

THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION

Ben Shahn's New York: The Photography of Modern Times

1996-2001

Finding Aid

**The Phillips Collection
Library and Archives
1600 21st Street NW
Washington D.C. 20009
www.phillipscollection.org**

CURATORIAL RECORDS IN THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION ARCHIVES

INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION

Collection Title: *Ben Shahn's New York: The Photography of Modern Times*

Author/Creator: The Phillips Collection Curatorial Department. Elsa Smithgall, Assistant Curator

Collection No:

Size: 1 linear foot

Bulk Dates: 1999-2000

Inclusive Dates: 1996-2001

Repository: The Phillips Collection Archives

INFORMATION FOR USERS OF THE COLLECTION

Restrictions: The collection contains restricted materials. Please contact Karen Schneider, Librarian, with any questions regarding access.

Handling Requirements: Care should be taken when handling Val Lewton's folded installation drawing in Exhibition Planning, Box 2, Folder 16.

Preferred Citation: The Phillips Collection Archives, Washington, D.C.

Publication and Reproduction Rights: See Karen Schneider, Librarian, for further information and to obtain required forms.

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ABSTRACT

Ben Shahn's New York: The Photography of Modern Times exhibition records contain materials created and/or collected by the Curatorial Department of The Phillips Collection, during the course of organizing the exhibition at The Phillips Collection. Included are exhibition planning and installation design files, as well as a limited number of research files.

HISTORICAL NOTE

Ben Shahn (1898-1969) was a social-realist painter and photographer, known for his documentary work for the Farm Security Administration between 1935 and 1938. Duncan Phillips was a strong supporter of Shahn's work, writing, "[Shahn is] one of our most distinguished artists... [with] a unique style and point of view." Between the years 1946 and 1950, Duncan Phillips acquired two paintings and four works on paper by Shahn. This exhibition is unique in its focus on Ben Shahn's photographic work, and represents the first time that this body of work has been exhibited at The Phillips Collection.

SCOPE AND CONTENTS OF THE COLLECTION

Ben Shahn's New York: The Photography of Modern Times was an exhibition of Ben Shahn's documentary photographs of New York street scenes in the early 1930s.

These curatorial records were collected and created in the course of planning, negotiating, and executing the exhibition. This exhibition originated at Harvard University's Fogg Art Museum, and traveled to The Phillips Collection, June 10 – August 27, 2000. The exhibition also traveled to The Grey Art Gallery, New York University, October 14 2000 – January 27, 2001, and David and Alfred Smart Museum, University of Chicago, April 19 – June 17, 2001. A substantial catalog was published by Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University Art Museums in conjunction with the exhibition.

The primary creators of the exhibition records were Elsa Smithgall, Assistant Curator at The Phillips Collection, and exhibition curators Deborah Martin Kao, Laura Katzman, and Jenna Webster.

The collection consists of the research and exhibition planning files of the curators, interfiled. These records consist of research materials assembled, exhibition planning and execution documents such as legal and financial records, and installation design (including drawings by Val Lewton) and checklists (restricted.)

CUSTODIAL HISTORY AND ACQUISITION INFORMATION

This collection is owned by The Phillips Collection, and was accessioned from the curators' offices in accordance with the museum's records schedule.

PROCESSING AND DESCRIPTION INFORMATION

Date Processed: October 2009

Processed By: Emily Hunter, UMD Graduate Student; Supervised by Karen Schneider, Librarian

Processing Notes:

In a meeting with the curator, it was decided to discard duplicative materials, general housekeeping materials (such as payment requisition forms, and travel documentation forms) and to keep the bulk of installation records, including invoices from contractors and vendors.

The original alphabetical arrangement was maintained. Within folders, materials are arranged chronologically by date of creation as indicated on the document, and followed by any undated materials. Folder headings were maintained when applicable, but were rewritten in some cases for greater clarity and accuracy. Metal paperclips and staples were removed and replaced with plastic clips. Post-its were copied if they held significance. All documents were re-folded in acid-free folders and placed in acid-free archival boxes.

Finding Aid Written By: Emily Hunter, UMD Graduate Student; Supervised by Karen Schneider, Librarian

RELATED MATERIAL

Stephen Lee Taller Ben Shahn Archive, the Fine Arts Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Ben Shahn Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

ARRANGEMENT OF THE COLLECTION

The collection was organized into one series: Exhibition Planning. Folders within this series are arranged alphabetically by folder heading.

Box Inventory

Series: Exhibition Planning

Box 1

Folder 1	Budget, 2000
Folder 2	Checklist, 2000 and undated
Folder 3	Comment Book, 2000
Folder 4	Contract, 2000
Folder 5	Correspondence, James Cuno, Deborah Martin Kao, Laura Katzman Charles Moffet, Elsa Mezvinsky Smithgall, Elizabeth Turner, Jenna Webster, 1997-2000
Folder 6	Educational Programs, 2000
Folder 7	Exhibition Proposal, folder 1 of 2, 1998 and undated
Folder 8	Exhibition Proposal, folder 2 of 2, undated
Folder 9	Funding, 1999-2000

Box 2

Folder 10	Installation, Cases, 1999-2000 and undated
Folder 11	Installation, Harvard University Fogg Art Museum, undated
Folder 12	Installation, Invoices, 2000
Folder 13	Installation, Labels, 2000 and undated
Folder 14	Installation, Mural, undated
Folder 15	Installation, Notes and Correspondence, 2000 and undated
Folder 16	Installation Plan, Drawings by Val Lewton, 2000 and undated
Folder 17	Programs and Events, 2000 and undated
Folder 18	Publicity, 2000
Folder 19	Publicity, Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University and Grey Gallery, New York University, 1999-2000 and undated
Folder 20	Publicity, Press clippings, 1999-2000
Folder 21	Research, 2000 and undated