

**Finding Aid to
Irene Rice Pereira Papers
1928-1971
Archives of Women Artists**

Finding Aid Prepared by: Emily Moore (August, 2019)
Collection Processed by: Patrick Brown, (August, 2006)

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Overview

Repository Information:

National Museum of Women in the Arts,
Betty Boyd Dettre Library & Research Center
1250 New York Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20005
Email: lrc@nmwa.org
Phone: 202-783-5000

Title:

Irene Rice Pereira Papers

Provenance:

The periodicals and books in the collection were part of the Library of Irene Rice Pereira, which was donated by the nephew of Pereira, Djelloul Marbrook, to the Washington Women's Art Center in 1973. In 1986 the Irene Rice Periera Library was donated to the Betty Boyd Dettre Library and Research Center of the National Museum of Women in the Arts.

Collection Dates:

Inclusive Dates: 1928-1971

Physical Description:

4 document boxes (approximately 1.68 linear feet)

Summary:

The National Museum for Women in the Arts is the repository for a collection of materials from Irene Rice Pereira (1902-1971), an American abstract artist, poet and philosopher. The collection includes periodicals and books from her personal library, many of which include handwritten annotations. The texts provided insight into her interests, which included the spiritual and philosophical beliefs of the East and West, metaphysics and plastic and visual expression. Items in the collection range in date from 1928-1971.

Finding Aid URL:

<https://nmwa.org/learn/library-research/archives/finding-aids/pereira-finding-aid>

Administrative Information**Access Information:**

Unrestricted

Preferred Citation:

[Item], [Date], [Series], Irene Rice Pereira Papers, Archives of Women Artists, National Museum of Women in the Arts, Betty Boyd Dettre Library & Research Center.

Publication and Photocopies Note:

Permission from the National Museum of Women in the Arts required for publication and reproduction of original materials. Photocopies of original materials can be made for a fee and at the discretion of the library director.

Related Materials Note:

The Archives on Women Artists in the Betty Boyd Dettre Library and Research Center at the National Museum of Women in the Arts maintains a vertical file on Irene Rice Pereira, which includes articles and other secondary research material.

The Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, houses the papers of Irene Rice Pereira. The Archives of American Art of the Smithsonian Institution has a microfilm copy of the Schlesinger Library's papers, other original material, and unique microfilmed material.

Processed by:

Patrick Brown, August 2006

Processing Note:

The collection is contained in four boxes, which are located in the Archives of Women Artists in the Betty Boyd Dettre Library and Research Center. An inventory of the first portion of the collection was prepared by 1988. The papers were processed and a finding aid was created in 2003. In 2006 the collection was reprocessed, an unprocessed portion of the collection was integrated, and the finding aid was edited and rewritten to conform to DACS standard. The collection was separated into seven series and re-housed in appropriately sized acid-free folders. This version of the collection consisted of 12 boxes and seven series and included, in addition to the current collection, a series of photocopies of notebooks entitled *The Concept of Substance*, written between 1954 and 1970. The originals of the photocopies in this collection are part of the Irene Rice Pereira Papers (accession number 79-M307) at the Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America at Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. Those papers were donated to the Schlesinger Library in 1979 by the I. Rice Pereira Foundation, whose Manager-Trustee at the time was Djelloul Marbrook. After 2006, the photocopies of the notebooks were deaccessioned from the collection at the Betty Boyd Dettre Library and Research Center. In addition to removing the copies, an original 1957 book by Pereira, titled *the Lapis*, was transferred from the Archive to the Rare Book collection at the Betty Boyd Dettre Library and Research Center. In 2019, three additional books from Pereira's personal library were added to Series 1. The finding aid was edited to reflect these changes, and was migrated to a new format.

Biographical Note

Irene Rice Pereira (1902-1971) was an abstract painter, poet, and philosopher. Born in Massachusetts, Pereira early on supported her family as an accountant. At twenty-five, she began to pursue the arts by enrolling in night classes at the Art Student League in New York City. She studied there for four years, after which she continued at the Academie Moderne in Paris.

Returning to New York City in 1933, Pereira had her first solo show at the ACA (American Contemporary Artists) Galleries. It was during the 1930s and 1940s that she became a prominent figure in the New York art scene, known for her geometric and rectilinear works, and later for her glass paintings. Her success is reflected in the showcase of her art by the Whitney Museum of American Art. Along with Loren MacIver and Georgia O'Keeffe, she was among the first women to be given a retrospective at a major New York Museum. She continued to be represented in institutions such as Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century Gallery, and the Corcoran Gallery of Art. At the peak of her career, she was included in the Museum of Modern Art's exhibition *Fourteen Americans*, in 1946.

