

4-2013

LG MS 25 George Daniell Artwork Finding Aid

Susannah Clark

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SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

JEAN BYERS SAMPSON CENTER FOR DIVERSITY IN MAINE
LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER COLLECTION

GEORGE DANIELL ARTWORK
LG MS 25

Total Boxes: 1
Linear Feet: 3.25

By
Susannah Clark

Portland, Maine
April 2013

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Administrative Information

Provenance: George Daniell Artwork was created and compiled by George Daniell, who donated the material in 1999. The “Untitled Self-Portrait” of the artist was donated by Andres Verzosa in 2004.

Ownership and Literary Rights: George Daniell Artwork is the physical property of the University of Southern Maine Libraries. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the creator or her/his legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the Head of Special Collections.

Cite as: George Daniell Artwork, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Collection, Jean Byers Sampson Center for Diversity in Maine, University of Southern Maine Libraries.

Restrictions on access: This collection is open for research.

Biographical Sketch

George Daniell (1911-2002) was born and raised in Yonkers, New York. His twin brother died at birth and he was raised as an only child. Interested in art and photography from a young age, Daniell studied photography and painting at Yale University, graduating in 1934 with a BA in Liberal Arts and a concentration in Drawing. During his years with the University he travelled to Europe, and he continued to travel extensively throughout the rest of his life around the country and the world, capturing images in photography, paintings, and video. In 1937 and 1940, he studied art at the Art Students League and at the American People’s School, both in New York.

In the late 1930’s, he worked as a freelance photographer in New York City. Here, he captured many images of fishermen and bathers on the Hudson River. During this time he also made his first visits to Monhegan Island, Maine and Grand Manan Island, in New Brunswick, Canada where he painted and photographed island life. The images he captured of island life during the Great Depression convey hope and human dignity, and Daniell’s work broadly has been credited with possessing a “democratic vision.”¹

Daniell served in the U.S. Army from 1942-1944, returning to his photography work in New York and Europe after the war. At this time he also purchased a house on Fire Island, New York, and from 1950-1970 he spent winters in Key West, Florida. He collaborated with and took portraits of many other artists and performers, including John Marin, Tennessee Williams, Robert DeNiro, and Georgia O’Keefe, who called Daniell “one of my favorite photographers.”² In the mid 1950’s he spent several months photographing at movie studios in Rome, where he took well known portraits of Sofia

¹ From the George Daniell website, <http://www.georgedaniell.com>

² Ibid

Loren, Audrey Hepburn, and other actors, as well as street scenes and the countryside of postwar Italy.

Daniell moved to Trenton, Maine (near Acadia National Park) in 1960 with his long time companion Stephen Dorland, also a painter. Daniell lived in Maine, and continued his photography and painting, through the end of his life. He died in 2002, at age 91. He is best known for his photographic portraits of well-known artists and literary figures, yet he created an equally, if not more compelling body of work that highlights images of fishermen and dock workers, swimmers, and scenes of island life. His work is highly regarded by the art community, and in recent years he has received more attention as an influential gay artist, beautifully capturing the strength and sensuality of the male figure.

His work has been the focus of many publications and gallery shows. He was a contributing photographer for *Downeast Magazine* from 1965-1980, and his work has also appeared in *Time* and *Life Magazine*. His photographs and paintings have been collected by many institutions nationally and in Maine, including the Museum of Modern Art (New York), the National Gallery (Washington, D.C.), the Bowdoin College Museum of Art (Brunswick, ME), The Colby College Museum of Art (Waterville, ME), the Museum of Fine Arts (Boston), the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art Foundation (New York), and by the Masterworks Foundation (Bermuda).

Description of the Collection

The George Daniell Artwork collection contains three items:

Untitled Self-Portrait, photograph, 12 ½" x 10" [1936]

Presumably a gelatin silver print, this black and white image shows the artist as a young man in a studio surrounded by photographic equipment. Wearing black pants and an open collared white shirt, he stands proudly with his arms folded, emerging from dramatic lighting and shadow. This photograph is signed on the back by the author.

Box 1

***Fire Island '50*, photograph (framed), 7 ¾" x 7 ½" [1950]**

Presumably a gelatin silver print, this framed black and white photograph captures a nude male standing amidst driftwood branches adorned with empty Chianti wine bottles. This image was presumably taken on the beach on Fire Island, New York, and at least two other photographs exist that feature the same subject matter ("*Chianti Bottles, Fire Island*" and "*Chianti Tree, Fire Island*," 1950).

Box 1

Untitled waterscape, watercolor on paper (framed), 14" x 17", 1993

This watercolor depicts two nude male figures standing with their backs to the viewer, facing what appears to be either sunrise or sunset over a body of water. One figure has his arms raised up over his head in a carefree expression. Islands, or land forming the edges of a protected cove, enter the image at the horizon line on the left and right sides of the painting. Like other watercolors by this artist, the image is boldly colorful and loose, painted with uninhibited brush strokes. Daniell's watercolors in this style have been compared to the work of John Marin and Marsden Hartley, two other painters associated with Maine.

This watercolor is currently hanging in the Special Collections Reading Room.