



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

Guide to the

**Reginald Walker collection**

1977-1989

Sc MG 945

Processed by Lauren Stark, August 2018.

## Summary

**Creator:** Walker, Reginald

**Title:** Reginald Walker collection

**Date:** 1977-1989

**Size:** 0.88 linear feet (3 boxes)

**Source:** Gift of Vince Aletti, 2017.

**Abstract:** This collection consists of the personal papers and artwork of Reginald Walker, known for artists' books constructed using ancient techniques and decorated with various alphabets and symbols.

**Preferred citation:** [Item], Reginald Walker collection, Sc MG 945, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

**Language of the Material:** English

**Processing note:** Processed by Lauren Stark, August 2018.

**Separated Materials:**

Transferred to the Art and Artifacts Division:

Oversized drawings, a few framed, mostly of botanicals-- *Irises for Vince*, 1979; *Mesa/2 (Cacti/Flowers)*, 1977; *Gladiatory (to Vince from Reggie)*, 1977; *O Bu \_ RA (1)*, 1983; *Study for the Hanging Gardens of Babylon (to Vince Aletti)*, 1977; *Bouquet 2*, 1979; *Sunflowers 9 (for Vince Aletti)*, 1979; *Irises 3 (for Vince Aletti)*, 1979; *Sunflowers 6 (for Vince)*, 1979; *Sunflowers 4 (Vase of Flowers)*, 1979

13 artist books (all untitled)

Transferred to the Photographs and Prints Division: 4 slide sheets of artist's work

## Creator History

Reginald Walker was known for his artists' books; he used ancient bookmaking techniques, symbols, and alphabets to create unique and contemporary books.

There is scant information available on Reginald Walker, but according to one of his own astrological drawings, he was born on June 13, 1946, in Chicago. According to his resume, his earliest education, from 1966-1971, was devoted to the study of reliure d'art (bookbinding) with Gerard Charriere at the Newberry Library of Chicago. He also spent a year at Loop College in Chicago, from 1966-1967, and a year at DePaul University, from 1968-1969. From 1974-1978, he studied in New York at Manhattan Community College, the Center for Book Arts, and the School of Visual Arts.

Walker's work and exhibition history are mostly derived from his papers as well. In 1971, Walker worked in Special Collections at the New York Public Library, where he inventoried and catalogued rare books and works on paper; this position possibly helped to inform his work. In 1978, he was awarded a National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Master Craftsmen Educational grant through the Center for Book Arts. This grant allowed him to research ancient Coptic book forms for his artwork. Around the same time, one of his pieces, *Spaces*, was included in an exhibition at the Grolier Club. Beginning around 1980, in order to pursue his artwork, he mainly supported himself as a computer technician in various temporary positions. His Coptic book, *Modern Relics*, completed using the research he obtained from the NEA grant, was included in the *Dialects* exhibition at Franklin Furnace Gallery in 1980. Walker's work was purchased by the Ruth and Marvin Sackner Archive of Concrete and Visual Poetry in 1983 and 1985. In 1983-1984, his work was included in the 4th Annual Book Show at Kathryn Markel Gallery and the Footworks exhibition at Public Image Gallery. *The Magical Properties of Sunflowers*, a work which used Coptic binding, acrylics, colored pencil, stencils, rubber, and brass stamps, was included in the exhibition, *The First Decade: Center for Book Arts*, held at the New York Public Library in 1984. This work is also featured in the exhibition catalog of the same name. The Spencer Collection of the New York Public Library purchased his work, *Mumbo Jumbo*, in 1985. Also in 1985, he participated in exhibitions at the Hand In Hand Galleries and the Center for Book Arts. Additionally, he created sketchbooks for other artists such as Brice Marden, James Brown, and Huck Snyder. His work was exhibited at additional galleries such as Gallery Nature Morte and Civilian Warfare Studio.

Walker died in the late 1980s. He remains an elusive figure. The scarce information available mainly comes from this collection and Vince Aletti, who donated this collection and let Walker live in his guest room in the East Village for a brief time in the mid-1970s. Peter Hujar, a photographer who also lived in the area, often photographed his friends and neighbors, one of whom was Reggie Walker. Although Aletti and Walker lived together, they were not the closest of friends, and at times, according to Aletti, they barely spoke. Aletti describes Hujar's *Reggie Walker* (1976), which is housed at the Princeton University Art Museum, as a reminder of why Aletti invited Walker to stay with him; "Reggie was funny, quick, and intense and had great style. I don't remember that pistol pendant he's wearing; it seems so unlike him. But he always wore a cap."

## Scope and Content Note

This collection includes a few personal papers and artwork of Reginald Walker, a book artist. It is arranged into three series; the first series, Biographical and correspondence, contains material such as his resume, artist's statement, and personal and professional correspondence. The second series, Printed matter, consists of press and publicity related to Walker's exhibitions and research material, such as copies of articles and book chapters. The third and largest series, Artwork, is comprised mostly of mock-ups, sketches, and renderings of his books, plus explanations of decorative elements and the

books' construction. Additionally, there are ten drawings and thirteen artist books housed in the Art and Artifacts Division.

