

Gil J. Wolman Papers

Collection Overview

Beinecke GEN MSS 969

Extent: 55 Boxes + Oversize Portfolio (c. 35-40 lf)

Scope: Wolman's entire career, 1944-1995, bulk 1950-1988

As represented in this archive, Wolman's career stands at the intersection of three major movements that are key to the development of postwar avant-garde and counter-culture in Europe collected both in print and manuscript by Beinecke: 1) Lettrism (Lemaître Papers); 2) International Sound Poetry (Chopin Papers); and Situationism (de Jong Papers). There is also some overlap with Italian movements feeding into the Movimento del 77 (Bertini, Mec Art, Lotta Poetica), and with the May 1968 Paris uprisings (Zoummeroff and Kugelberg Collections).

The archive spans Wolman's first experiments with sound poetry and the milieu in the "caves" of Saint-Germain des Prés where it emerged in the late 1940s and early 1950s. This period was enormously important for subsequent developments across Europe (and beyond), but is exceedingly difficult to document. Wolman was also involved in Lettrist experimental cinema, not only through his own *L'Anticoncept* (1951) but also appearing on the sound track of Isou's *Traité de Bave et de l'Éternité* (1950-51) and deeply involved in Debord's *Hurlements en faveur de Sade* (1951) as well as Lemaître's *Le film est déjà commencé?* (1951). Film projects of Jean Louis Brau, apparently unrealized, are also documented, as is the work of Serge Berna.

The archive provides rare and significant insight into the period of collaboration between the radical Lettrists (Debord, Wolman, Brau, Berna) and Lemaître, a period widely acknowledged as significant but virtually unresearched, as well as the early years of the Lettrist International, one of the two main organizations behind the founding of the Situationist International, in the years before and during the publication of *Potlatch*. Correspondence and drafts of important tracts and theoretical pieces from this period are abundant. Another important, but as yet unresearched period also covered by the archive is the brief return of the radical Lettrists (minus Debord) to the mainstream Lettrist movement in the early 1960s.

Wolman's graffiti art and so-called Scotch period are also comprehensively documented, as are his later conceptual works focusing on the act of "separation." From the early 1960s until his death, Wolman edited an important chronicle, *L'Officiel des Galeries*, so the archive also includes substantial documentation of the Parisian art and gallery scene.

Wolman turned to book production in the late 1970s, and the archive includes a near-complete set of these works as well as substantial production files on many of them, especially *L'Homme séparé* (1979), for which we have multiple drafts as well as the complete manuscript. The print component also includes hundreds of Lettrist, Situationist, and other tracts, posters, ephemera that complement our holdings, filling out runs of important, but nearly impossible to find periodicals (esp. *Internationale Lettriste*, for which we have only one of four issues).

A small, but densely packed archive from one of the leading figures of the early postwar avant-garde, the Wolman Papers substantially add to our documentation of the network of relationships that sustained it through a formative period in the development of the twentieth century. It both complements and bears

comparison to recent archival acquisitions such as the de Jong Papers (less than half as large) and Chopin Papers (roughly the same size; much richer in correspondence, but weaker in manuscripts of major works).

Wolman Archive: Overview of Contents

Correspondence (c. 550 pieces)

Altman, Roberto (6)
Arnaud, Noel (9)
Aubertin, Bernard and Denise (12)
Berna, Serge (17), letters from prison, 1952-53
Bernstein, Michelle (1)
Bertini, Gianni (3)
Brau, Jean Louis and Elian (20)
Chopin, Henri (6)
Debord, Guy (42)
Dufrêne, François (2)
Fillon, Jacques (3)
Hopfenblum, Emile (6)
Isou, Isidore (3)
Lemaître, Maurice (15)
Mension, Jean Michel (1)
Matricon (1)
Pinot-Gallizio (1)
Rumney, Ralph (6)
Simondo, Piero (2)
Spacagna and Aude Jessemin (11)
Spiess, Jacques (5)
Stern, Nane (6)
General correspondence (300 + c. 50 documents)

Writings by Wolman (c. 5500 pp MS, 2100 pp TS, 250 original documents)

Early sound poems ("mégapneumes"): 160 pp. MS, incl 4 lengthier mss and 1951 collaboration w/ Lemaître and Debord

L'Anticoncept (Film, 1951): 121 pp MS; 133 pp TS/corrected proofs; 3 AL/TLS, 31 pp. orig docs, plus printed materials

