copy negs.]

[Laundry on Clothesline; copy negs.]

[Laundry on Clothesline; copy negs.]

[Empire State Building]

[Empire State Building]

Alligator Sky [enlarged cloud negs.; IPC, pl. 37]

God/Adam [enlarged cloud negs. #1-3]

Chinese Dragon [enlarged cloud negs.; IPC, pl. 36]

Nike #s1-3 [enlarged cloud negs.; IPC, pl. 46]

Cloud Neg. Copy #1 [IPC, pl. 75]

[Chinese Dragon, enlarged cloud neg.; IPC, pl. 36]
Cloud Negatives [enlarged cloud negs.; IPC pl. 75]
Peacock [enlarged cloud negs.; IPC pl. 80]
Saratoga Springs House, closer view [1929]
Saratoga Springs Fancy House (now Funeral Home), [1929]
Saratoga Springs Fancy House, [1929; copy negs.]
Morris [Carnovsky] & Lee Strasberg--After Rehearsal, [1936]
Typewriter, 1921-1922

Appendix A: 8x10 negatives (Box 15)

[McLean Trucking and Akers Trucking; 5x7 color trans.]
[Arrangement of bottles and glassware; 8x10 color trans.]
[Arrangement of bottles and glassware; 8x10 color trans.]
[Arrangement of bottles and glassware; 8x10 color trans.]
[Neon signs; 8x10 color trans.]
[Woman in bathtub; 8x10 color trans.]
[Neon signs through prism; 8x10 color trans.]
[Duck hunters; 5x7 color trans.]
[Shalimar bottle; 8x10 color trans.]
[Neon signs through prism; 8x10 color trans.]
[Enlarged cloud images on Kodak Translite film; IPC, pl. 34]
[Enlarged cloud images on Kodak Translite film; IPC, pl. 58]
[Enlarged cloud images on Kodak Translite film; IPC, pl. 74]
[Enlarged cloud images on Kodak Translite film; IPC, pl. 77]
[Enlarged cloud images on Kodak Translite film; IPC, pl. 89]
[Translite film test strips]
[Stills from *Café Universal* (1934); Art Smith and Elia Kazan]
[Stills from *Café Universal* (1934); Art Smith]
[Enlarged cloud neg.; 5x7; IPC, pl. 37]
[Male portrait; 5x7 copy neg.]
[Distorted view of pedestrians; 5x7]

Appendix B: Proof prints

Typewriter, 1921-22
42nd St. between 1st and 2nd Avenues, North Side
[Clouds] Mexico 1980 MX-7
Caroline
[Clouds] '85 30-32
[Clouds] ZZ 26
[Clouds] CE 29-30
[Clouds] Monheg '85 102-103

[Clouds] '85 135-141

[Clouds] Mon '84 68-69, 73-74, 130-131, 147-148

[Clouds] Mon '84 60-61, 89-90, 111-112, 152-153

Dr. Rudolph Stonehenge, Jan. 15, 1969

Triffids P-41, P-50

Majorca EE-3

Spain Grass XYZ

Trees, Sky, NY-Fifth Ave. Central Park & Others

'V' Tree and Its Leaves--Fall of '78

[Fragment from *Mechanical Principles* (1931) ?]