

MENABONI, ATHOS, 1895-1990.
Athos Menaboni collection, 1940-1985

Emory University
Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library
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Descriptive Summary

Creator: Menaboni, Athos, 1895-1990.
Title: Athos Menaboni collection, 1940-1985
Call Number: Manuscript Collection No. 665
Extent: 1.25 linear feet (2 boxes) 1 oversized papers box and 1 oversized papers folder (OP), and 1 framed item (FR)
Abstract: Papers of Athos Menaboni, artist and illustrator, including clippings, articles, advertisements, a typed letter, original printed material and reproductions of Menaboni's work.
Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Restrictions on Access

Unrestricted access.

Terms Governing Use and Reproduction

All requests subject to limitations noted in departmental policies on reproduction.

Source

Donated to the library by different sources.

Citation

[after identification of item(s)], Athos Menaboni collection, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

Processing

Barbara Mann, Associate Processing Archivist, Completed June 1989, revised June 8, 1999.

Collection Description

Biographical Note

Athos Rodolfo Giorgio Alessandro Menaboni was born October 20, 1895 in Livorno, Italy, the son of a ship's chandler. His maternal grandfather, Alessandro Neri, was one of the leaders of Italy's Garibaldi movement for national liberty. At the age of nine, Menaboni began studying painting under private teachers. He later attended the Academy of Fine Arts in Florence. During his time of learning in Italy he studied under Ugo Manarisi, Charles Doudelet, and Pietro Gori.

After serving for four years in the Italian army during World War I as a sharpshooter, signal corpsman, and pilot, Athos Menaboni came to the United States in 1921, settling in New York where he took a job painting artificial candles. Four years later, he went to Davis Island, a real estate development near Tampa, Florida, to become the Art Director. When the Florida real estate market's bubble burst he moved to Atlanta to accept a free-lance art assignment. Upon completion of this project, he took samples of his work around to various architectural firms. Philip Shutze liked Menaboni and his work and hired him to do decorative painting at the Swan House, the residence of Edward Inman and one of Shutze's major projects.

During his early days in Atlanta, Menaboni lived in a boarding house in downtown Atlanta. It was here that he met Sara Arnold of Rome, Georgia, niece of the owners of the boarding house. They were married within a year. In 1939 they bought a farm in the Atlanta area which the Menabonis' named "Valle Ombrosa" ("Shady Valley") after the town, Vallombrosa, located near Florence. This has been the Menaboni homestead ever since. It is here, also, where Athos Menaboni did his painting. The Menaboni land is an unofficial bird sanctuary and the home contained a glass-enclosed aviary which Menaboni used to house the birds he painted.

In 1938 Sara Menaboni sent thirty-six of his paintings to New York which resulted in several Menaboni exhibitions. His paintings hung in the American Museum of Natural History, Kennedy Galleries, and in nation-wide exhibits by the Audubon Society. It was from a showing in the Kennedy Galleries that Menaboni began his long association with Robert W. Woodruff. A Coca-Cola executive saw his work, discovered the artist lived in Atlanta, and purchased the painting *Doves in Longleaf Pine*. From 1941 to 1984, the covers of Woodruff's Christmas cards contained Menaboni prints of birds found at the Woodruff's south Georgia plantation, Ichauway.

Menaboni's work was published in 1950 in a book entitled *Menaboni's Birds*. The paintings were by Menaboni with the texts written by his wife, Sara. It was voted one of "Fifty Best Books of the Year" for 1950. This book was revised by Menaboni using the original texts and thirty-two new full-color reproductions of his work. The revised book was published in 1984.

Menaboni, often hailed as a second Audubon, is referred to as a scientific ornithological painter because of his methods of painting live subjects. He has painted over 150 different kinds of birds, mostly those seen in the southeast region. Single canvas paintings have not been his only avenue of painting. Murals, such as the ones done for the Citizen's and Southern Bank on Mitchell Street and the Capital City Club, both in Atlanta, were painted by Menaboni. In addition, he has done covers and illustrations for publications such as *The World Book Encyclopedia* and *Sports Illustrated*.

Athos Menaboni suffered a stroke in May 1990 and died July 18, 1990 of complications. A memorial service was held at the Ida Cason Calloway Memorial Chapel at Callaway Gardens on July 22nd. Menaboni's body was donated to Emory University.

