

# PHILLIPS

The Phillips Collection

*John Graham: Artist and Avatar*

Exhibition Records

1988

Finding Aid

**The Phillips Collection  
Library and Archives  
1600 21<sup>st</sup> Street NW  
Washington D.C. 20009  
[www.phillipscollection.org](http://www.phillipscollection.org)**

## CURATORIAL RECORDS IN THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION ARCHIVES

### INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION

**Collection Title:** *John Graham: Artist and Avatar*, exhibition records

**Author/Creator:** The Phillips Collection Curatorial Department. Eleanor "Sue" Green, guest curator; Willem de Looper, exhibition coordinator.

**Size:** 3 linear feet, 8 boxes

**Bulk Dates:** 1985-87

**Inclusive Dates:** 1982-1988

**Repository:** The Phillips Collection Archives

### INFORMATION FOR USERS OF THE COLLECTION

**Restrictions:** Some material is restricted. Please contact Karen Schneider, Librarian, with any questions regarding access.

**Handling Requirements:** No special requirements

**Preferred Citation:** The Phillips Collection Archives, Washington, DC

**Publication and Reproduction Rights:** See Karen Schneider, Librarian, for further information and to obtain required forms.

### ABSTRACT

*John Graham: Artist and Avatar* exhibition records contain materials created and collected by the Curatorial Department, The Phillips Collection, during the course of organizing the exhibition. Included are correspondence, loan forms, and exhibition planning materials.

### HISTORICAL NOTE

John Graham, a painter, collector, and writer who has often been overlooked as an artist, influenced abstract expressionism. Documentation on his early life remains scarce and contradictory. Published sources have widely cited his birthplace as Kiev, Ukraine, but baptismal records indicate that Graham was born Ivan Dombrowski into a noble family in Warsaw, Poland, in 1886 (1887 in the Gregorian calendar). He spent his youth in Kiev, graduating from the University of Kiev in 1907. In World War I he served as a Cavalry officer for the Russian Army and was also an officer for the "Whites" or Anti-Bolsheviks during the Russian Civil War. After immigrating to New York City in late 1920 to escape persecution, Dombrowski immersed himself in the local art scene, and ultimately changed his name to John D. Graham. He was known for his extravagant claims, some of which included that he had shared a prison cell with Tsar Nicholas II and that he was the son of the Roman God Jupiter. Graham's greatest influence in the world of art are perhaps his portraits of cross-eyed women, and his 1937 essay

*Systems and Dialectics of Art*, which had a major influence on Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, and other abstract expressionist artists. Among his major patrons were Duncan Phillips, who in 1929 gave Graham his first solo museum exhibition, and Katherine Dreier. Graham died in London in 1961.

*John Graham: Artist and Avatar* was the first major retrospective on Graham's work. The exhibition came about when an anonymous donor contributed money to conserve and exhibit Graham's work, with additional support for the exhibition and accompanying catalogue made possible through the National Endowment for the Arts. The exhibit was held at The Phillips Collection from July 9 to September 4, 1988.

### **SCOPE AND CONTENTS OF THE COLLECTION**

Records in this collection document the research and planning that went into the exhibition *John Graham: Artist and Avatar*, organized by the Phillips Collection. The show also had prior stops at the Neuberger Museum, State University of New York at Purchase (June 25 to September 13, 1987); Newport Harbor Art Museum at Newport Beach, California (October 23, 1987 to January 3, 1988); University Art Museum, University of California, Berkeley (January 20 to March 20, 1988); and The David and Alfred Smart Gallery of The University of Chicago (April 14 to June 12, 1988).

Starting in 1984, Eleanor "Sue" Green, the guest curator of the exhibition, conducted primary research as well as making initial contacts. She contacted numerous people who had collected Graham's works including private donors as well as works from various art galleries. Others who worked on the exhibition include Ellen Hicks, editor of the Graham catalogue; Linda Johnson, the exhibition coordinator at the Phillips; Laughlin Phillips the previous director of the Phillips Collection, and then curator Willem de Looper.

