

Leah Brenner:

An Inventory of Her Papers at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Brenner, Leah, 1915-2004
Title:	Leah Brenner Papers
Dates:	1929-1999, undated (bulk 1939-1988)
Extent:	13 document boxes, 1 oversize box (osb) (8.4 linear feet)
Abstract:	The papers document Leah Brenner's writings on Mexican art and culture, including a children's book about and illustrated by Diego Rivera, and articles for <i>Town & Country</i> . Personal and family documents and correspondence are also present.
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-5024
Language:	English, Spanish
Access:	Open for research. Some materials restricted.

Administrative Information

Acquisition:	Gift, 2006 (G12499)
Processed by:	Amye McCarther and Sally DeBauche, 2013
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

Leah Brenner was born in 1915 to Jewish immigrants, who, after emigrating from Latvia to Mexico, moved to San Antonio in the year of Brenner's birth. She attended La Universidad de Mexico, receiving a master's degree in Modern Languages in 1937 and her doctorate in Letters in 1941. Brenner worked as a secretary for Mexican artist Diego Rivera from 1939 to 1945. After leaving Rivera's employment and returning to the United States, Brenner lived for a time in New York City and eventually settled in San Antonio, where she lived until her death in 2004. During this period of her life she worked as a freelance writer, contributing stories about Mexican art, culture, and history to publications such as *The New York Times* and *Town and Country*. She also wrote a children's book, *An Artist Grows up in Mexico* (1953), about Diego Rivera's childhood, illustrated with drawings by Rivera. The book was later republished as *The Boyhood of Diego Rivera* (1964) and *An Artist Grows up in Mexico: Scenes from the Boyhood of Diego Rivera* (1987).

Sources:

Glusker, Susannah Joel. *Anita Brenner: A Mind of Her Own*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1998.

"Leah Brenner Obituary." *San Antonio Express News*, 21 February 2004, accessed 25 February 2013, <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/sanantonio/obituary.aspx?n=leah-brenner&pid=88842662#fbLoggedOut>.

Scope and Contents

The Leah Brenner Papers consist of published and unpublished manuscripts, correspondence, legal and financial documents, photographs, clippings and personal documents. Materials relating to Brenner's writing career make up the major focus of the collection, with correspondence and detailed financial documents featured to a lesser degree. The papers are organized into three series: I. Works, 1931-1991, undated; II. Correspondence, 1941-1993, undated; and III. Personal, 1929-1994, undated.

Series I. Works contains materials related to Leah Brenner's writing career and is arranged in three subseries: A. Manuscripts, B. Diego Rivera Materials, and C. Press Clippings. The Manuscripts subseries consists of drafts of her book *An Artist Grows up in Mexico* (including reprints under alternate titles), articles written for periodicals, and unpublished works. A number of these manuscripts contain the handwritten annotations of Brenner and her publishers. The second subseries, Diego River Materials, consists of copies of Diego Rivera materials used by Brenner in the course of her writing career. Included are photocopies of Rivera drawings used in *An Artist Grows up in Mexico*, promotional materials based on the drawings, and photocopies of notes sent by Rivera to Brenner. The Press Clippings subseries is comprised of newspaper and magazine clippings and photocopies of Brenner's published articles and news pieces relating to her work.

Series II. Correspondence is arranged in four subseries: A. Financial, B. General, C. Personal, and D. Professional. The financial correspondence prominently features materials related to a trust fund that was liquidated without Brenner's consent and subsequent legal action against Groos Bank. General correspondence includes exchanges with the Detroit Institute of Arts relating to a Diego Rivera retrospective, including loan agreements for works that the Institute borrowed from Brenner for the exhibit. Photographer Tina Modotti, painter Jean Chalot and architect Mathias Goeritz are among the personal correspondents. And Brenner's writing career is represented in professional correspondence to publishers, including some enclosed manuscript drafts.

Series III. Personal reflects Brenner's personal activities and is arranged in five subseries: A. Biographical, B. Financial and Legal, C. Photographs, D. Dogs and Dog Breeders, and E. Ephemera. The biographical materials are comprised of high school and college diplomas, and various personal identification cards and certificates. Financial and legal documents include materials related to Groos Bank, as well as receipts for expenses accrued as a traveling correspondent and household expenditures. The photographs, primarily family related, include portraits of Brenner's mother, Paula Brenner, and flower images taken by Italian photographer Tina Modotti, a contemporary of Diego Rivera. During the process of housing the materials at the Ransom Center, many of the photographs were sleeved together for preservation purposes, but this does not represent any original order or indicate an association between the photographs. Finally, Brenner's love of purebred cocker spaniels is evidenced in numerous photographs and correspondence with breeders, while other personal interests are reflected in clippings and ephemera.

Related Material

The Leah Brenner Papers contain correspondence with and photographs of Brenner's sister, Anita Brenner, award-winning writer of books on the art and history of Mexico, as well as children's books. The Anita Brenner Papers are also housed at the Harry Ransom Center, as are several works by Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo, including lithographs and drawings by Rivera, his painting "Niña con Muñeca" and Kahlo's drawing "Diego y Yo."

Separated Material

Twenty-seven books, exhibition catalogs, and auction catalogs, including one book with inscription by Anita Brenner were transferred to the Ransom Center Book Collection. One VHS tape was transferred to the Center's Moving Image Collection. Three small hand painted gourds were transferred to the Center's Personal Effects Collection.

Index Terms

People

Brenner, Anita, 1905-1974.

Brünner, Werner Mathias Goeritz, 1915-1990.

Charlot, Jean, 1898-1979.

Kahlo, Frida, 1907-1954.

Modotti, Tina, 1896-1942.

Rivera, Diego, 1886-1957.

Subjects

Mexican Art.

Children's Books.

Places

Mexico City (Mexico).

San Antonio (Tex.).

New York (N.Y.).

Organizations

A. S. Barnes & Co.

Atheneum (New York, N.Y.).

Detroit Institute of Arts.

Town & Country (New York, N.Y.: 1901).

Universidad Nacional de México.

University of New Mexico Press.

Document Types

Clippings.

Correspondence.

Financial records.

Legal documents.

Manuscripts.

Photographs.

Programs.

Yearbooks.

Series I. Works, 1931-1991, undated

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An Artist Grows Up in Mexico

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Correspondence, printers' material, 1944, 1987, undated **Container 3.3**

Chronological History of World War II, typed manuscript, undated **Container 4.3**

Concert, typed manuscript, undated **Container 3.4**

Concerto for Four Horns, typed manuscript undated

Conversations of Diego Rivera

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The Drunken Lizard, typed manuscript, undated

Frog-Face, typed manuscript, handwritten note, undated **Container 3.2, 4.4**

Gentlemen of the Press, typed manuscript, undated **Container 3.4**

Ho. Ho. Ho, typed manuscript, undated

La Estrallita, typed drafts, correspondence, clippings, undated **Container 3.4, 3.9**

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