



The New York Public Library
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

Beauford Delaney letters

1958-1963

Sc MG 217

Home to Harlem Project funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

Summary

Creator: Delaney, Beauford, 1901-1979

Title: Beauford Delaney letters

Date: 1958-1963

Size: 0.01 linear feet (1 folder)

Source: Gift, Stone, Lynn, 1987

Revision History: This finding aid was updated by Allison Hughes.

Abstract: Beauford Delaney (1901-1979) was a painter associated with the Harlem Renaissance. The Beauford Delaney letters (1958-1963) consist of 18 autograph letters from Delaney to his friend Lynn Stone in New York City, two letters to Stone from artist Charles Boggs, a handwritten draft with typewritten copy of a fundraising letter by author James Baldwin and two letters from Edward C. Califano, director of Galerie Internationale, New York City.

Preferred citation: [Item], Beauford Delaney letters, Sc MG 217, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English

Separated Materials:

Photographs have been separated to Photographs and Prints division.

Paintings, watercolors, and exhibition catalogs have been separated to Art and Artifacts division.

Creator History

Beauford Delaney (1901-1979) was a painter associated with the Harlem Renaissance. Delaney was born in Knoxville, Tennessee to parents Samuel and Delia Delaney. An art teacher with whom he studied in Knoxville encouraged him to get further training in Boston, where he studied at Massachusetts Normal School, the South Boston School of Art, and the Copley Society. Arriving in New

York in 1929, he began meeting and painting many of the prominent Black personalities, such as W.E.B. DuBois and W.C. Handy. As an admirer of jazz and other forms of music, he later made portraits of Duke Ellington, Ethel Waters, Louis Armstrong and Marion Anderson. Delaney exhibited in several locales in New York, and in the late 1940s he began his association with the Roko Gallery. During this period he also became acquainted with James Baldwin and Henry Miller, who would become his lifelong friends. In 1953 he left New York to visit Rome for a few months; what was planned to be a brief stop in Paris extended until his death in 1979. Delaney's work was exhibited at many galleries in Paris from the late 1960s through the early 1970s. Starting in the 1950s, his work became increasingly abstract, and art critics often commented on his unique use of light and color. Delaney was hospitalized for alcoholism and mental illness in Paris and died in 1979.

Scope and Content Note

The Beauford Delaney letters (1958-1963) consist of 18 autograph letters from Delaney to his friend Lynn Stone in New York City, two letters to Stone from artist Charles Boggs, a handwritten draft with typewritten copy of a fundraising letter by author James Baldwin and two letters from Edward C. Califano, director of Galerie Internationale, New York City.

The correspondence between Delaney and Stone is primarily of a personal nature in which Delaney discusses mutual friends, his philosophy of life, the importance of friendship, etc. However there is also frequent mention of plans for a proposed National Urban League fundraising exhibition (1963) in cooperation with Galerie Internationale. Other topics include exhibitions in which Delaney is currently showing, his artistic production in general, as well as other artists including composer Howard Swanson, painter Charles Boggs and author James Baldwin. In one letter (January 11, 1963) Delaney discusses writer/photographer Carl Van Vechten and his role as patron of Black artists. In the same letter he discusses artist Al Hirschfeld and others who own pieces of his work, also a documentary film (1960) made by Television Francaise in which he appears. Another letter (October 20, 1962) contains a partial list of private individuals owning some of Delaney's work.

James Baldwin writes in his capacity as chairman of the Sponsoring Committee to raise initial funds for the proposed National Urban League fundraising exhibition of Delaney's work. The letter also emphasizes the committee's second goal, to bring wider recognition, within the United States, to the work of Beauford Delaney. Baldwin also refers to Delaney as his spiritual father, to whom he owes a tremendous debt.

The correspondence from Charles Boggs to Stone (1962) primarily discusses proposed plans for Delaney's coming to New York for the National Urban League's fundraising exhibition. In addition, some discussion is devoted to Delaney's mental and physical health as well as to his views on race-related matters. Delaney's relationship with gallery owner Paul Facchetti of Paris is also heavily emphasized.

The two letters (1963) from Galerie Internationale's director Edward C. Califano discuss the proposed fundraising exhibition and details regarding representation, sales, commissions etc.

Key Terms

Subjects

African American artists
African American painters

Expatriate painters -- France -- Paris

Occupations

African American artists -- France -- Paris
African American painters -- France -- Paris
Painters -- United States

Names

Baldwin, James, 1924-1987
Boggs, Charles
Califano, Edward C.
Delaney, Beauford, 1901-1979
Facchetti, Paul
Swanson, Howard, 1907-1978
Van Vechten, Carl, 1880-1964
Galerie Internationale (New York, N.Y.)