

William Auerbach-Levy drawings, 1925-1964
3,326 drawings



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Prepared by Morgen Stevens-Garmon, April 2014
Description is in English.

Descriptive Summary

Creator: William Auerbach-Levy (1889-1964)

Title: William Auerbach-Levy drawings

Dates: 1925-1964

Abstract: William Auerbach-Levy (1889-1964) was a Russian born, New York City educated painter, etcher, and caricaturist. During his forty year career, he created thousands of caricatures for national and local New York publications, predominantly capturing Broadway productions and theatrical personalities, but also depicting politicians, writers, musicians, military personnel, and sports heroes.

Extent: 3,326 individual drawings

MCNY Numbers: 43.366.682; 67.145; 68.3.75; Activity ID: 17946

Language: English

Biographical Note

William Auerbach-Levy (1889-1964) was born in Brest-Litovsk, Russia. His family added the surname Levy when they moved to the United States around 1894. Auerbach-Levy grew up in the Lower East Side where his drawing talent was recognized at an early age. At 11 years-old he was admitted to study at the National Academy of Design. He briefly attended the Julian Academy in Paris after graduating from City College, but returned to New York where he taught at the National Academy and the Educational Alliance Art School. Auerbach-Levy worked as a painter and etcher, but he is best known as a caricaturist. In a career spanning four decades, Auerbach-Levy drew the popular artists, performers, thinkers, and athletes of his day. His work appeared in a variety of publications including *The New Yorker*, *Vanity Fair*, *Esquire*, *Colliers*, *Brooklyn Eagle*, and the *New York Post*. In 1947, he published two books on caricature: *The Art of Caricature* and *Is That Me? A book about caricature*, in collaboration with his wife Florence Von Wien. Auerbach-Levy died of a heart attack on June 29, 1964 in Ossining, New York.

Scope and Content

Objects in the collection are primarily working drawings prepared for publication. Many feature white-out corrections and notes in the margins or on the back of the drawing. A few of the works are in color, but most are black line drawings with a blue coloring used to indicate areas of shading to the printers. Subjects are predominantly scenes and stars from Broadway productions from the mid-1920s up until his death in 1964 but also include sports personalities, politicians, writers, musicians, and military figures. The collection also contains images of Charlie Chaplin, the Marx brothers, Babe Ruth, Norman Rockefeller and others outside the world of Broadway who captured popular interest. Objects range in size from approximately 28" x 22" to 11" x 8".

Arrangement

The collection is arranged according to accession number. It is unknown whether this reflects the order in which the objects were received, or if object arrangement was determined by the Museum staff at the time of primary donation in 1964.

Language of Materials

Materials are in English.

Access and Use

The Museum of the City of New York collections must be examined on site. Appointments to examine materials must be made in advance by contacting the Archivist through e-mail at research@mcny.org.

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Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

[Title of drawing, date.] William Auerbach-Levy drawings, [dates]. Museum of the City of New York. Accession #.

Custodial History

The vast majority of the collection was in the possession of Auerbach-Levy until the time of his death in 1964 when his estate donated the drawings to the Museum. The collection was re-housed in the Museum's new climate-controlled storage facility in 2009.

Acquisition Information

Of the 3,326 drawings in the collection, all but four were donated as part of a single gift from the Estate of William Auerbach-Levy in 1964. One drawing came in 1943 as part of a gift from fellow caricaturist Rollin Kirby (43.366.682). Another was donated by Auerbach-Levy's brother, Max D. Levy, in 1967 (67.145). A third comes from a large gift from the theatrical press agent John L. Toohey, given in 1968 (68.3.75), and a fourth was found in the Museum's collection in 2014 without any identifiable donor (F2014.170.1).

Processing Information

Over 3,000 drawings given from the Estate of William Auerbach-Levy were assigned the accession number series 64.100. These were initially cataloged by Museum employee Mary S. Cassidy in 2003. Unnumbered drawings from the Estate gift were assigned an X2013.165 series in preparation for digitization. The entire collection was digitized in December 2013 and January 2014. In January and February 2014, Cataloging Coordinator Lauren Robinson cataloged nearly half of the drawings including creating original catalog records for the X2013.165 numbers. Object-level cataloging continued in April 2014 with descriptions by archival intern Emily Chapin. As of April 2014 just over 1,400 images of Auerbach-Levy drawings were uploaded to the Museum's Collections Portal with complete catalog records. The finding aid is based on information in the catalog records and transmittal documents. Object-level cataloging is ongoing.

