

Gertrude Stein:

An Inventory of Her Collection in the Carlton Lake Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

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| Creator: | Stein, Gertrude, 1874-1946 |
| Title: | Carlton Lake Collection of Gertrude Stein |
| Inclusive Dates: | 1914-1973 |
| Bulk Dates: | (bulk 1946-1967) |
| Extent: | 9 boxes (3.78 linear feet), 1 oversize folder |
| Abstract: | Manuscripts, correspondence, financial and legal documents, address books, and personal papers make up the Gertrude Stein Collection. The material was collected by Alice B. Toklas after Stein's death and includes a large amount of Toklas's incoming correspondence. |
| Languages: | Stein's letters to Georges Hugnet and a few of the letters in the Toklas series are in French; the rest of the collection is in English. |
| Note: | We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, which provided funds for the processing and cataloging of this collection. |
| Access: | Open for research. |

Administrative Information

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| Acquisition: | Gifts of Carlton Lake and purchase, 1970, 1985, 1997 (G2284, R14001) |
| Processed by: | Monique Daviau, Richard Workman, and Catherine Stollar, 2004 |
| Repository: | The University of Texas at Austin, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center |

Biographical Sketch

Gertrude Stein was born February 3, 1874, in Allegheny, Pennsylvania. After graduation from Harvard and medical studies at Johns Hopkins, she joined her two brothers in Paris, moving in with her brother Leo at number 27, rue de Fleurus. From Leo she acquired a love for modern painting, and she began building a personal collection of major artists, many of whom became her friends and formed the core of her regular salons.

In 1907, as Stein was struggling to establish herself as a writer without much encouragement from Leo, she met a fellow American who had come to Paris to escape a spinsterish life with her San Francisco family. Alice Babette Toklas had been born in 1877 to a comfortable middle-class family and had attended the University of Seattle. She had studied music and briefly considered a career as a pianist, but instead became mired in housekeeping duties for a large household of male relatives. Then she met Michael Stein and his wife, who encouraged her to break free and visit them and their family in Paris. Within months of their meeting, Gertrude Stein and Toklas became inseparable companions, and when Leo moved out of the rue de Fleurus apartment, Toklas moved in.

With Toklas's encouragement and support, Stein found her first book publisher, and *Three Lives* appeared in 1909. In spite of the difficulty of her writing, with its emphasis on the sound rather than the sense of language and its experiments in adapting to literature some of the techniques of modern art, Stein managed to continue to find publishers, readers, and even loyal fans. When the Depression made publishing more difficult, Stein and Toklas formed the Plain Edition press, which brought out several of Stein's previously unpublished works, including *Before the Flowers of Friendship Faded* (1931).

In 1939, as they had during the previous war, Stein and Toklas left Paris for the countryside, where they endured hardships and offered as much assistance and support to the Allies as possible. (They had each received the *Medaille de la Reconnaissance Française* in 1922 for their service to the French wounded.) After the war they returned to Paris. In July 1946 Stein suddenly fell acutely ill and chose to have exploratory surgery. Before the operation, she dictated her will, leaving her papers to Yale, the Picasso portrait to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the rest of her paintings to Toklas. The surgery disclosed inoperable uterine cancer and she died a few days later on July 27, 1946.

Alice Toklas remained in the apartment in the rue Christine where the couple had moved before World War II. In the following years she suffered from arthritis and cataracts and had several serious falls. In 1961, while she was making an extended visit to Italy for her health, the Stein family seized all the paintings, on the grounds that Toklas was not taking sufficient care of them by leaving them unguarded in an unheated apartment. Legal action never succeeded in returning them to her. She died March 7, 1967, and was buried beside Stein in Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris.

Sources:

Mellow, James R. *Charmed Circle: Gertrude Stein & Company*. New York: Praeger, 1974.

Mellow, James R. "Gertrude Stein." *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 4: American Writers in Paris, 1920-1939*. <http://www.galegroup.net> (accessed 17 May 2004)

Scope and Contents

Manuscripts, correspondence, financial and legal documents, address books, and personal papers make up the Gertrude Stein Collection. The material was collected by Alice B. Toklas after Stein's death and includes a large amount of Toklas's incoming correspondence. The collection is arranged in four series: I. Works, 1930-1945 (1 box); II. Correspondence, 1928-1946 (1 box); III. Personal Papers, 1914-1959 (1 box); and IV. Alice B. Toklas, 1920-1973 (bulk 1947-1967) (6 boxes).

Stein's writings are represented by three titles in the Works series. *Composition as Explanation* was originally a lecture delivered at Oxford and Cambridge in 1926; later that year it appeared in *The Dial* and in book form from Leonard and Virginia Woolf's Hogarth Press. "From Dark to Day" is a two-page depiction of couturier Pierre Balmain that appeared in *Vogue* in 1945. The dossier of items relating to the publication of *Before the Flowers of Friendship Faded Friendship Faded* documents not only various stages in Stein's creation of this work, but also the conflicts between Stein and Georges Hugnet, whose collection of French poems, *Enfances*, was originally to have been published along with Stein's. The two disagreed over whether Stein's work was a translation of Hugnet's or an original work loosely based on it and could not come to an agreement on how the two authors should be credited in the book. Also included are letters from composer Virgil Thomson, who had introduced them to each other in 1927, trying to reconcile their differences.

