

# Guide to the Yale Collection of Herbert Matter

MS 1630



compiled by Jae Rossman

December 2001

Yale University Library  
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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Manuscripts and Archives  
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New Haven, CT 06520-8240  
(203) 432-1735  
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<http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/>

**CALL NUMBER:** MS 1630

**CREATOR:** Matter, Herbert, 1907-1984

**TITLE:** Yale Collection of Herbert Matter

**DATES:** 1928-1991

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 4 linear feet

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** The collection consists of client files and biographical material related to Herbert Matter. The client files provide examples of Matter's logo, advertisement, and publication designs for several well known businesses, including Knoll, Inc., Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, and the New Haven Railroad. The biographical material contains both works created by Matter, such as promotional material and photographs, as well as works about Matter, such as published articles and papers related to his teaching career at Yale. The majority of materials in this collection were amassed in support of a retrospective exhibition which took place at the Yale University Art and Architecture Gallery from January 16 to February 3, 1978.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.1630>

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## Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Manuscripts and Archives reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.1630>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please go to [http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr\\_copy\\_order.html](http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/ifr_copy_order.html). The information you will need to submit an order includes: the collection call number, collection title, series or accession number, box number, and folder number or name.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b.      box  
f.      folder

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## Administrative Information

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Transferred from the Yale Art Gallery, 1991. Gift of Knoll, Inc., 1992.

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### Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Original audiovisual materials, as well as preservation and duplicating masters, may not be played. Researchers must consult use copies, or if none exists must pay for a use copy, which is retained by the repository. Researchers wishing to obtain an additional copy for their personal use should consult Copying Services information on the Manuscripts and Archives web site.

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### Conditions Governing Use

Copyright status for collection materials is unknown. Transmission or reproduction of materials protected by U.S. Copyright Law (Title 17, U.S.C.) beyond that allowed by fair use requires the written permission of the copyright owners. Works not in the public domain cannot be commercially exploited without permission of the copyright owners. Responsibility for any use rests exclusively with the user.

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### Preferred Citation

Yale Collection of Herbert Matter (MS 1630). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

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## Biographical / Historical

Herbert Matter was born in Engelberg, Switzerland, on April 25, 1907. He was encouraged by his family to pursue his artistic interests, which were apparent early in his life. The Matter family owned a dance hall and restaurant where they hung Matter's early paintings.

In the late 1920s Matter moved to Paris to be a part of the active art scene there. He studied with the painters Fernand Léger and Amédée Ozenfant. He also assisted the graphic designer Adolphe Cassandre and the architect Le Corbusier. During his time in Paris, Matter started to move away from painting toward the graphic arts, especially photography, and he became a master of photomontage. Matter used this technique to great effect in several travel posters created between 1932 and 1936 for the Swiss National Tourist Office. This work established his reputation as a prominent and successful graphic designer.

Matter moved to New York City in 1936. He worked as photographer and designer for such magazines as *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue* and for lesser known, but more cutting edge, publications like *New Pencil Points*. He also designed publications for the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, Texas, as well as logos, publications, and advertising materials for many companies, most notably the New Haven Railroad and Knoll, Inc.

In 1952 Matter joined the faculty of the graphic design and photography programs at Yale University, where he taught until 1976. Matter was also involved with the New York Studio School, which his wife founded. As the Yale graduate program produced many successful designers, Matter's ideas became widespread in the graphic design world. Students remember Matter fondly and were greatly influenced by his teachings.

Matter died in Southampton, New York, on May 8, 1984.

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## Scope and Contents

The Yale Collection of Herbert Matter contains materials that trace the personal and professional aspects of the life of an important graphic designer. The collection will be of interest to those studying the design career of Matter, the history of advertising or logos for the companies represented (especially Knoll, Inc.), the publications of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, and to some extent, the life history of Matter.

The collection primarily focuses on Matter's work with clients, especially the magazine ads and promotional material he designed for Knoll between 1946 and 1966 and the publications he designed for the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum from 1959 to 1967. The biographical material includes both copies of his Paris diaries from 1928 to 1932 and copies of notes on an exhibition about Matter which took place in 1989. Other notable items in the collection are photograms created in a Yale class, and some photographs taken by Matter studying the value contrasts of tree bark. The majority of materials in this collection were amassed in support of a retrospective exhibition which took place at the Yale University Art and Architecture Gallery from January 16 to February 3, 1978.

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## Arrangement

Arranged in two series: I. Client Files, 1932-1974. II. Biographical Material, 1928-1991.