Pereira's interest in philosophy influenced both her paintings and her writings. As a writer she worked prolifically, but she never received the same acclaim as she got for her painting. In 1944, she published her first article, *An Abstract Painter on Abstract Art*. She continued to write throughout her life, addressing topics such as structure, time, optics, and space. In 1950 she wrote, "my philosophy is the reality of light and space; and ever flowing-never ceasing continuity, unfettered by man-made machinery, weight and external likenesses. I use geometric symbols because they represent structural essences and contain infinite possibilities of change and dynamics."¹ She published her last work, *The Poetic of the Form of Space, Light and the Infinite* in 1969.

In 1971 Irene Rice Pereira died of emphysema at the age of sixty-seven, in Marbella, Spain.

Chronology:

- 1902 *August 5* Born in Chelsea, Massachusetts to Emery Rice, a baker born in Poland, and Hilda Vanderbilt Rice.
- 1927-1928 *October 1927 – May 1928* Studied at Art Students League with Richard Lahey.
- 1929 *January 8* Married Humberto Pereira.
- 1929-1930 *October – May* Studied with Jan Matulka, Art Students League.
- 1930-1931 *September – April* Studied with Jan Matulka, Art Students League.
- 1931 Studied at Academie Moderne, Paris under Ozenfant; visited Switzerland, Palermo, Tunis.
- 1932 Leaves from Cherbourg to return to US.
- 1933 Studies with Hans Hofmann one month at ASL. First one-woman show at ACA Gallery.
- 1935-1939 Teaches, Design Laboratory, WPA FAP.
- 1938 Divorces H. Pereira. Visiting artist lecture, Columbia University, "New Materials and the Artist."
- 1940 Lecture, UAA forum on abstract art. Begins work with Guggenheim Foundation under Hilla Rebay as "Museum Assistant."
- 1941 Sister Dorothy diagnosed with cancer in January and dies in September. MOMA acquires two paintings for permanent collection.
- 1942 Hilla Rebay asks for IRP's resignation, notes IRP "too concerned with materials" but permits IRP to stay until fall.

¹ I. Rice Pereira, *I. Rice Pereira: April 17th through May 22nd 1976* (New York, 1976) introductory statement.

- September 26* Marries George Wellington Brown.
- 1944 Publishes article "An Abstract Painter on Abstract Art," published by ACA Gallery.
- 1947 *May 13* Listed in Congressional Record as having Communist affiliations (support of New Masses).
June 10 Participates in panel discussion, "Why the Conflict Over Modern Art?" broadcast by WQXR.
- 1948 Participates in panel discussion, "New Roads in Science and Education: The Artists Meets the Critics".
- 1949 Separates from George Brown.
March Presents lecture at the Town Hall, Inc.
Listed as sponsor for Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace, Waldorf-Astoria.
Sponsors Mexican Art Workshop associated with University of Guadalajara.
Meets George Reavey at end of August. In September leaves for Paris.
- 1950 IRP begins letter writing to George Reavey. Returns to Florida and completes divorce from George Brown.
September 9 Marries George Reavey in St. Marylebone, London. Witnesses included Dylan Thomas, Helen McAlpine, W.R. Rogers.
Demonstrates plastics and new materials at Art Education Conference.
Teaches at Artists' Equity in New York City.
- 1951 Teaches at Ball State Teacher's College in Muncie, Indiana then returns to New York City in August.
October First mentions new philosophy of light.
Publishes *Light and the New Reality*.
- 1952 *April 15* Lectures at Dayton Art Institute on "Light and the New Reality".
- 1953 Whitney Retrospective.
Lecture/Demo at Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.
- 1954 Writes introduction to catalogue of show of Robert E. Borgatta, Wellons Gallery.

April 25 Participates in panel, "The Retreat and Advance of Color in Modern Painting," at Marcia Clapp Gallery in New York City.

Presents lecture on creative process at symposium "Woman in the World of Man" at University of Michigan.

September IRP's sister Juanita is in the hospital with eye injury.

1955 *December 13* IRP leaves George Reavey.

1956 *March 2.* Separation agreement with George Reavey.

Publishes *Nature of Space*.

1957 Publishes *The Lapis*.

1959 *July 16* Divorces George Reavey.

Publishes *Crystal of the Rose*.

1963 *July* Joins Galerie Internationale, New York City.

1964 *June* Travels to San Diego to be co-juror with Vincent Price for "Santa Barbara to the Border" at San Diego County Fair.

1965 Juror, Audubon Artists, 23rd Annual Exhibition.

March 1 Lectures at Norton Gallery in Palm Beach on "Art and Space".

June 30 Public reading of *The Poetics of the Form of Space, Light and the Infinite* at Gotham Book Mart.

