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Sidney Finkelstein Papers

1914-1974

11 boxes (5.5 linear ft.)

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Noted critic of music, literature, and the arts, as well as a writer and an active member of the Communist Party U.S.A. Includes letters to and from Mr. Finkelstein; original manuscripts of reviews, articles, essays, and books; legal documents, educational, military, and personal records, financial papers, contracts, photographs, and lecture and course notes.

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Background on Sidney Walter Finkelstein

Sidney Finkelstein, born in Brooklyn, New York on July 4, 1909, received his Bachelor's degree from City College in New York in 1929 and his A.M. from Columbia University in 1932 before he became a renowned critic of music, literature, and the arts. In 1955, he earned a second master's degree from New York University. During the 1930s he served as a book reviewer for the Brooklyn Daily Eagle and worked for the United Postal Service. In the 1940s he joined the music staff of the Herald Tribune and also served as a music reviewer for several other publications including New Masses, Masses and Mainstream. Finkelstein became active in the Communist Party U.S.A. (CPUSA) where he served as the party's leading musical and cultural theoretician. Finkelstein applied his interpretation of Socialist Realism in several books on arts and culture, the most famous being *Jazz, a People's Music* (1948). Between 1951 and 1973 he served on the staff of Vanguard Records, a New York based record label that specialized in jazz and classical recordings. In 1957 he was called to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee for his Communist party affiliation. Finkelstein died in Brooklyn, New York on January 14, 1974.

1909
Born July 4, Brooklyn, NY
1929
B.A., City College
1930s
Book reviewer, Brooklyn Daily Eagle
1932
A.M., Columbia University
1940s
Music staff, The Herald Tribune; also music reviewer, New Masses, Masses and Mainstream, and other publications
1951-1973
Staff, Vanguard Records
1955
M.A., New York University
1957
Called to testify before House Un-American Activities Committee
1974
Died, January 14, Brooklyn, NY; survived by two brothers

Scope of collection

The Sidney Finkelstein Papers (1914-1974) are organized into 3 series: Biographical (1914-1969), Correspondence (1934-1974), and Writings (1949-1973, n.d.). Biographical materials include legal documents, educational, military, and personal records, financial papers and contracts, photographs, and lecture and course notes. Correspondence includes letters both to and from Mr. Finkelstein and consists primarily of informal discussions of his works and the writings of others on related topics. Finkelstein's writings constitute the bulk of the collection and include original manuscripts of reviews, articles, essays and books he wrote during his career. Finkelstein's writings cover a broad array of topics and include discussions of jazz, classical music, music criticism, aesthetics, literary criticism, profiles of the work of individual artists, and Socialist Realism and its relevance and application to cultural studies.

Partial List of Correspondents

1946
Axelrod, Eric
1970
Cameron, Angus--of Knopf
1965
Capouya, Emile
1955
Cazden, Norman
1964
Cohen, Robert Sonn e--physicist
1955, 1956
Downes, Olin--critic
1964
Gelbin, Gertrude--editor, Seven Seas
n.d.
Hille, Waldemar
1956, 1965

Kent, Rockwell and Sally
1948
Lask, Tom--New York Times Book Review
1965, 1966
Lawson, John Howard
1970
Lowenfels, Walter
1964
Lumer, Hyman--editor, Political Affairs
1969
Markin, Ann
1966
Richmond, Al
1972
Russell, Ross
1966
Selsam, Millicent and Howard
1971
Schneerson, Grigon
1947
Siegmeister, Eliew--composer
1948
Smith, Harrison--Saturday Review
1953
Tamura, Toshio
1948
Thomson, Virgil--composer
1959
Veiaus, Abraham--Syracuse Univ.
1966
_____, John

Arrangement

This collection is organized into three series:

Series 1. Biographical, 1914-1969

Series 2. Correspondence, 1934-1974

Series 3. Writings, 1949-1973

Inventory

Series 1: Biographical

1914-1969

Legal documents and other personal records

1914-1957

Box 1: 1

Education, records of

1925-1955

Box 1: 2

Military records

1942-1947

Box 1: 3

Publishing contracts and related materials

1947-1969

Box 1: 4

Photographs

Box 1: 5

Course outline: Philosophy of Art

Box 1: 6
Lecture notes and course outline

Box 1: 7
Series 2: Correspondence

Note:
See attached partial list of correspondents

1934-1974
Letters from SF
1949-1966

Box 1: 8
Letters to SF
1934-1954

Box 1: 9
Letters to SF
1955-1964

Box 1: 10
Letters to SF
1965-1974

Box 1: 11
Series 3: Writings
1949-1973
Student paper by SF: The Imagery of Picasso's Blue Period

Box 1: 12
Student paper by SF: The Philosophy of Art of Frank Lloyd Wright

Box 1: 13
Masters thesis: Picasso (fragment)

Box 1: 14
Notebooks

Box 1: 15
Melville/Pierre notes

Box 1: 16
Book reviews by SF

Box 1: 17-24
(Combined with folder 16)

Box 1: 25
Is Jazz a National Expression or an International Folk Music?