The type of materials in the collection include loan forms for Graham's paintings, correspondence with individual donors, photocopies of articles related to Graham, and finally other exhibition materials such as glossaries and checklists about the exhibition.

### **CUSTODIAL HISTORY AND ACQUISITION INFORMATION**

The collection is owned by The Phillips Collection, and was accessioned from the curators' offices in accordance with the museum's records schedule.

### **PROCESSING AND DESCRIPTION INFORMATION**

**Date Processed:** December 2015

**Processed By:** William Dawson, archival volunteer.

**Processing Notes:** After an initial survey of the collection, some materials that were duplicates or of no future reference value were disposed of with approval by the librarian. For the sake of time, paper clips were removed when possible, but staples remained. Post-it notes were

photocopied or otherwise removed, and handwritten notes were maintained with the collection when possible. Photocopies of academic articles, as well as photocopies of Graham's notes were also maintained in the collection as well.

**Finding Aid Written By:** William Dawson, archival volunteer, under the direction of Karen Schneider, Head Librarian. Partially revised by Colleen Hennessey, Archives Assistant.

### **RELATED MATERIAL**

For Researchers who wish to learn more about Graham's life and work, should contact the Archives of American Art and inquire about the John Graham Papers. The John Graham Papers contain Graham's correspondence, biographical materials, and personal photographs.

Archives of American Art  
750 9th St NW #2200  
Washington, DC 20001  
Tel. (202) 633-7950  
<http://www.aaa.si.edu/>

### **ARRANGEMENT OF THE COLLECTION**

The collection is organized into three series.

Series 1: Exhibition Research and Planning Materials, 1982-88

Series 2: Correspondence, 1984-88

Series 3: Loan Forms, 1985-88

### **Box Inventory**

#### **Series I Description: Exhibition Research and Planning Materials, 1982-88**

Materials in this series relate to the planning of the exhibition, *John Graham: Artist and Avatar*. Included are handwritten notes, research sources on Graham (mostly photocopies of resources dated from the 1920s-1980s), and other ephemeral items. Photocopies of articles and images include date of publication if found, otherwise date copied.

<b>Box 1</b>	Folder 1	Application (signed) & letters—NEA, 1985-1987
	Folder 2	Agreement (signed) with "Sue" Green (copy), 1985 [restricted]
	Folder 3	Budget and funding proposals, 1985-1986
	Folder 4	Budget and funding—letters to private supporter, 1982-1986 [restricted]
	Folders 5-7	Budgets and expenses, 1985-1988
	Folder 8	Catalogue editing services, 1986
	Folder 9	Catalogue distribution, 1987
	Folder 10	Catalogue notes & planning, 1985-1987
	Folder 11	Catalogue outline and drafts, undated
	Folder 12	Checklists—working, 1986-1987

