



The New York Public Library  
Manuscripts and Archives Division

Guide to the

**Rafael Sala papers relating to the America's Making exposition**

1920-1921

MssCol 24672

Processed by Susan P. Waide, 2018

## Summary

**Creator:** Sala, Rafael, 1891-1927

**Title:** Rafael Sala papers relating to the America's Making exposition

**Date:** 1920-1921

**Size:** .21 linear feet (1 box)

**Source:** Purchased from William Allen Word & Image, 2018.

**Abstract:** Rafael Sala (1891-1927) of Cataluña was a Spanish painter associated with various modern art movements of the early 20th century. He lived in New York City from 1919 to 1923. America's Making was an exposition held at the 71st Regiment Armory in New York City from October 29 to November 12, 1921. Its purpose was to present three centuries of immigrant contributions to the nation through educational exhibitions and pageantry. The Rafael Sala papers relating to the America's Making exposition, 1920-1921, consist of typescript correspondence, reference files, and printed matter regarding his participation as chairman of the Hispanic Section's Committee on Exhibits. Correspondents include John H. Finley, William Laurel Harris, H.C. Heaton, John Musser, and Lawrence A. Wilkins. Sala's reference files, 1920-1921, bound with metal clips, contain typescript memoranda prepared by America's Making, Inc. and the Hispanic Section outlining Hispanic contributions to the nation to guide their own work, with mention of exhibit and pageantry plans. Similar collected memoranda, two addressed to him as committee chair, are grouped under the file title "America's Making Suggestions." A pamphlet and copies of a flyer issued by America's Making, Inc. are also included.

**Access:** Advance notice required.

**Preferred citation:** Rafael Sala papers relating to the America's Making exposition, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

**Language of the Material:** English Materials are in English and Spanish.

**Processing note:** Processed by Susan P. Waide, 2018

## Creator History

Rafael Sala (1891-1927) of Cataluña was a Spanish painter associated with various modern art movements of the early 20th century. He lived in New York City from 1919 to 1923. Sala chaired the Hispanic Section's Committee on Exhibits in the America's Making exposition of 1921.

In 1923 Sala had a solo exhibition in New York City and married the writer Monna Alfau. Shortly after the wedding they sailed for Mexico, where he resided until his death at a clinic in Pasadena, California. Sala is also known for his published study of Mexican "marcos de fuego," branded ownership marks on books in colonial libraries, having worked as a bibliographer as well as a painter in Mexico.

America's Making was an exposition held at the 71st Regiment Armory in New York City from October 29 to November 12, 1921. Its purpose was to present three centuries of immigrant contributions to the nation through educational exhibitions and pageantry. Immigrant groups were classified as racial groups, and included African-Americans. The exposition was formed under the auspices of the New York State and New York City Departments of Education, and carried out by voluntary committees for each group under the organization America's Making, Inc. Its president was John Huston Finley (1863-1940), an educator, editor, author and civic leader.

Participating ethnic groups, called racial and lineage groups in the exposition, were usually led by prominent persons backed by executive and working committees. During the organizational period for the Hispanic immigrant group (later Americans of Hispanic Lineage), officers of the Hispanic Division were distinct from the executive committee members of the Hispanic Section, who headed various committees (such as Exhibits, Pageantry, etc.) to carry out plans. Rafael Sala was Chair of the Hispanic Section's Committee on Exhibits and thus a member of the Section's Executive Committee. As the date of the event approached, the term "Hispanic Section" was generally used by all concerned to refer to the Hispanic group's organization as a whole. In the case of Americans of Hispanic Lineage, the working committees are not listed in the commemorative publication *The Book of America's Making Exposition* (1921). Under the Lineage group's leaders (two of whom had appeared as officers on Hispanic Division letterhead) a single committee is listed, including Rafael Sala. The leaders and committee members together are identical to the members of the "Comite Organizadora" identified in "Contribuciones Hispánicas....," a typescript memorandum prepared on the eve of the exposition by the Hispanic Section, containing an urgent plea for funds.

## Scope and Content Note

The Rafael Sala papers relating to the America's Making exposition, 1920-1921, consist of typescript correspondence, reference files, and printed matter regarding his participation in the exposition as chairman of the Hispanic Section's Committee on Exhibits. Correspondents include John H. Finley, William Laurel Harris, H.C. Heaton, John Musser, and Lawrence A. Wilkins. Sala's reference files, bound with metal clips, contain typescript memoranda issued by America's Making, Inc. and the Hispanic Section outlining Hispanic contributions to the nation to guide their own work, with mention of exhibit and pageantry plans, 1920-1921. Similar collected memoranda, two addressed to him as committee chair, are grouped under the file title "America's Making Suggestions." A pamphlet and copies of a flyer issued by America's Making, Inc. are also included.

Letters, 1921 March 30-September 13, express increasing concern over Sala's missed meetings and the delay in presenting operational plans. Section chairman H.C. Heaton's letter of September 13th, however, notes that the Hispanic Section had no funding to carry out plans submitted by its committees on Exhibits and Pageantry. The crisis was somehow resolved as Hispanic immigrants were represented in the exposition the following month.

Letters and documents are in typescript or typescript copies, in English and in Spanish, the latter chiefly translations of English text. Some items bear Sala's notes as to the time and place of appointments; there are also draft responses to letters in English in a different hand. A lengthy letter from William Laurel Harris of the Art Center to Lawrence A. Wilkins dated 1921 May 4, suggests topics for the exhibitions, and potential contacts regarding art and artifacts. Letters include a meeting notice addressed to Monna Alfau, who married Sala in 1923.

## **Key Terms**

### **Subjects**

Acculturation -- United States -- Exhibitions  
Exhibitions -- New York (State) -- New York  
Hispanic Americans  
Immigrants -- United States -- Exhibitions

### **Occupations**

Artists.  
Educators.

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Printed materials (object genre)

### **Names**

Finley, John H. (John Huston), 1863-1940  
Harris, William Laurel, 1870-1924  
Heaton, H. C. (Harry Clifton), 1885-1950  
Musser, John, 1889-1949  
Sala, Rafael, 1891-1927  
Wilkins, Lawrence A. (Lawrence Augustus), 1878-  
America's Making (Exposition) (1921 : New York, N.Y.)  
America's Making, Inc.  
America's Making, Inc. Hispanic Section