

Henry Miller:

An Inventory of His Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Miller, Henry, 1891-1980
Title:	Henry Miller Art Collection
Dates:	1943-1971, undated
Extent:	3 boxes, 5 oversize folders, 1 boxed portfolio (84 items)
Abstract:	The collection consists of art works by Miller, including self-portraits, several abstract works, screen prints by Bezalel Schatz of a design by Miller, proofs of screen prints from Miller's collaboration with Schatz, and the portfolio of facsimile prints of Miller's paintings, <i>Insomnia, or The Devil at Large</i> (1971). Also found in the collection are art works by other artists including a portrait of Miller, a drawing by Miller's wife, and one other work.
Call Number:	Art Collection AR-00180
Language:	English and Latin
Access:	Open for research. A minimum of twenty-four hours is required to pull art materials to the Reading Room.

Administrative Information

Acquisition:	Purchases (R1507, R1972, R4190, R4497, R4813), 1963-69
Processed by:	Alice Egan, 1997, and Helen Young, 2002
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

Henry Valentine Miller was born 26 December 1891, in Manhattan, to children of German immigrants, Heinrich Miller and Louise Nieting. A younger sister, Lauretta Anna, was born in 1895. Within a year of Miller's birth, the family moved to Brooklyn. He graduated from high school second in his class in 1909, then spent one semester at New York's City College, but left after finding the environment unbearable.

In 1915, Miller took piano lessons with Beatrice Wickens, whom he married in 1917. Their daughter, Barbara, was born in 1919. For five years, Miller was employment manager at Western Union Telegraph Company. He frequently visited a friend from his school days, Emil Schnellock, an advertising artist who had a studio in New York City. Miller liked to watch Schnellock at work, and from this association Miller developed an interest in watercolor painting.

In the summer of 1923, Miller met June Mansfield, an exotic dancer. He and Beatrice divorced in December 1923, and he married June in 1924. June persuaded Miller to quit his Western Union job in order to write full time. In late 1926, June began an intimate relationship with Greenwich Village artist Jean Kronski. Kronski soon moved in with the Millers, and as the two women carried on their relationship, Miller experienced fits of jealousy and even attempted suicide. In April 1927, June and Jean left together for Paris, and Miller expressed his despair in extensive notes, which would become the source material for much of his later autobiographical writing, particularly *Tropic of Capricorn* (1939) and *The Rosy Crucifixion* (1949-1960).

In 1929, Miller began writing his novel *Crazy Cock* (1981). Around this time he started to develop a passion for painting watercolors, and studied art history. Emil Schnellock introduced him to Italian art and Walter Pater's *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, and Miller read Elie Faure's *History of Art*.

Miller journeyed to Paris in 1930, where he spent several lonely months reading and visiting art galleries where he saw the works of Joan Miró, Max Jacob, and Marie Laurencin. In December 1931, Miller was introduced to Anaïs Nin, who was married to the wealthy banker Hugh Guiler. The Guilers' house at Louveciennes outside Paris became a refuge for Miller, and in March, Miller and Nin began a love affair. Nin was a source of encouragement for Miller, and by October he had finished writing *Tropic of Cancer* (1934). As a result of praise from writers such as Blaise Cendrars and Ezra Pound, the book gained a reputation as an underground classic.

In December 1934, Henry and June Miller divorced, and Henry hoped to marry Anaïs Nin. Miller followed Nin to New York in 1935 and while there finished *Black Spring* (1936), which included a description of himself painting a watercolor in the passage "The Angel Is My Watermark." Nin returned to Paris in May 1935, and Miller followed in October and began work on *Tropic of Capricorn* (1939).

After his travels in Europe and America, Miller moved to California in 1942. Although his books were selling well in Europe, he was not receiving his royalties because of the war. But his reputation as a watercolor painter was becoming established; in 1943, he earned \$1400 from sales of his paintings.

In March 1943, he moved to Big Sur and re-established contact with Janina Martha Lepska, a graduate student whom he had met earlier in New York. Lepska traveled from New Haven, Connecticut, to California with Miller, and the two married en route in Denver in December 1944. Their daughter, Valentine, was born in November 1945, and son, Henry Tony, in 1948.

