

# **Russell Barnett Aitken Collection**

## **1111.131**

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September 05, 2017

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Ingalls Library and Museum Archives  
11150 East Blvd.  
Cleveland, OH, 44106  
216-707-2492  
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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository</b>	Ingalls Library and Museum Archives
<b>Creator - Artist</b>	Russell Barnett Aitken (American, 1910-2002)
<b>Title</b>	Russell Barnett Aitken Collection
<b>Date [inclusive]</b>	1915-2003
<b>Extent</b>	8.0 Cubic feet
<b>Language</b>	English

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## Biographical/Historical note

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Russell Barnett Aitken was a celebrated ceramic sculptor and enamellist from Cleveland, most active during the 1930s. While a student at the Cleveland School (now Institute) of Art, Aitken began sculpting figures at the Cowan Pottery Studio alongside Viktor Schreckengost, his exact contemporary. He graduated from CIA as the class valedictorian in 1931. He also received a degree in journalism that same year from Case Western Reserve. From 1931-33, he did post-graduate study in Vienna with Professors Michael Powolny and Josef Hoffmann. After Cowan Pottery closed in 1931, Aitken set up his own studio in Cleveland. His fame grew among collectors and dealers alike and he moved to New York in 1935. He was known for his distinctive caricatures of people and animals in a style influenced by his contact with Viennese modernists. Prior to World War II, Aitken continued to exhibit and win 1st prizes in the annual May Show, maintaining his ties to Cleveland. His work in Surrealism brought him special acclaim and a placement in the Museum of Modern Art, in New York. Later, his mural for the 1939 World's Fair, which was the largest decorative mural ever fired in vitreous enamel, was exhibited subsequently at the Metropolitan Museum and is a promised gift there currently.

Born in 1910, Aitken quickly discovered his two callings during his youth, sculptor and sportsman. He frequently traveled to the Canadian wilderness earning money as a guide and trapper. In these as with all things, Aitken pursued success with passion. He became a highly decorated soldier in World War II and a gunnery ace. Following the war, he went on to become one of the most celebrated outdoorsman of the 20th century. He was an associate editor for *Field & Stream*, and contributed over 300 articles about the genre. Aitken shot skeet, live pigeons, and big game, traveling to five continents to do so. In 1969 his book "Great Game Animals of the World" was published. Aitken married his first wife Anne Laurie Crawford Aitken in 1957. She was also a ceramicist and with her financial prowess they afforded their shared interests in houses, English and French furniture, rare books, arms and armor, decoys, African art, porcelain, silver, and fine decoration. Together they supported many philanthropic causes. The Annie Laurie Aitken English galleries at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Russell Barnett Aitken Arms and Armor galleries represent their generosity to that institution. After nearly 30 years of marriage, Anne Laurie died in 1984. Years later Aitken married Irene Roosevelt. Russell Barnett Aitken died in 2002.

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## Scope and Contents note

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The Russell Barnett Aitken collection was donated to the museum archives by Irene Roosevelt Aitken. The collection documents the artist's life and career through visual, textual, and three dimensional materials. It consists of six scrapbooks, four photo albums, loose photographs, three sketchbooks, one notebook, fifteen works of art; and artist tools and molds.

## Administrative Information

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### Publication Information

Ingalls Library and Museum Archives

### Conditions Governing Access note

Open to the public. For more information or to access this collection contact archives staff at [archives2@clevelandart.org](mailto:archives2@clevelandart.org).

### Immediate Source of Acquisition note

Gift of Irene Roosevelt Aitken, 2016.

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## Controlled Access Headings

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### Occupation(s)

- Ceramicists
- Outdoorsmen

### Subject(s)

- Art, American -- Ohio -- 20th century.
- Art--Private collections
- Artists -- Ohio -- Cleveland.
- Cleveland School of Art
- Cowan Pottery Studio
- May Show (Cleveland, Ohio)

## Collection Inventory

### Scrapbooks

#### Scope and Contents note

Arranged chronologically consisting of photographs, drawings, articles, newspaper clippings, awards, and other ephemera.

<b>Number 1 1915-1931</b>	<b>Box</b> 1
<b>Number 2 1932-1933</b>	<b>Box</b> 2
<b>Number 3 1934-1936</b>	<b>Box</b> 2
<b>Number 4 1937-1939</b>	<b>Box</b> 3
<b>Number 5 1940-1942</b>	<b>Box</b> 4
<b>Number 6 1979-2003</b>	<b>Box</b> 4

### Photographs

#### Scope and Contents note

Photo Albums contain object photographs, installation views, and portraits. Some object photographs have an index card with history of piece.

