

Johann Moritz Rugendas Collection

1835-1845

1 box (0.5 linear ft.)

Call no.: MS 271



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The painter Johann Moritz Rugendas was born in Augsburg, Germany, in 1802, and achieved fame for his depictions of the landscape, natural history, and cultural history of South America early in the era of independence. Beginning as a member of George Heinrich Langsdorff's scientific expedition to Minas Gerais in 1821, and then on his own, Rugendas traveled widely in Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, and Peru. His best-known published work is the monumental four-volume set, *Malerische Reise in Brasilien* (1827-1835).

The Rugendas collection consists of 192 letters and 4 poems written to Rugendas by four of his South American artist friends who shared his passion for the country and culture of Argentina.

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Background on Johann Moritz Rugendas

Johann Moritz Rugendas (also known as Juan Mauricio Rugendas) was among the most influential European artists to travel in South America during the first half of the nineteenth century. Born in Augsburg (present-day Germany) on Mar. 29, 1802, and raised in a family of renowned painters and engravers, Rugendas was provided with a strong academic artistic foundation, training in father's art school and studying under the painter Albrecht Adam and then under Lorenz Quaglio at the Academy of Arts in Munich.

Although only in his late teens, Rugendas grew weary of academic study, and when the Russian naturalist Georg Heinrich Freiherr von Langsdorff, offered an opportunity to travel into the interior of Brazil and explore the New World firsthand, Rugendas wasted little time accepting. As an illustrator accompanying Langsdorff's scientific expedition to the Brazilian states of Minas Gerais and Sao Paulo, Rugendas had a rare opportunity to immerse himself in the natural and cultural history of the country, then struggling toward independence, and although he broke with Langsdorff and was replaced as illustrator by Adrien Taunay, he continued on his own to explore Mato Grosso, Pernambuco, Bahia, and Rio de Janeiro.

In 1825, Rugendas returned to Europe at the request of Bavarian King Max Josef, lured in part by the prospect of publishing an illustrated account of his travels. Despite the loss of a potential patron with the untimely death of the King, Rugendas succeeded in publishing the monumental four volume set, *Malerische Reise in Brasilien*, which appeared more or less simultaneously in French translation as *Voyage pittoresque dans le Bresil* (1827-1835). The one hundred published plates were acclaimed for their beauty, but also for their evocative depictions of aboriginal culture, landscapes and animals, urban scenery, and the Brazilian system of slavery.

After spending time in Paris and Italy, Rugendas returned to the Americas in 1831, traveling successively through Haiti and Mexico, adding oil paintings to his repertoire for the first time. Not simply an observer, Rugendas became caught up in failed coup against Mexican President Anastasio Bustamante, and was arrested and expelled from the country in 1834. For the next decade, traveled throughout Chile, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil, making the same careful visual documentation of his travels as always.

Upon his arrival back in Europe in 1847, Rugendas sold his drawings and paintings to King Max II of Bavaria in exchange for an annual annuity, but failing health led him to give up his art. He died at Weilheim an der Teck on May 29, 1858.

Scope of collection

The Rugendas collection is comprised of 192 letters and 4 poems received by Juan Mauricio Rugendas (Johann Moritz Rugendas) from four friends during the years 1835 to 1845. The bulk of these letters were written while Rugendas sought political asylum in Valparaiso, Chile, and in Lima, Peru (1842-1844).

Although Rugendas traveled extensively throughout Europe and Latin America, he was most intrigued by the scenery and the native people of Argentina. His enthusiasm for native Argentine culture was shared by his correspondents Domingo de Oro, Juan de Espinosa, and Juan Godoy, whose own careers led them into the Argentine back country. Their letters reflect their mutual interests in the landscape and native costume, music, customs, and language.

Information on the correspondents

A native of San Juan, Argentina, and the nephew of Bishop Santa Maria de Oro, Domingo De Oro (1800-1879) served as secretary to General Carlos Maria Alvear and as assistant to General Antonio Jose de Sucre. As a friend of General Lucio Mansilla of Entre Rios and General Estanislao Lopez of Santa Fe, he was instrumental in the Argentine attempt to overtake Uruguay in the 1820s. Oro worked as a messenger for the administration of Juan Manuel de Rosas until a bitter conflict arose between the two men,

leading him to seek exile in Chile and Bolivia until the end of Rosas' rule in 1852.

Juan Gualberto Godoy (1793-1864), born in Mendoza, Argentina, was one of the first writers to introduce the poetry of "los payadores," minstrels who roamed the pampas, singing and playing guitars.