Lepska left Miller in June 1951, and they divorced in November 1952. In April 1952, Eve McClure, a fan, moved in with him. In December 1952 Miller and McClure traveled in Europe for seven months, and they married at the end of 1953. In 1960 Miller divorced Eve.

Tropic of Cancer was legally published in the United States in 1961, and Miller's fame became widespread. As a result of his notoriety, Miller's home in Big Sur was overrun with undesirable types, causing Miller to leave in September 1962 for the Pacific Palisades, where he lived for the rest of his life. Around this time he began creating a large number of watercolors, which he donated to non-profit organizations.

In February 1966, Miller met Hiroko Tokuda ("Hoki"), a pianist at a Hollywood bar, who had recently moved to California from Japan. They married in September 1967, but Tokuda left him in May 1970, and they divorced in 1977. By that time Miller required the use of a walker, and had to rely on assistance from others as his health declined. He died June 7, 1980.

Sources:

Dearborn, Mary V. *The Happiest Man Alive: a Biography of Henry Miller*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991.

Ferguson, Robert. *Henry Miller: a Life*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1991.

Fowlie, Wallace. "Henry Miller." *Dictionary of Literary Biography. Vol. 9, American Novelists, 1910-1945.*, ed. James J. Martine. Detroit: Gale Research, 1981.

Scope and Contents

The Henry Miller Art Collection consists of art works by Henry Miller, as well as works by other artists that relate to Miller. It is organized into two series: I. Works by Henry Miller, and II. Works by Other Artists. Titles are transcribed from the items. Cataloger's titles appear in brackets.

Series I., Works by Henry Miller, is subdivided into Subseries A. Paintings and Drawings, and Subseries B. Prints. Works are organized by accession number within each series. The fourteen paintings and drawings by Miller were created between 1943 and 1963 and include two self-portraits and several abstract works. The prints include two screen prints by Bezalel Schatz of a design by Miller, two proofs of screen prints from Miller's collaboration with Schatz, *Into the Night Life* (1947), and the portfolio of twelve facsimile prints of Miller's paintings, *Insomnia, or The Devil at Large* (1971). The Works by Other Artists series includes a portrait of Miller, a drawing by Miller's wife, Eve Miller, and one other work.

Related Material

The Art Collection also has a portrait drawing of Miller by Austin Osman Spare in its Austin Osman Spare Collection. The Ransom Center also has Henry Miller materials in its Manuscripts Collection, its Library, and its Photography Collection.

Series I. Works by Henry Miller, 1943-71, undated**Subseries A. Paintings and Drawings, 1943-1963**

- Accession Number: 65.129** [Self-portrait, head and shoulders; detached backing with Bern Porter's business card and inscription]. 1943. 1 drawing (ink, wash, and chalk?), 27.6 x 22.8 cm. **Box** 1.1-2
- Accession Number: 65.382** [Abstract design with figurative and architectural symbols]. 1951. 1 painting (watercolor, ink, and pencil), 15.3 x 28.8 cm. **Box** 1.3
- Accession Number: 65.383** [Two half-length figures with hats]. 1949. 1 painting (watercolor and ink), 48 x 32.2 cm. **Box** 1.4
- Accession Number: 65.384** [Abstract landscape]. 1952. 1 painting (watercolor and ink), 36.4 x 24.5 cm. **Box** 1.5
- Accession Number: 68.34** [Self-portrait, head and shoulders; detached backing with inscription of Bern Porter]. 1943. 1 painting (watercolor), 24.1 x 19.9 cm. **Box** 1.6-7
- Accession Number: 68.64.1** [Abstract design with person and horse?]. 1963. 1 painting (watercolor), 37 x 18.4 cm. **Box** 2.1
- Accession Number: 68.64.2** Lil [head portrait of woman]. 1961. 1 painting (watercolor), 39.8 x 30 cm. **Box** 2.2
- Accession Number: 69.32** Semblance of a Devoted Past [cover design (unused) with head profile for *Semblance of a Devoted Past*, 1944]. 1944? 1 painting (watercolor), 62.5 x 49.2 cm. **Location** Flat file
- Accession Number: 69.41.5** Mal du Pays [two heads]. Undated. 1 painting (watercolor and ink), 28.6 x 30.8 cm. **Box** 2.3
- Accession Number: 69.41.7** [Three full-length figures; inscribed: "For Joseph Flagg"]. 1949. 1 painting (watercolor and ink), 24.7 x 30.5 cm. **Box** 2.4
- Accession Number: 73.489** [Map of Southern England, with cities labeled in Latin]. Undated. 1 painting (watercolor), 55.6 x 39.5 cm. folded to 27.7 x 39.5 cm. **Box** 2.5
- Accession Number: 85.164** The Pointilliste of Big Sur [half-length figure; detached backing with manuscript notes]. Undated. 1 painting (watercolor), 27.4 x 20.4 cm. **Box** 2.6-7
- Accession Number: 97.1.1** [Abstract still-life in urban landscape; inscribed: "For Dante and Connie"]. 1950. 1 painting (gouache), 24 x 21.7 cm. **Box** 3.1