1967 Spends five weeks in St. Vincent's Hospital.

May 27 Participates in Artists' Voices for India, readings to benefit *The Literary Half-Yearly*.

1968 *March 7* Lecture on "The Logos Principle," Gotham Book Mart Gallery, with Dr. Olivier Leslie Reiser and Dr. Ira Progoff.

1970 *August* In Clinique Sylvana in Epalinges, Switzerland.

December 12 Leaves NYC for Spain after being evicted from apartment.

1971 *January 11* Dies in Spain.

Scope and Content Note

The collection is divided into 5 series. The first series contains periodicals and books. The texts have writings by Pereira, reviews of her, and generally match her philosophical

interests. The second series is Pereira's personal address book. Series 3 contends record keeping notes by Pereira regarding her paintings. Inventories of her paintings are in notebooks and a group of notecards record the condition of the paintings. On the notecards are photographic film roll counts to refer the card to a particular painting. The fourth series is a manuscript of Pereira's memoir, which is described as a *Künstlerroman*² by Bearor. The manuscript includes photographs of Pereira's work. The photographs are in their original positions, in mylar sleeves.

The collection is divided into 5 series:

Series I: Periodicals and Books, 1928-1971 (by subject)

Series II: Address Book, n.d.

Series III: Art Inventories, 1935-1967 (by object)

Series IV: Manuscript, c. 1932 – c. 1959 (original order)

Series V: Original Work, n.d.

Organization and Arrangement Information

Arrangement Note:

Series I: Periodicals and Books, 1928-1971

This series consists of periodicals and books which have writings by Pereira, reviews of her, and generally match her philosophical interests.

Series II: Address Book

This series is Pereira's personal address book.

Series III: Art Inventories, 1935-1967

This series contains record keeping notes by Pereira regarding her paintings. Inventories of her paintings are in notebooks and a group of notecards record the condition of the paintings. On the notecards are photographic film roll counts to refer the card to a particular painting.

Series IV: Manuscript, c. 1932-c.1959

² *Künstlerroman* is a romantic novel of an artist's moral and intellectual development. (Karen Bearor, "Irene Rice Pereira's Early Work: Embarking on an Eastward Journey." P. 9)

This series is a manuscript of Pereira's memoir – or *Künstlerroman*, a romantic novel of an artist's moral and intellectual development, according to Bearor – entitled “An Eastward Journey. The manuscript includes photographs of Pereira's work. The photographs are in their original positions, in mylar sleeves.

Series V: Original Work

This series contains one original black and white ink drawing.

Names and Subject Terms

LOC Name Authority: Pereira, I. Rice (Irene Rice), 1902-1971

Variants: Reavey, Irene Rice Pereira, 1902-1971

Rice, I. (Irene) 1902-1971

Rice, Irene, 1902-1971

Pereira, Irene Rice, 1902-1971

Pereira, Irene Rice, 1907-

Container Inventory

Series 1 : Periodicals and Books

Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
1	1	Almanac for 1943
1	2	American Scholar, 1970-1971
1	3	Art in America, 1963
1	4	Art in America, 1965
1	5	the arts, 1946
1	6	Cahiers d'Art, 1928-1930
1	7	The Charioteer, 1960
1	8	Daedalus, 1960
1	9	An Essay on Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture, 1953
2	1	La Government de la Catalogue Expose a Paris Cinq Siècles d'art Catalon, 1937
2	2	Harpers Magazine, 1968
2	3	The Hound and Horn: a Harvard Miscellany, 1929
2	4	Interior Design and Decoration, 1937
2	5	Latit Kala Contemporary, 1968
2	6	The Literary Half-Yearly, 1966

2	7	Odyssey Review, 1961-1962
2	8	Palette, 1952-1960
2	9	Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, 1958-1964
2	10	Eastern Religion and Western Thought, 1960
3	1	Portal, n.d.
3	2	The Review of Metaphysics, 1959
3	3	Spectrum: the Richmond Tri-Annual Review, 1970
3	4	Think, 1960
3	5	Tomorrow, 1957
3	6	Vincent Van Gogh, n.d.
3	7	Voyages, 1971
3	8	Writers Workshop, 1960-1961
3	9	XXth Century, 1938
3	10	The Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art, 1936
3	11	Greek Science: Its Meaning for Us, 1953

Series 2 : Address Book

Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
3	12	Address book, n.d.

Series 3: Art Inventories

Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
4	1	Notebook, 1935-1952
4	2	Notebook, 1953-1967
4	3	Notebook, 1956, 1966-1967
4	4	Condition Report Index cards, n.d.

Series 4: Manuscript

Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
4	5, 6, 7	Eastward Journey, c. 1932-c. 1959

Series 5: Original Work

Box #	Folder #	Folder Title
4	8	Black and white ink drawing, n.d