- Box 2**
- Folder 1 Fact sheet & PR info, 1987
  - Folders 2-3 Notes & memos about exhibit, 1985-1986 & undated
  - Folder 4 Permission to reproduce & quote applications, 1987
  - Folder 5 Photo requests, 1985-1987
  - Folder 6 Press release, 1988
  - Folder 7 PR items, 1987-88
  - Folder 8 Quotes for approval, 1985-87
  - Folder 9 Research—bibliographic citations, 1985
  - Folder 10 Research—inventory of Graham Papers at Archives of American Art, 1960; 1986
  - Folder 11 Research—inventory of Brinton Collection; Russian art article, 1941; 1962
  - Folder 12 Research—inventory of MOMA’s Graham archive, 1980s
  - Folder 13 Research—bio data on Graham, 1920s-1982
  - Folder 14 Research—glossary of Graham terms and symbols, undated
  - Folder 15 Research—notes about Graham (biblical references; mysticism), 1986
- Box 3**
- Folder 1 Research—Graham’s work in Phillips Collection, 1980s
  - Folder 2 Research—Graham works (David Smith estate), 1960s-1980s
  - Folder 3 Research—Graham’s artwork, undated
  - Folder 4 Research—Graham’s drawings (sketchbook), 1958
  - Folder 5 Research—Graham drawings (sketchbook), 1959
  - Folder 6 Research—source images (mostly of women; theatrical), 1901 & undated
  - Folder 7 Research—Graham’s thoughts on painting (sent to Phillips), 1928
  - Folder 8 Research—Graham’s writing on Picasso (sent to Phillips), 1946
  - Folder 9 Research—Graham’s notes about Don Giovanni, 1950s
  - Folder 10 Research—Graham’s writings (excerpts) & notes, 1960 & undated
  - Folder 11 Research—Graham’s book entitled *Have It*, 1923
  - Folder 12 Research—Graham’s published articles, 1937-1961
  - Folder 13 Research—letter to “John” from Graham, 1929
  - Folder 14 Research—John Graham-Katherine Dreier correspondence, 1929-1949
  - Folder 15 Research—letters to Duncan Phillips from Graham, 1930
  - Folder 16 Research—letters from Graham to his former wife, Elinor, 1935-1961?
  - Folder 17 Research—letters from Graham to his son David, 1950-1960
  - Folder 18 Research—letters to Graham from Francoise Gilot, 1961
  - Folder 19 Research—poem about Graham by Fernand Marc, undated
  - Folder 20 Research—Waldemar George’s book on Graham, 1929
  - Folder 21 Research—article about Graham for *C Magazine*, 1988
- Box 4**
- Folders 1-2 Research—articles about Graham, 1926-1987 & undated
  - Folder 3 Research—articles (various general topics), 1961-1985
  - Folder 4 Research—publication excerpt—reference about Milton Avery, undated
  - Folder 5 Research—publication excerpts about Willem de Kooning, 1979-1983

Folder 6	Research—publication excerpts & notes about Arshile Gorky, 1976-1980s
Folder 7	Research—publication excerpts about Adolph Gottlieb (& The Ten), 1981
Folder 8	Research—publication excerpts about Lee Krasner, 1983
Folder 9	Research—publication excerpts, notes, & letter about Picasso, 1931-1985
Folder 10	Research—publication excerpts about Jackson Pollock, 1942-1983
Folder 11	Research—publication excerpt about The Ten ( <i>See also</i> : Gorky file), 1978
Folder 12	Research—various exhibitions since 1925 of Graham's works, 1929-1987
Folder 13	Research—Pennsylvania Academy annual exhibit catalogs, 1929-1946
Folder 14	Travel schedule—potential museum stops, 1984-1985
Folder 15	Travel schedules & bookings contract form, 1987-88
Folder 16	Travel tour (proposed co-organizer), American Federation of Arts, 1986
Folder 17	Travel tour, Neuberger Museum, SUNY (Purchase), 1985-1987
Folder 18	Travel tour, Newport Harbor Art Museum, 1985-1986
Folder 19	Travel tour, Smart Gallery (Chicago), 1985-87
Folder 20	Travel tour, University Art Museum, Univ. of California, Berkeley, 1985-1987
Folder 21	Writing (drafts)—Graham bio info & exhibition overview, undated

## **Series II Description: Correspondence, 1984-88**

Series II contains general correspondence regarding the exhibition as well as files with individuals. Files with individuals are arranged alphabetically by correspondent name.