Related Material

Museum of the City of New York

Other works by Auerbach-Levy can be found in the following collections:

- George and Ira Gershwin collection of theatrical memorabilia
- Helen Hayes papers
- Oscar Serlin collection
- Ruth Hammond papers
- Paintings and Sculpture collection, [73.235](#)

Information on the productions and theatrical personalities featured in William Auerbach-Levy's drawings can be found in the following collections:

- Collection on Broadway productions

Collection on Off-Broadway productions
Collection on theatrical personalities
Collection on Yiddish theater

Collections in Other Repositories

Art Institute of Chicago

<http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/artwork/artist/Levy,+William+Auerbach>

Library of Congress

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/search/?q=William%20Auerbach%20Levy&fi=author>

Luther College

http://fac.luther.edu/search/index.php/Detail/Entity/Show/entity_id/33

National Academy Museum

<http://www.nationalacademy.org/collections/artists/detail/164/>

National Portrait Gallery

<http://npgportraits.si.edu/eMuseumNPG/code/emuseum.asp?newpage=NPG>

Access Points

Personal names (partial list)

Abbott, George, 1887-1995	Harrison, Rex
Adair, Yvonne	Jeanmaire, Zizi, 1924-
Ailey, Alvin	Jeans, Ursula, 1906-1973
Allen, Adrienne, 1907-1993	Johann, Zita, 1904-1993
Arnaud, Yvonne	Jolson, Al, 1886-1950
Astaire, Adele	Lane, Abbe, 1932-
Auerbach-Levy, William, 1889-1964	Longmire, Adele, 1918-
Balanchine, George	Mancini, Al
Bank, Xenia	Marden, Adrienne
Beckley, Zöe, -1961	Matalon, Zack
Bel Geddes, Barbara	Matthews, A. E. (Alfred Edward), 1869-1960
Brynnner, Yul	Menjou, Adolphe, 1890-1963
Buck, Gene	Menuhin, Yehudi, 1916-1999
Burrows, Abe, 1910-1985	Merkel, Una, 1903-1986
Byrne, Gaylea	Merrill, Gary
Checco, Al	Montalbán, Ricardo
Darius, Adam	Montand, Yves, 1921-1991
Dell, Gabriel	Moorehead, Agnes, 1906-1974
Frost, Robert, 1874-1963	Moss, Arnold, 1910-1989
Gessner, Adrienne, 1896-1987	Mostel, Zero, 1915-1977
Goulet, Robert, 1933-2007	Muste, A. J. (Abraham John), 1885-1967
Green, Adolph	Nureyev, Rudolf, 1938-1993
Hagen, Uta, 1919-2004	Pendleton, Austin

Perkins, Anthony, 1932-1992
Pitts, ZaSu, 1898-1963
Printemps, Yvonne, 1894-1977
Quinn, Anthony, 1915-2001
Rathbone, Basil, 1892-1967
Rodgers, Richard, 1902-1979
Rolands, Gena
Rupert, Gene

Ruth, Babe, 1895-1948
Scott, Zachary, 1914-1965
Shankar, Uday, 1900-1977
Snyder, Gene, -1953
Sumac, Yma
Talva, Galina
Tamiroff, Akim, 1899-1972
Whorf, Richard, 1906-1966

Corporate names

Anderson Theatre (New York, N.Y.)
Azuma Kabuki Dancers and Musicians
Ballet Africains
Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo
Bayanihan Philippine Dance Company
Belasco Theatre (Organization : New York, N.Y.)
Comedie-Francaise
Empire Theatre (New York, N.Y. : Broadway)
Flying Wallendas
Katherine Dunham Company
Mazowsze (Musical group)
Miller & Lyles
Moiseyev Dance Company
National Theatre (New York, N.Y. : Houston Street and 2nd Avenue)
New York Shakespeare Festival Productions
New York Yankees (Baseball team)
New Yorker (New York, N.Y. : 1925)
Nicholas Brothers
Olsen & Johnson
Palace Theatre (New York, N.Y.)
President Theatre (Organization : New York, N.Y.)
Smith and Dale
Takarazuka Kagekidan
Winter Garden Theatre (New York, N.Y. : 1634 Broadway)

Topical subjects

Actors--United States--Caricatures and cartoons
Animals--Caricatures and cartoons
Athletes--Pictorial works
Authors--20th century--Portraits--Caricatures
Caricatures and cartoons--United States--20th Century
Dancers--Caricatures and cartoons
Entertainers--Caricatures and cartoons
Motion picture actors and actresses--Caricatures and cartoons
Musicians--Caricatures and cartoons

Politicians--United States--Caricatures and cartoons
Portraits, American--20th Century
Singers--Caricatures and cartoons.
Soldiers--United States--Pictorial works

Geographic subjects

New York (N.Y.)

Container List

Images and catalog records for individual drawings can be found on the Museum's Collections Portal at the following link: collections.mcny.org

Please contact research@mcny.org for a complete container list.