George Benjamin Luks Papers, 1920-1994

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the
Helen Farr Sloan Library & Archives, Delaware Art Museum

Acquisition Information
Acquired through the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1994

Extent
2.5 linear feet

Processed
2003 (revised 2016)

Abstract
The collection represents the research of Arthur H. Lewis and contains correspondence, legal documents, interviews, and research notes.

Access Restrictions
Unrestricted

Contact Information
Helen Farr Sloan Library & Archives
Delaware Art Museum
2301 Kentmere Parkway
Wilmington, DE 19806
(302) 571-9590
hfslibrary@delart.org

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George Benjamin Luks Papers, 1920-1994, Helen Farr Sloan Library & Archives, Delaware Art Museum
Biography of George Benjamin Luks

American painter and graphic artist, 1867–1933

George Benjamin Luks was an American realist painter, best known for his images of New York and its inhabitants. Born in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, Luks worked as a vaudeville performer before moving to Philadelphia to study art at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. He traveled through Europe, where he attended several art schools and developed a particular admiration for Velazquez, Frans Hals, and Manet.

In 1893 he returned to Philadelphia, taking a job as a newspaper illustrator at the Philadelphia Press. He befriended Everett Shinn, William Glackens, John Sloan, and Robert Henri. In 1896 Luks moved to New York and began to work as an illustrator for Joseph Pulitzer's New York World. He drew the comic strip Hogan's Alley. He continued to paint, often depicting the streets and denizens of the Lower East Side, subjects which gained him little favor with art critics and jurors steeped in the genteel tradition. He painted thickly, often laying his paint on the canvas with a palette knife.

In 1907, the rejection of one of his canvasses from a juried exhibition at the National Academy of Design spurred the organization of a protest exhibition the following year at Macbeth Gallery. This watershed exhibition would become known as the exhibition of the Eight for the eight painters who collaborated to put it together. Known for his big personality and love of liquor, Luks was a vocal proponent of American painting in the early 20th century.
Scope and Contents Note

The George Benjamin Luks Papers, 1920-1994 represent the research of Arthur H. Lewis. Much of the primary material was acquired through Samuel Ross Ballin, art collector and attorney with Milban, Tweed, Hadley & McCloy, in December 1979. The primary material (Series I) includes original correspondence between Luks and C.W. Kraushaar, the law firm of Root, Clark, Buckner & Howland, Ballin, and various members of the Luks family. The collection includes legal documentation of the divorce agreements between Luks and his second and third wives, Emma Louise Noble Luks (Frankenburg) and Mercedes Carbonell Luks, and primary material from Luks’s brother, William (Will), the executor of the George B. Luks Estate, regarding the availability of information and works of art for exhibition and research purposes.

The secondary material (Series II), originating from Arthur H. Lewis, includes correspondence, interviews, and research notes. Interviews are recorded on audiocassettes.

Organization of the Papers

Series I: Samuel Ross Ballin Material
   Subseries A: Correspondence
   Subseries B: Legal Documents
   Subseries C: Material Pertaining to William Luks

Series II: Arthur H. Lewis Material
   Subseries A: Research Material and Writing
   Subseries B: Note Cards
   Subseries C: Audiocassette Interviews, 1979-1981
Description of the Papers

Series I: Samuel Ross Ballin Material

Subseries A: Correspondence

Box 1
Folder
1  Correspondence, original – George Luks and Samuel Ross Ballin, 1920-c. 1933
2  Correspondence, original – Harry [____] and “Bill” (William Luks?) regarding estate of George Luks, 1934-1935
3  Correspondence, original – 1969-1984
4  Correspondence, photocopy – 1920-1971 and undated

Subseries B: Legal Documents

Box 1
Folder
5  Divorce agreement between George and Emma L. Luks, 1921
6  Correspondence and inventories re. Kraushaar and divorce from Emma Luks, 1920-1934
7  Divorce agreement between and George and Mercedes Luks, 1930
8  Estate of George B. Luks – appraisal and memorandum of adjustments, 1934
9  Memorandum of Sale of oil painting Noble Experiment, 1949
10 Estate of George B. Luks – sale at Parke-Bernet Galleries, 1950

Subseries C: Material Pertaining to William Luks

Box 1
Folder
11 Correspondence re. Estate of William D. Luks, 1939-1954
12 Sonnets to Ilor, carbon copy
13 We Went to the Zoo, carbon copy
Series II: Arthur H. Lewis Material

Subseries A: Research Material

Box 2
Folder
1 Correspondence, 1980s
2 Correspondence and interviews – Arthur Lewis – 1980s
3 Copy of research material – Arthur Lewis
4 Research notes
5 Research notes
6 Research notes
7 Research notes
8 Research notes
9 “People I Interviewed”
10 List of people that should be interviewed
11 Institutions, libraries, galleries, etc. researched
12 The American Magazine, 1890-1940, Delaware Art Museum, 1979
13 Catalogs
14 Reviews of Luks’s works and bibliography
15 “My own involvement with Luks”
16 Attempts at Luks chronology
17 Brief sketch of George Benjamin Luks
18 George B. Luks a/k/a “Chicago Whitey”, Chapter One
19 Chapter Two
20 Chapter ?
21 “The Case of Dr. T”

Subseries B: Note Cards

Box 3
Note cards

Subseries C: Audiocassette Interviews, 1979-1981

Box 4
Samuel Ross Ballin, various dates, 1979-1981
Daniel W. Luks and H. Andrea Luks, January 20, 1980
Margaret (Peggy) Luks Malczynski, January 1980
Elizabeth Luks Malczynski
Mrs. Kraemer N. (Gertrude) Luks, January 17, 1980
George B. Luks (Young George), January 1980
Mercedes Diaz Luks, December 1979, July 1980
B.A. Bergman
Antoinette Kraushaar, February 13, 1980
John Clancy
Helen Sloan, March 10, 1980
Edgar P. Richardson
Ira Glackens, April 2, 1980
Bennard Perlman, March 19, 1980
Andrew King Grugan, September 24, 1980
Steward Klonis
Lawrence Campbell
Robert B. Koslosky
Barbara Tweed, January 14, 1980
William B. Hennessey, March 1980
Ray Walsh
Mrs. Mrs. Robert Impink
Estelle Powers
Louis Mozdy, November 27, 1974
Bill O’Brien
Sam Smith
Ed Conrad
Dr. Naysh Brennan
Mrs. Sarah Cooper
Edwin G. Fox
Charles W. Delp
Martin L. Cuff
Joseph M. Hanney
Margaret Crane, Fall 1980
Albert S. Callan, Jr., September 15-16, 1980
Elizabeth Olds, October 1980
Frank Eliscu, October 1980
Harry Burley, October 1980
Mike Hanson, Fall 1980
Joe Young, Fall 1980
Mrs. John Williams
Philip C. Jessup, January 6, 1981
Elsie K. Belmont, January 13, 1981
Elsie Driggs, January 14, 1981
Iona Luks
Joan Luks Fay
Mrs. Spencer (widow of Dr. Spencer)