Duhring Duhring (1979): 280 pp. MS; 228 pp. TS; 12 pp. other docs; détourned book

L'Homme séparé (1979): 210 pp. MS, 50 pp. TS, 91 pp. production materials

Wolman résumé (1981, with additions for intended second addition, to 1995): 700 pp corrected proof; original documents 1950-1995, including 48 tracts, 51 handbills/posters; 31 exhibition documents; 24 AL/TLS, 141 pp. TS; 24 catalogs/brochures; 3 maquettes/montages

Vivre et mourir (1984): 89 pp MS, c. 100 pp (?) TS

Les entrepôts d'Ivry (1985): 65 pp MS, 89 pp TS

Fin de Communication (1985): 216 pp MS, 311 pp. TS; 5 pp. art/production materials

Les Inhumations/Peinture dépeinte (1991): 1754 pp MS; 244 ppp TS

Smaller MSS/articles/manifestos: 2610 pp MS; 1047 pp. TS; 11 pp. maquettes/croquis – includes mss material from *Ur*, no. 1 (first series, 1950); 28 pp. ms on Camus's *L'Etranger* (probably for *Combat*, c. 1945); an additional 30-40 pp. early lettrist poems (1950-51); additional film scenarios (unrealized, 1960s, 1970s); 10 pp draft of letter to Guy Debord (1942); 7 pp. ms on cadavres exquis w/ lettrist poems (c. 1950)

Writings by Others (c. 125 pp MS; 200 pp TS, letters and docs)

Altman, Roberto (1 ms)

Berna, Serge (66+ pp. MS, including ms of "film/novel")

Brau, Jean Louis (6 pp. MS, 55 pp. TS; 4 ALS (8pp., see also more under correspondence) – includes film projects, recording projects, and TS of tract w/ corrections by Debord)

Cathelin, Jean (1 ms, polemic against Lemaître)

Debord, Guy (c. 20 pp. corrected TS, including text fm *IL* no. 3 and very early Debord text on psychogeography (1953)

Dufrène, François (11 pp. MS, 15 PC, incl lettrist poem)

Isou, Isidore (33 pp MS; 63 pp. TS, including c. 30 pp. original material relating to *Traité de bave e d'éternité* (1951), also GJW's recording for soundtrack)

Ivain, Gilles (1 pc)

Lemaître, Maurice (2 pp MS; 1 TS, 14 TLS, mainly 1961-62)

Sabatier, Roland (1 pc)

Spacagna, Jacques (1 pc)

Unidentified/Collaborations (11 pp MS, 43 pp TS), including original production materials (maquettes) for *Ur*, no. 2 (first series, 1952) and the *Deuxième Internationale Lettriste* (1964); manifestos texts relating to final split with lettrists, c. 1964

Printed

Books by Wolman

Quelques jours en août 1976 (1977), with ms restoration of missing letters, 5 pp ms

Duhring Duhring (1979), 2 copies, incl. "tirage de tête"

L'Homme séparé (1979)
Wolman resumé (1981, deluxe edition w/ original art work)
Vivre et mourir (1984)
Les entrepôts d'Ivry (1986)
Haute Vie (1987)
Le sens perdu de l'interruption (1987)
Peinture dépeinte (1991)
Appel à témoin, pour une peinture de tradition orale (1991)

Journals/Revue – (27 titles), including lacking issues of *Internationale Lettriste*, *Nouvelle Génération*, *Revue en Marge*, *A, O*, and 107 issues of *L'Officiel des Galeries* (edited by GJW), also a near-complete run of *Potlatch*

Tracts – (c. 150) including fliers from 1950, lacking ephemera from Alba 1956, Gruppe Spur, lettrist cinema (1951-52); many lacking or unknown tracts of pre-Potlatch and return to Lettrism in 1960s

Posters – (c. 50) largely document exhibitions of 1960/70s

Silkscreens/Lithographs (9)

Catalogs, invitations, fliers (350-400) – nearly complete documentation of Wolman and entourage exhibition careers in Paris from mid-1950s through 1980s

Photographs (c. 100), mainly documenting artwork

Various Documents (c. 1000 pieces) – including docs on GJW's wartime activities (e.g. *Combat*), early lettrist mss relating esp to *Traité de base* and *Ur* (1st series), Tabou performances (c. 1950), art and production materials, documents relating to commercial aspects of publishing and exhibiting