## Collection Contents

### Series I: Client Files, 1932-1974

The series contains examples of design work produced by Matter, and is arranged alphabetically by client. Materials include photography, magazine advertisements, promotional material, publication design, and more. When the work that Matter produced for the client is merely a logo (as with the Boston and Maine or New Haven Railroads) the materials in these files are not necessarily produced by Matter, but do document the use of his logo designs. If Matter worked as a designer for a client, a publication from that client may be included, even if Matter's individual work is not specifically identified within the publication. Additionally, the Knoll file contains a selection of copper plates (color separated) that were used to print the advertisements Matter designed.

b. 1, f. 1	Acrilan	undated
b. 1, f. 2	Aluminum Company of America	1956
b. 1, f. 3	Awixa Pond Art Center	1966
b. 1, f. 4	Boston and Maine Railroad	undated
b. 1, f. 5	Container Corporation of America	[1959]
b. 1, f. 6	DuPont	undated
b. 1, f. 7	Evans Products Company	undated
	Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum	
	Catalogs	
b. 1, f. 8	"Accessions and Proposals" English	1964
b. 1, f. 9	"American Abstract Expressionists and Imagists" English	1961
b. 1, f. 10	"American Drawings" English	[1963]
b. 1, f. 11	"Francis Bacon" English	1963
b. 1, f. 12	"Alexander Calder: A Retrospective Exhibition" English	1964
b. 1, f. 13	"Joseph Cornell" English	1967
b. 1, f. 14	"Jean Dubuffet 1962-66" English	1966
b. 1, f. 15	"Elements of Modern Painting" English	1961
b. 1, f. 16	"European Drawings" English	[after 1963]

## Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum &gt; Catalogs (continued)

b. 1, f. 17	"Guggenheim International Award 1964" English	[1964]
b. 1, f. 18	"Philip Guston" English	1962
b. 1, f. 19	"Inaugural Selection" English	1959
b. 1, f. 20	"Vasily Kandinsky 1966-1944: A Retrospective Exhibition" English	1962
b. 1, f. 21	"Frederick Kiesler: Environmental Sculpture" English	1964
b. 2, f. 22	"Paul Klee 1879-1940: A Retrospective Exhibition" English	1967
b. 2, f. 23	"Jan Muller 1922-1958" English	1962
b. 2, f. 24	"Edward Munch" English	1965
b. 2, f. 25	"One Hundred Paintings from the G. David Thompson Collection" English	1961
b. 2, f. 26	"Paintings from the Collection of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum" English	1965
b. 2, f. 27	"Antoni Tàpies" English	1962
b. 2, f. 28	"Jean Xceron" English	1965
Pamphlets		
b. 2, f. 29	"Gauguin and the Decorative Style" English	1966
b. 2, f. 30	"Modern Masters from the collection of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum" English	1961
b. 2, f. 31	"Six Painters and the Object" English	1963
b. 2, f. 32	Posters See also: <a href="#">Oversize folder 7</a>	1961-1974
	<i>Harper's Bazaar</i> See: <a href="#">Oversize Folder 5</a>	1940
b. 2, f. 33	<i>House and Garden</i>	1948-[1950s]
b. 2, f. 34	Kimbe Optic	undated

## Knoll, Inc.

b. 2, f. 35 - 37      [Advertisements](#)      [1946-1966]  
See also: [Oversize folder 4](#)

b. 3      Printing plates [copper]      [1946-1966]

b. 4      Printing plates [copper]      [1946-1966]

b. 5      Printing plates [copper]      [1946-1966]

b. 6      Printing plates [copper]      [1946-1966]

b. 7      Printing plates [copper]      [1946-1966]

b. 8      Printing plates [copper]      [1946-1966]

b. 9      Printing plates [copper]      [1946-1966]

b. 10      Printing plates [copper]      [1946-1966]

b. 11, f. 38      Promotional materials      [1946-1966]

Matter, Alex [son]      after 1966  
See: [Oversize Folder 8](#)

b. 11, f. 39      Morton Salt      undated

## Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

## Administrative publications

b. 11, f. 40      Annual Report      1966

b. 11, f. 41      Newsletter      1964

## Catalogs

b. 11, f. 42      "Alberto Burri"  
English      1963

b. 11, f. 43      "Alexander Calder: Circus Drawings, Wire Sculpture and Toys"  
English      1964

b. 11, f. 44      "Eduardo Chillida"  
English      1966

b. 11, f. 45      "The Olmec Tradition"  
English      1963

## Pamphlets

b. 11, f. 46      "Derain before 1915"  
English      1962

b. 11, f. 47      "Six Master Paintings Two Glasses On Sculpture"  
English      1963



## Museum of Fine Arts, Houston &gt; Pamphlets (continued)

b. 11, f. 48	"Some Recent Accessions 1961-1963" English	[1963]
b. 11, f. 49	The Museum School of Art, Houston	1963
b. 11, f. 50	New Haven Railroad	[ca.1954]
b. 11, f. 51	<i>New Pencil Points</i>	1943
b. 11, f. 52	New York Studio School See also: Oversize Folder 6 <a href="#">ref145</a>	undated
b. 11, f. 53	Oxford Paper Company	undated
b. 11, f. 54	Reynolds Aluminum	undated
b. 11, f. 55	Swiss National Tourist Office	[1932-1936]
b. 11, f. 56	Upjohn Company/Medrol	undated
b. 11, f. 57	<i>Vogue</i>	1950-1957
b. 11, f. 58	Wilson, Morris, Crane and Anderson	[after 1967]
b. 11, f. 59	Unidentified clients	undated
b. 11, f. 60	Unidentified images	undated