<b>Box 5</b>	Folder 1	Correspondence (general—internal), 1984-1988
	Folder 2	Correspondence (general—external), 1985-1988
	Folder 3	Correspondence—regarding <i>Arts</i> article, 1985
	Folder 4	Correspondence—regarding catalogue, 1984-1986
	Folder 5	Correspondence—regarding Stuart Davis, 1985
	Folder 6	Letters (outgoing)—to private lender & supporter, 1984-1987 [restricted]
		<b>Individual correspondents:</b>
	Folder 7	S. Thomas Alexander III, 1985-88
	Folder 8	Marcia Allentuck, 1985-86
	Folder 9	Art Students League, 1985
	Folder 10	Edwin A. Bergman, 1985-87
	Folder 11	Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation, 1987-1988
	Folder 12	Donald Boxman, 1985-1987
	Folder 13	Mr. & Mrs. Richard Brenner, 1986-1987
	Folder 14	Dan Brewster, 1985-1987
	Folder 15	Peter Broido, 1985
	Folder 16	Phillip A. Bruno, 1987
	Folder 17	Carnegie Museum of Art, 1987
	Folder 18	Leo Castelli, 1985
	Folder 19	Cheekwood Fine Arts Center, 1986-1987

	Folder 20	John Cheim, 1986-1987
	Folder 21	Dr. & Mrs. Sidney Clyman, 1986-1987
	Folder 22	Maurice Cohen, 1985-87
	Folder 23	Conservation Studio (Washington), 1985
	Folder 24	Daniel Cowin, 1987
	Folder 25	Dorothy Dehner, 1985-1987
	Folder 26	Sid Deutsch Gallery, 1986-1987
<b>Box 6</b>	Folder 1	Andre Emmerich Gallery, 1985-1986
	Folder 2	Elin Lake Ewald, 1987
		Francoise Gilot, <i>See</i> : Patricia G. Graham
	Folder 3	Herbert and Kitty Glantz, 1985-87
	Folder 4	John David Graham, 1985-1988
	Folder 5	Patricia G. Graham, 1985-1988
	Folder 6	Max Granick, 1985
	Folder 7	Grey Art Gallery, 1986-1987
	Folder 8	Guggenheim Museum, 1986
	Folder 9	Mr. & Mrs. Kirby Hamilton, 1987
	Folder 10	Helen Mary Harding, 1986-1987
	Folder 11	Hirshhorn Museum & Sculpture Garden, 1986-1987
	Folder 12	Indiana University Art Museum, 1986-1987
	Folder 13	William & Ellen Kahn, 1985-1987
	Folder 14	Jacob and Ruth Kainen, 1985-1987
	Folder 15	Ann Lanyon (Mrs. Julius) Kaplan, 1988
	Folder 16	R. B. Kitaj, 1985
	Folder 17	Mr. & Mrs. Carl D. Lobell, 1985-1987
	Folder 18	Maryland Institute, College of Art, 1986
	Folder 19	McMillen, Inc., 1985
	Folder 20	Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987
	Folder 21	Donald Morris Gallery, 1985-1986
	Folder 22	Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 1985-1986
	Folder 23	Museum of Modern Art, 1985-1988
	Folder 24	National Museum of American Art, 1986-1987
	Folder 25	Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, 1985
	Folder 26	New Orleans Museum of Art, 1988
<b>Box 7</b>	Folder 1	Martin Packard, 1985-1987
	Folder 2	Beverly Pepper, 1985-1987
	Folder 3	Harvey and Francoise Rambach, 1985-1987
	Folder 4	Karen and Thomas Rochon, 1986-87
	Folder 5	Rose Art Museum, 1985-1986
	Folder 6	Marieeve Rugo, 1985-1987
	Folder 7	Linda Leyden Stander, 1985
	Folder 8	Hedda Sterne, 1985-1987

Folder 9	Allan Stone Gallery, 1984-87
Folder 10	Nina & Michael Sundell, 1987
Folder 11	N.G.W. Thorne, 1985
Folder 12	Suzanne Vanderwoude, 1985-1987
Folder 13	Washburn Gallery, 1987
Folder 14	Weatherspoon Art Gallery, 1985-1987
Folder 15	Thomas Weisel, 1986-1987
Folder 16	Linda & Martin Weissman, 1985-1986
Folder 17	Wells College, 1985 (includes copies of correspondence between Graham and William Sener Rusk, 1931-1937)
Folder 18	Whitney Museum of American Art, 1985-86
Folder 19	Yale University Art Gallery, 1986-1987
Folder 20	Richard Zeisler, 1985-1987

### **Series III: Loan Agreements, 1985-88**

Series III contains loan agreements between lenders and the Phillips Collection. This series contains sensitive materials and should be referred to the librarian for access.