Box 1: 26
On jazz (fragment)

Box 1: 27
On American music

Box 1: 28
On opera

Box 1: 29
Music and Music Criticism: A New Look

Box 2: 30
Myths and Realities of the Arts
c. 1949

Box 2: 31-33
Psychoanalysis and the Arts
1951

Box 2: 34
On realism, especially Charles White (fragment)

Box 2: 35
On Charles White's paintings

Box 2: 36
Realism in Art, review of
c. 1954

Box 2: 37
Realism in Art, article about & SF response

Box 2: 38
On Arnold Hauser's "The Social History of Art" (fragment)

Box 2: 39
Dialectical Materialism and the Arts

Box 2: 40
On John Dewey's "Art as Experience"

Box 2: 41
On Tagore's play "The King of the Dark Chamber" (fragment)

Box 2: 42
On two articles regarding young intellectuals

Box 2: 43
The Art and Science of C.P. Snow
c. 1961

Box 2: 44
Composer and Nation, letters re: review of
1961

Box 2: 45
Dialectics of Art/Form and Freedom

Box 3-5: 46-71
Notes on Greece/Spain: High Renaissance architecture, Spanish Colonial architecture, Romanesque sculpture

Box 6: 72-73
On Henry James' "The Sacred Fount"
1960
Box 6: 74
James: Introduction to Princess Cassanassima

Box 6: 75
Dialectical materialism & Art/ What Is Art?

Box 7: 76-84
The Literary Influence of Existentialism/ The Literature of Alienation
1965
Box 8-10: 85-93
Media & the Arts: The Sense and Nonsense of McLuhan
1968
Box 8-10: 94-95
McLuhan Book - published versions

Box 8-10: 96
On Beauty and Truth

Box 8-10: 97
How Music expresses Ideas
1970
Box 11: 98
Who Needs Shakespeare?
1973
Box 11: 99-100

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Acquired from: Maynard Solomon, 1986.

Books Written by Finkelstein

1947.*Art and Society*. New York, International Publishers.

1948.*Jazz, a People's Music*. New York, Citadel Press.

1952.*How Music Expresses Ideas*. New York, International Publishers.

1954.*Realism and Art*. New York, International Publishers.

1960.*Composer and Nation: the folk heritage of music*. New York, International Publishers.

1965.*Existentialism and Alienation in American Literature*. New York, International Publishers.

1968.*The Sense and Nonsense of McLuhan*.

1969. *The Young Picasso*.

1970. *How Music Expresses Ideas*, Revised and Enlarged edition.

1973. *Who Needs Shakespeare?*. New York, International Publishers.

Processing Information

Processed by Linda Seidman and David Goldberg, 1986, 2001.

Language:

English

Acknowledgments

Encoding funded by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

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Cite as: Sidney Finkelstein Papers (MS 128). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.

Search terms

Subjects

Art criticism--United States--History--20th century--Sources.

Cohen, R. S. (Robert Sonn e)--Correspondence.

Communism--United States--History--Sources.

Communist Party of the United States of America--History--20th century--Sources.

Communist aesthetics--History--Sources.

Criticism--United States--History--20th century--Sources.

Critics--United States--Archives.

Culture--Study and teaching--United States--History--20th century--Sources.

Finkelstein, Sidney Walter, 1909-1974--Archives.

Finkelstein, Sidney Walter, 1909-1974--Correspondence.

Gorton, Sally Kent, 1915-2000--Correspondence.

Hille, Waldemar, 1908- --Correspondence.

Kent, Rockwell, 1882-1971--Correspondence.

Lawson, John Howard, 1894- --Correspondence.

Music--History and criticism--Sources.

Musical criticism--United States--History--Sources.

Richmond, Al, 1913-1987--Correspondence.

Selsam, Millicent Ellis, 1912- --Correspondence.

Siegmeister, Elie, 1909- --Correspondence.

Socialist realism--History--Sources.

Thomson, Virgil, 1896- --Correspondence.

Veinus, Abraham--Correspondence.

Contributors

Finkelstein, Sidney Walter, 1909-1974 **[main entry]**

Cohen, R. S. (Robert Sonn e)

Hille, Waldemar, 1908-

Kent, Rockwell, 1882-1971.

Gorton, Sally Kent, 1915-2000.

Lawson, John Howard, 1894-

Richmond, Al, 1913-1987.

Selsam, Millicent Ellis, 1912-

Siegmeister, Elie, 1909-

Thomson, Virgil, 1896-

Veinus, Abraham.

Genres and formats

Manuscripts.

Photographs.

Link to similar SCUA collections

Communism and Socialism

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