## Series II: Biographical Material, 1928-1991

The series contains a wide range of material both by and about Matter. Items created by Matter include photographs, a diary written during his stay in Paris, correspondence about grants, press sheets for a book on Giacometti, and promotional material for himself. The items about Matter include articles, correspondence, notes concerning exhibitions, photographs, and postcards. Original tapes and duplicating masters in boxes 13-14 may not be played. For information on copies created for research use consult the reference archivist.

b. 12, f. 1	Article on Matter ["Art in Industry" by Perey Seitlin]	undated
b. 12, f. 2	A4 Architects and Designers Diary	1985
b. 12, f. 3 - 4	Exhibition publications on Matter	[1970s]
b. 12, f. 5	<i>Graphis</i> article on Matter	1980-1981
b. 12, f. 6	Grant applications	1977
b. 12, f. 7	"History of Writing" time-line English	[ca.1984]
b. 12, f. 8	Letter to Matter's students about his death	1984
b. 12, f. 9	Letters about "Herbert Matter: A Retrospective" [exhibit at the Art and Architecture Gallery, Yale School of Art]	1977-1978
b. 12, f. 10	Matter's promotional material	undated
b. 12, f. 11	Notes on Matter Memorial Day, Yale	1984
b. 12, f. 12	Notes on Walker Art Center show	1989
b. 12, f. 13	Papers on Yale classes	1972-1979
b. 12, f. 14	Photocopies of items loaned to Alex Matter	1991
b. 12, f. 15 - 17	Photocopies of Matter notebooks from Paris	1928-1932
	Photograms from class demonstration See: <a href="#">Oversize Folder 2</a>	1982
	Photographs of bark by Matter See: <a href="#">Oversize Folder 1</a>	undated
b. 12, f. 18	Photographs of exhibition at MIT	[1950-1960]
	Photographs of Matter See: Oversize Folder 3 <a href="#">ref142</a>	undated
b. 12, f. 19	Photographs and postcards (unidentified)	
	Press sheets and mock-ups for Giacometti publication See: Oversize Folder 9 - 10 <a href="#">ref148</a>	undated

Teaching aids [posters of Matter's work created by the Reinhold Book Corporation]

[post 1962]

See: [Oversize Folder 11](#)

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Videotapes of Matter interview

- |         |  |
|---------|--|
| b. 13   | <p>Original<br/>1 Videocassette (<i>U-matic</i>)</p> <p>Original audiovisual materials, as well as preservation and duplicating masters, may not be played. Researchers must consult use copies, or if none exist must pay for a use copy, which is retained by the repository. Researchers wishing to obtain an additional copy of non-commercially produced items for their personal use should consult the ordering reproductions information on the Manuscripts and Archives web site.</p> |
| b. 13-D | <p>Duplicating master<br/>1 Videocassette (<i>Betamax</i>) 00:07:02 Duration (<i>HH:MM:SS.mmm</i>)<br/>The program starts and ends abruptly.</p> <p>Audiovisual material: Restricted fragile. Reference copies may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.</p>  |
| b. 13U1 | <p>Use copy<br/>1 Videocassette (<i>VHS</i>)</p>   |
| b. 13U2 | <p>Use copy<br/>1 Videocassette (<i>VHS</i>)</p>   |
- 

"Herbert Matter on trade symbol design"

- |         |   |         |
|---------|---|---------|
| b. 14   | <p>Original<br/>1 Audiocassette 1:32:48 Duration (<i>HH:MM:SS.mmm</i>)</p> <p>As a preservation measure, original materials, as well as preservation and duplicating masters, may not be used. Digital access copies must be provided for use. Contact Manuscripts and Archives at <a href="mailto:beinecke.library@yale.edu">beinecke.library@yale.edu</a> to request access.</p> <p>A copy of this material is available in digital form from Manuscripts and Archives.</p> | Undated |
| b. 14Ua | <p>Use copy (part 1)<br/>1 audio disc (<i>CD</i>)</p>   |         |
| b. 14Ub | <p>Use copy (part 2)<br/>1 audio disc (<i>CD</i>)</p>   |         |
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**Oversize**

b. 15, f. 1	Photographs of bark by Matter	
b. 15, f. 2	Photograms from class demonstration	1982
b. 15, f. 3	Photographs of Matter	
b. 15, f. 4	Knoll advertising	
b. 15, f. 5	<i>Harper's Bazaar</i> cover	1940
b. 15, f. 6	New York Studio School posters	
b. 15, f. 7	Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum poster	1974
b. 15, f. 8	Matter, Alex [poster for <i>The Drifter</i> ]	
b. 15, f. 9-10	Press sheets and mock-ups for Giacometti publication	
b. 15, f. 11	Teaching aids [posters of Matter's work created by the Reinhold Book Corporation]	[post 1962]
b. 16	<i>Thirteen Photographs: Alberto Giacometti and Sculptures</i>	

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## **Selected Search Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### **Subjects**

Graphic arts

### **Names**

Matter, Herbert, 1907-1984

### **Corporate Bodies**

Knoll International, Inc  
Yale University -- Faculty