<b>Box 8</b>	Folder 1	Sample loan letters, 1986
	Folders 2-3	Potential lenders for exhibition, 1985-87
	Folder 4	Loans—lender lists & notes, 1985-1987
	Folder 5	Loans—declined, 1985-1987
	Folder 6	S. Thomas Alexander loan agreement, 1986
	Folder 7	Archives of American Art loan agreement, 1987
	Folder 8	Mrs. Edwin Bergman lender form, 1986
	Folder 9	Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation loan agreement, 1987
	Folder 10	Dr. & Mrs. Donald Boxman loan agreement, 1986
	Folder 11	Mr. & Mrs. Richard Brenner, loan agreement, 1987
	Folder 12	Dan Brewster loan agreement, 1986
	Folder 13	Phillip Bruno loan agreement, 1987
	Folder 14	Carnegie Museum of Art, loan agreement, 1987
	Folder 15	Cheekwood loan agreement, 1987
	Folder 16	John Cheim loan agreement, 1987
	Folder 17	Maurice Cohen, loan agreement, 1987
	Folder 18	Daniel Cowin loan agreement, 1987
	Folder 19	Dorothy Dehner, loan agreement, 1986
	Folder 20	Sid Deutsch Gallery loan agreement, 1987
	Folder 21	Andre Emmerich loan agreement, 1986-87
	Folder 22	Elin Lake Ewald, loan agreement, 1987
	Folder 23	Herbert Glantz, loan agreement, 1986
	Folder 24	Grey art gallery loan agreement, 1986



- Folder 25 Helen Mary Harding loan agreement, 1986
- Folder 26 Hirshhorn Museum loan agreement, 1987
- Folder 27 Indiana University art museum, loan agreement, 1987
- Folder 28 William and Ellen Kahn loan agreement, 1986
- Folder 29 Jacob and Ruth Kainen loan agreement, 1987
- Folder 30 Mrs. Julius Kaplan, lending form, 1988
- Folder 31 Mr. & Mrs. Carl Lobell, loan agreement, 1988
- Folder 32 Metropolitan Museum of Art, loan agreement, 1987
- Folder 33 Donald Morris Gallery, loan agreement, 1986
- Folder 34 Museum of Modern Art, loan agreement, 1987
- Folder 35 National Museum of American Art loan agreement, 1987
- Folder 36 New Orleans Museum of Art loan agreement, 1987
- Folder 37 Martin Packard, loan agreement, 1986
- Folder 38 Beverley Pepper, loan agreement, 1986
- Folder 39 Harvey & Francoise Rambach, loan agreement, 1986
- Folder 40 Karen and Thomas Rochon, loan agreements, 1986
- Folder 41 Rose Art Museum, loan agreement, 1986
- Folder 42 Marieve Rugo loan agreement, 1986
- Folder 43 Hedda Sterne loan agreement, 1987
- Folder 44 Allan Stone Gallery, loan agreements, 1987
- Folder 45 Nina and Michael Sundell, loan agreement, 1987
- Folder 46 Suzanne Vanderwoude, loan agreement, 1987
- Folder 47 Washburn Gallery loan agreement, 1987
- Folder 48 Weatherspoon Art Gallery, loan agreement, 1986
- Folder 49 Tom Weisel loan agreement, 1987
- Folder 50 Dr. & Mrs. Martin Weissman, loan agreement, 1986
- Folder 51 Whitney Museum loan agreement, 1986
- Folder 52 Yale University Art Gallery, loan agreement, 1987
- Folder 53 Richard Zeisler, loan agreement, 1986

Folders 54-58 Private collections, loan agreements and related correspondence,  
1986-1988 [restricted]

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