**Arrangement:** Organized into three series: (1) Biographical and correspondence; (2) Printed matter; and (3) Artwork.

## **Key Terms**

### **Subjects**

African American artists  
alchemy  
Artists' books  
Artists, Black -- New York (State) -- New York  
Book artists.  
Coptic language.  
Historical languages  
runes  
Symbolism in art

### **Names**

Aletti, Vince  
Hujar, Peter, 1934-1987  
Walker, Reginald

## Container List

### Biographical and correspondence ca. 1978-1986

This small series contains biographical information in the form of various iterations of Walker's resume and artist's statement. This series also includes correspondence, both personal and professional. Some of this material consists of recommendation letters, grant and funding requests, and postcards from fellow artists. Many of these postcards are tucked into the pages of an address book, which includes contact information for artists, such as Peter Hujar and Keith Haring, and galleries, including the Center for Book Arts and Kathryn Markel Gallery.

Arranged alphabetically.

- b. 1 f. 1 Artist's statements and resumes ca. 1984 - 1986
- b. 1 f. 2 Correspondence and address book ca. 1978-1986

### Printed matter 1980-1986

This series consists of printed matter, including a press release, exhibition announcements, a review, and a copy of *The First Decade: Center for Book Arts* catalog (1984). In addition, there is research material for his artwork on such topics as the Druids, Roman numerals, and ancient languages; this material is mostly photocopies of published book chapters and pages, but it also includes a booklet on Anglo-Saxon runes.

Arranged alphabetically.

- b. 1 f. 3 Press and publicity 1980-1986
- b. 1 f. 4 Research material

### Artwork ca. 1978-1989

This series, the largest, is composed of descriptions, renderings, and sketches of Walker's books plus some finished individual pieces; most of this series consists of undated material. It is arranged into four subseries; the majority of the material in the first three subseries is handwritten. The first subseries, general notes and concepts (Walker's own title for this material), consists of background and historical material on concepts used by Walker in his books, such as alchemy and astrology. Most of this material appears to be from other sources, possibly published, while the material on mythological books is clearly written by him. It explains his mythological books as "contemporary works representing a fusion of ancient Egypto-Ethiopian (Coptic and pre-Coptic) and Celtic book crafts". Subseries two, book construction and structure, describes how his books are made in a general sense (material marked "basic") and in greater detail. This latter group contains material on different book sizes; book types, such as encaustic books, "burned" books, jeweled books, and books in frames; Coptic clasps; covers; decoration; and sources for purchasing materials. The third subseries, language, is comprised of notes on various ancient languages and alphabets, such as Coptic, Greek, Latin, Old English, Roman, and Phoenician. The final subseries, projects and finished work, consists of book descriptions with information such as title, date, media, and size; mockups or sketches of books, some of which were eventually completed; and completed individual works. These individual works are mostly works on paper, not books, but decorated with the same symbols, runes, and characters as the books. Many of these pieces are undated and untitled.

Arranged into four subseries, alphabetically within each one: (1) General notes and concepts; (2) Book construction and structure; (3) Language; and (4) Projects and finished work.

#### General notes and concepts

- b. 1 f. 5 Alchemy
- b. 1 f. 6 Astrology
- b. 1 f. 7 Coptic books
- b. 1 f. 8 Mythological books

#### Book construction and structure

- b. 1 f. 9 Basic

Artwork (cont.)

Book construction and structure (cont.)

- b. 1 f. 10 Book sizes
- b. 1 f. 11 Book types
- b. 1 f. 12 Clasps
- b. 1 f. 13 Covers and decoration

Language

Includes vocabulary lists, alphabets, and guides for Greek, Roman, Phoenician, Latin, Old English, French, and German.

- b. 1 f. 14 Alphabets, runes, and astrological signs
- b. 1 f. 15 Language guide for Greek, Roman, and Phoenician
- b. 1 f. 16 Language guide for Latin, Old English, French, and German
- b. 1 f. 17 Vocabulary lists in various languages

Projects and finished work

- b. 1 f. 18 Book descriptions 1978-1984  
Includes book titles and other information.
- b. 1 f. 19 Book project mock-ups
  - b. 2 f. 1 *The Magickal Formulary (Old Mummio) mockups*
  - b. 2 f. 2 Slide lists
  - b. 3 f. 1 *Celtic Graffiti* 1984
  - b. 3 f. 2 *Fire Without Water (wall piece)* undated
  - b. 3 f. 3 *H. Sebastian, NYC* 1989
  - b. 3 f. 4 Libra astrological chart
  - b. 3 f. 5 Paper samples
  - b. 3 f. 6 Sketchbook undated
  - b. 3 f. 7-9 Untitled works undated