The Correspondence series contains a large number of Stein's letters to Hugnet from the period of their first acquaintance until their final break. Incoming letters are concerned with matters of publication and include correspondence from her American publisher, Random House, and her English agents, Pearn, Pollinger & Higham, Ltd. (later known as David Higham Associates, Ltd.). All correspondence in this and other series is arranged alphabetically by author or recipient.

Among the Personal Papers are an address book, various contracts, and miscellaneous financial records. Of particular interest in this series are documents concerning Stein's art collection: two insurance policies (dated 1935 and 1938) with Lloyds of London with itemized schedules and appraisals of the paintings, and three appraisals made for Alice Toklas after Stein's death (1958 and undated).

The largest series is devoted to Alice B. Toklas. It includes a few random pages from autobiographical writings; a small number of letters to other correspondents, either drafts or returned letters; an address book and other personal and financial papers; and a large incoming correspondence from such writers as literary agent Mrs. William Aspenwall Bradley, actor Sandy Campbell, historian Bernard Faÿ, Stein scholar Donald C. Gallup, attorneys Edgar Allan Poe and Russell M. Porter, composer Virgil Thomson, and writer Carl Van Vechten, who served as Stein's literary executor. Many of these letters, mostly dating from the last few years of Toklas's life, are filled with expressions of concern for the state of her health or her misfortune in losing Gertrude Stein's art collection to the Stein family. Letters to Toklas's companion, Madeleine Charrière, have been interfiled with those to Toklas herself, and a few of these letters are dated after Toklas's death. A peculiarity of this collection is that Toklas herself evidently made a practice of ripping up letters once she had answered them; approximately one-third are torn into large pieces. Fortunately, all the pieces have been preserved. Among the personal papers are a very small number of recipes, some in Toklas's hand, and transcripts of letters written by admirers of Stein on the occasion of the exhibit "Hommage à Gertrude Stein" organized in 1965 in Paris by the American Cultural Center.

Related Material

Elsewhere within the Lake Collection at the Ransom Center, letters and works by Stein can be found in the Georges Hugnet and the Henri-Pierre Roché collections. The Center also houses a second collection of Stein papers that is not part of the Lake Collection.

Separated Material

Several items were removed from the Stein Collection to the Ransom Center's Personal Effects Collection.

Index Terms

Correspondents

Acosta, Mercedes de, 1893-1968.

Bradley, Mrs. William Aspenwall (Jenny Surrus).

Breon, John.

Brown, Helen Evans.

Brown, John Lackey, 1914.

Stein, Gertrude, 1874-1946

Butcher, Fanny, 1888-1987.

Campbell, Sandy.

Chanler, Maria de A.

Charrière, Madeleine.

De La Torre, Lillian, 1902- .

Downes, Donald, 1903- .

Fay, Bernard, 1893- .

Fourcade, Xavier.

Frankenberg, Lloyd, 1907- .

Freund, Marya.

Gallup, Donald Clifford, 1913- .

Grosser, Maurice, 1903-1986.

Hansen, Lilyana Elizabeth.

Hugnet, Georges, 1906-1974.

Knapik, Virginia.

Lescher, Robert.

Lucas, John, 1918- .

Martin, Lynn.

Néjad, Mehmed Melih Devrim.

Notti, Mary.

Ostrow, Lucille.

Pivano, Fernanda.

Poe, Edgar Allan, 1871- .

Poe, Edgar Allan, Jr.

Porter, Russell M.

Rea, Joy.

Rogers, W. G. (William Garland), 1896- .

Rohan, Dilkusha, princess de.

Rose, Francis, Sir, 1909-1979.

Schaffner, John.

Steward, Samuel M.

Stewart, Lawrence D. (Lawrence Delbert), 1926- .

Stein, Gertrude, 1874-1946

Sutherland, Donald, 1915- .

Taylor, Edward, Father.

Taylor, Louise, fl. 1962.

Toklas, Alice B.

Thomson, Virgil, 1896- .

Van Vechten, Carl, 1880-1964.

Van Vechten, Fania Marinoff.

Weissberger, L. Arnold, 1907-1981.

Whitehead, William.

Wilcox, Wendell.

Organizations

David Higham Associates, Ltd.

Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, inc.

Joseph (Michael) Limited.

Morgan, Smith & Sainte Croix.

Random House (Firm).

William R. Scott, Inc.

Subjects

American literature--20th century.

Art, Modern--20th century.

Women authors, American.

Document Types

Appraisals.

Contracts.

Insurance policies.

Page proofs.

Recipes.

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Art collection: inventories, correspondence, insurance policies, appraisals,
1934-1959, nd

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| Charrière, Madeleine, 1960-1965 | Box-Folder 276.4 |
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