Scope and Content Note

The collection consists of the papers of Athos Menaboni from 1940-1985. The papers include newspaper clippings and magazine articles by or about Athos and Sara Menaboni. These clippings also contain reproductions of some of his work. Other examples of his work are represented by menu covers from Rich's Department Store, acquisition offers for his works including *Menaboni's Birds*, and a sketch of a turkey feather. The only correspondence found in this collection is a typed letter, signed, from Menaboni to Wilbur [Kurtz?]. A tribute to Menaboni was written by Molly Aeck in honor of the fiftieth wedding anniversary of the Menabonis. One folder of the four over-sized folders contains original printed material that was too large to fit in the collection's box. Photocopies have been made of these originals and then have been filed with the other printed materials in this collection. The other three over-sized folders contain reproductions of Menaboni prints. A complete listing of each over-sized folder is located in the accompanying container listing.

Arrangement Note

Arranged by record type.

Container List

| Box | Folder | Content |
|-----|--------|---|
| 1 | 1 | Clippings and printed material, 1940-1951 |
| 1 | 2 | Clippings and printed material, 1953-1990, no date |
| 1 | 3 | Acquisition offers, clippings, and reviews: Menaboni's Birds, 1950-1951, 1984 |
| 1 | 4 | Announcements and clippings: Menaboni exhibits, 1951, 1959, 1961, 1974, 1978, no date |
| 1 | 5 | Clippings and printed material: Citizens and Southern Bank mural, 1958 |
| OP1 | 1 | Clippings and printed material, 1945-1984 |
| 1 | 6 | Acquisition offers: Prints and china, no date |
| 1 | 7 | Clippings and printed material: Woodruff Christmas cards, 1976, 1984, 1989 |
| 1 | 8 | Rich's Menaboni menu covers |
| 1 | 9 | Pencil sketch: "Turkey" [drawn and signed by Athos Menaboni] |
| 1 | 10 | "Art for Italy": A Tribute to Athos Menaboni by Molly W. Aeck, no date |
| 1 | 11 | Correspondence: Athos Menaboni to Wilbur [Kurtz], 1963 |
| 1 | 12 | Obituary, 19 July 1990 |
| 1 | 13 | Memorial service program, 22 July 1990 |
| OP1 | 4 | Photographs |
| 1 | 14 | Scrapbook, 1950-1985 (1 of 3) |
| 1 | 15 | Scrapbook, 1950-1985 |
| 1 | 16 | Scrapbook, 1950-1985 |
| 1 | 17 | Athos Menaboni Convention Center reception invitation, 19 October 1993 |
| 1 | 18 | Partial note: "Dear Molly and Dick" from [?], December 1976 |
| 1 | 19 | "Menaboni's American Song Birds," china plates pamphlet |

Reproduction prints

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|-----|---|--|
| OP1 | 2 | Blue Grosbeak, ca. 1940s |
| OP1 | 2 | Rose-breasted Grosbeak, ca. 1940s |
| OP1 | 2 | Cardinal, ca. 1940s |
| OP1 | 3 | Brown Leghorn, 1956 |
| OP1 | 3 | Black Minorca, 1956 |
| OP1 | 3 | Tulip Tree, 1969 |
| OP1 | 3 | Red Maple, 1969 |
| OP2 | - | Chinese Hibiscus, 1945 |
| OP2 | - | Brown Thrasher and Cherokee Rose, 1950 |
| OP2 | - | Valley Quail, 1945 |
| OP2 | - | Bob-White, 1945 |
| OP2 | - | American Bald-Eagle, 1976 |
| FR1 | - | American Bald-Eagle, 1976 |

China plates

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|---|---|-----------------------|
| 2 | 1 | Cedar Waxwing |
| 2 | 2 | Common Goldfinch |
| 2 | 3 | Painted Bunting |
| 2 | 4 | Cardinal |
| 2 | 5 | Carolina Wren |
| 2 | 6 | Eastern Bluebird |
| 2 | 7 | Cedar Waxwing |
| 2 | 8 | Golden Crowned Knight |
| 2 | 9 | Common Goldfinch |