Accession Number: 97.1.2 [Half-length figure]. 1949. 1 painting (gouache and ink), 25.6 x 14 cm. **Box**
3.2

Subseries B. Prints, 1945-1971

Accession Number: 65.153.1, 69.41.6 Hindu Wedding [print by Bezalel Schatz from a drawing by Miller; 75/200]. 1948. 2 prints (screen print), image 45 x 30.9 cm., on sheets 43.7 x 29.9 cm. and 45 x 30.9 cm. **Box**
3.3-4

Accession Number: 69.41.1.1-12 *Echolalia: reproductions of water colors*. 1945. 1 portfolio (1 leaf, 11 reproductive prints), 30.5 x 22.5 cm. **Box**
3.5

Accession Number: 69.41.3 "It is neither night nor day ..." [proof of page from *Into the Night Life*; without color]. 1947. 1 print (screen print), image 20.3 x 17.6 cm. on board 30.5 x 27.7 cm. **Box**
3.6

Accession Number: 69.41.4 "Then the low-bellied weasel ..." [proof of page from *Into the Night Life*; without color]. 1947. 1 print (screen print), image 34.3 x 24.1 cm. on board 45.6 x 35.6 cm. **Box**
3.7

Accession Number: 90.10.1-14 *Insomnia, or, The Devil at Large: a first edition book & portfolio*. (Albuquerque, N.M.: Loujon Press) "Edition D ... number 3". 1971. 1 volume (98 p.) & portfolio (12 reproductive prints) 60.3 x 48.4 cm. **Location**
Flat file

Accession Number: 92.9.1-12; 92.10.1-12; 92.11.1-12 [*Insomnia, or, The Devil at Large*. 3 sets of plates only]. 1971. 36 reproductive prints, 55.7 x 43 cm. **Location**
Flat file

Accession Number: 92.12.1 *Insomnia #3* [plate from *Insomnia, or, The Devil at Large*]. 1971. 1 reproductive print, 55.7 x 43 cm. **Location**
Flat file

Series II. Works by Other Artists, 1961-1962

Accession Number: 68.31 Drummonte(?) [Henry Miller, head portrait]. 1961. 1 painting (oil on canvas board), 40.5 x 30.2 cm. **Box**
3.8

Accession Number: 85.163 Maurer, Maurice. [Three-quarter length portrait of woman in Persian costume, inscribed to Henry Miller; holograph manuscript on verso: "From Ezra Gerhardt's copy book - Class in "Religion" ... Copied by Henry Miller faithfully, this day of 10/16/62 Berlin - Wilmersdorf"]. 1962. 1 painting (watercolor), 48.2 x 35.9 cm. **Box**
3.9

Accession Number: 65.385 Miller, Eve. 3 min. Life Sketch [reclining female nude]. 1962. 1 drawing (ink), 25.5 x 31.3 cm. **Box**
3.10