<b>Photo Album number 1</b>	<b>Box</b> 5
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## Photo Album number 2

<b>Photo Album number 2</b>	<b>Box</b> 5
<b>Photo Album number 3</b>	<b>Box</b> 5
<b>Photo Album number 4</b>	<b>Box</b> 5
<b>Century Album 1: loose photos 1930-1937</b>	<b>Box</b> 6
<b>Scope and Contents note</b>	
Object Photographs, 1930-1937. Photos are arranged in chronological order. May Show images are filed the year prior to the exhibition.	
<b>Century Album 2: loose photos 1938-1946, undated</b>	<b>Box</b> 7
<b>Scope and Contents note</b>	
Object Photographs, 1938-1946 and undated. Photos are arranged in chronological order. May Show images are filed the year prior to the exhibition.	
Object Photographs, Groups. Object Photos, Installation Views, Aitken Home and Galleries.	
Portraits of Russell Aitken by Cecil Beaton.	
Portraits of Artists and Visitors to Aitken Exhibitions at New York Galleries.	
<b>Sketchbooks/Notebooks</b>	
<b>Scope and Contents note</b>	
Less than 1/4 cubic foot of materials.	
<b>Sketchbook number 1</b>	<b>Box</b> 8

## Sketchbook number 2

<b>Sketchbook number 2</b>	<b>Box</b> 8
<b>Sketchbook number 3</b>	<b>Box</b> 8
<b>Notebook</b>	<b>Box</b> 8

**Objects****Scope and Contents note**

Three dimensional objects including works of art, tools, and plaster molds.

**Object**

A2014-001.1 Russell Barnett Aitken (American, 1910-2002) The Highwayman (Second Version). 1938 Ceramic 10"h x 9"w x 5"d	Unboxed A2014.001.1
A2014-001.2 Russell Barnett Aitken (American, 1910-2002) Monkey Business. 1933 Ceramic. 11"h x 9"w x 9"d	Unboxed A2014.001.2
A2014-001.3 Russell Barnett Aitken (American, 1910-2002) Congo Belle. 1932-1933 Ceramic. 13"h x 9"d	Unboxed A2014.001.3
A2014-001.4 Russell Barnett Aitken (American, 1910-2002) Copper Stylized Antelope. 1933 Copper. 15"h x 13"w x 6"d	Unboxed A2014.001.4
A2014-001.5 Russell Barnett Aitken (American, 1910-2002) Figural Group. 1932-1933 Metal. 8.5"h x 13"w x 3.5"d	Unboxed A2014.001.5



## Objects

A2014-001.6 Russell Barnett Aitken (American, 1910-2002) Wild Woods Fawn. 1938 Ceramic. 7"h x 4"w x 4"d	Unboxes A2014.001.6
A2014-001.7 Leda, or "Kiss the Boys Goodbye" 1933 Ceramic. 12"h x 6"d	Unboxed A2014.001.7
A2014-001.8 Russell Barnett Aitken (American, 1910-2002) Virgins of Mogambo. 1935 Enamel on metal. overall 20 inches.	Unboxed A2014.001.8
A2014-001.9 Russell Barnett Aitken (American, 1910-2002) The Cactus Kid. 1932 Ceramic. overall 19 inches.	Unboxed A2014.001.9
A2014-001.10 Russell Barnett Aitken (American, 1910-2002) The Virgin & the Unicorn. 1937 Ceramic. 8"h x 10"w x 5"d	Unboxes A2014.001.10
A2014-001.11 Russell Barnett Aitken (American, 1910-2002) Wild Woods Fawn. 1938 Ceramic. 7"h x 4"w x 4"d	Unboxed A2014.001.11
A2014-001.12 Russell Barnett Aitken (American, 1910-2002) Possum. 1935 Ceramic. overall 4 inches.	Unboxed A2014.001.12
A2014-001.13 Russell Barnett Aitken (American, 1910-2002) Congo Pottery Punch Bowl. 1936 Ceramic. overall 15 inches.	Unboxed A2014.001.13
A2014-001.14 Russell Barnett Aitken (American, 1910-2002) Enamel Plaque of a Masai Warrior framed in silver moulding unknown Enamel. 7"h x 4.5"w x 2"d	Unboxed A2014.001.14
A2014-001.15 Russell Barnett Aitken (American, 1910-2002) Black Scotty. Ceramic. overall 3 inches.	Unboxed A2014.001.15

## Objects

A2014-001.16 10 Ceramic Tools.	A2014.001.16
A2014-001.17 Pistol. unkown	Unboxed A2014.001.17
A2014-001.18.a-b Plaster Mold of bear. unknown 6"w x 8"l x 3"d	Unboxed A2014.001.18.a- b
A2014-001.19 Plaster Cast of Animal Track. unkown overall 3 3/4 inches.	Unboxed A2014.001.19
A2014-001.20 Plaster Mold. Unknown object. unknown overall 10 inches.	Unboxed A2014.001.20