Juan De Espinosa (1804-1871) was born in Uruguay. A colonel in Uruguay's War of Independence in 1826, and a veteran of the conflict in Peru in 1823, he was also an historical writer.

Jose Javier Y Tomas Bustamante - an unidentified correspondent.

Arrangement

This collection is organized into four series:

Series 1. Domingo De Oro, 1837-1845

Series 2. Juan Gualberto Godoy, 1841-1843

Series 3. Juan De Espinosa, 1835-1843

Series 4. Jose Javier Y Tomas Bustamante, 1837-1843

Series descriptions

Series 1. Domingo de Oro

1837-1845

Contains 84 letters received in Valparaiso, Chile and Lima, Peru. These letters reveal an affectionate and supportive relationship between the two men, and a mutual appreciation for the beauty of Argentina. Oro offers his sympathy to Rugendas after Rugendas was rejected by Clara Álvarez, encouraging him to continue with his artistic work as a means of convalescing. He informs Rugendas as to the whereabouts and wellbeing of mutual friends, including Juan Godoy, Juan de Espinosa, and Carmen Guticke. The friendship of Oro and Rugendas seems strengthened by their experiences as exiles and their disdain for the policies of Governor Juan Manuel de Rosas of Argentina.

Series 2. Juan Gualberto Godoy

1841-1843

Contains 2 letters and 4 poems. Godoy uses Rugendas as a sounding board for ideas about his creative work. The poems and letters express his deep passion for the lyrical poetry of "los payadores," the minstrels of the pampas.

Series 3. Juan de Espinosa

1835-1843

Contains 79 letters. Espinosa's prose is gentle and poetic with affectionate overtones. He often questions Rugendas for any news of their friends, especially Juan Godoy and Domingo de Oro. His status in the Uruguayan military allows him to travel extensively throughout the backcountry of Argentina. His letters include detailed descriptions of the terrain of the pampas, including small sketches of sites of interest. Espinosa also compiles lists of common native terminology and expressions and their usage. He encourages Rugendas to document the beauty of Argentina in his artwork. Espinosa's letters served as a catalyst and as a guide for Rugendas' successful journeys in Argentina.

Series 4: José Javier y Tomás Bustamante

1837-1843

Contains 27 letters. Many of the letters center around the activities of Carmen Guticke. The two men seem to share a common opinion of Rosas' reign as governor.

Inventory

Series 1: Domingo de Oro

1837-1845

Letters

1837-1840

Box 1: 1

Letters

1840

Box 1: 2

Letters

1841

Box 1: 3

Letters

1842

Box 1: 4

Letters

1843-1845

Box 1: 5

Series 2: Juan Gualberto Godoy

1841-1843

Letters and poems

1841-1843

Box 1: 6

Series 3: Juan de Espinosa

1835-1843

Letters

1835-1836

Box 1: 7

Letters

1837

Box 1: 8

Letters

1838

Box 1: 9

Letters

1839

Box 1: 10-11

Letters

1840

Box 1: 12

Letters

1841-1843

Box 1: 13

Letters

n.d.

Box 1: 14

Series 4: José Javier y Tomás Bustamante

1837-1843

Letters

1837-1843

Box 1: 15

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Acquired from Robert Potash, Dept. of History, University of Massachusetts Amherst, 1988.

The collection was originally the property of Marta Madler, a descendant of Rugendas. In January 1968, Oscar Carlos Avalle of Munich's Argentine Consulate received a cable from Ms. Madler offering to sell the letters. Avalle contacted a series of officials in Argentina's Foreign Relations Department, offering them the opportunity to purchase the letters from Ms. Madler. The letters were eventually passed to historian, Carlos Maria Gelly y Obes, in Buenos Aires, who turned them over to Robert Potash at the University of Massachusetts Amherst in 1988, who in turn donated them to the SCUA.

The collection originally contained 427 items; however, the location of 231 of them is unknown. Of the missing items, 225 were letters from Dona Carmen Arriagada Guticke, and 2 letters and 4 poems were from the Cuban poet, Rafael Valdes, both personal friends of Rugendas.

Processing Information

Processed by Madeleine Charney, January 1991.

Languages:

English, Spanish

Acknowledgments

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Search terms

Subjects

Argentina--Description and travel

Argentina--Social life and customs--19th century

Contributors

Rugendas, Juan Mauricio **[main entry]**

Rugendas, Johann Moritz, 1802-1858

Espinosa, Juan, 1804-1871

Oro, Domingo de, 1800-1879

Godoy, Juan Gualberto, 1793-1864

Bustamante, José Javier y Tomás

Guticke, Carmen

Genres and formats

Letters (Correspondence)

Poems

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