

Henry Moore Institute The Acquisition of the Anton Lesseman Archive



Photograph of Anton Lesseman, 1948
Courtesy of the Estate of Anton Lesseman and Leeds Museums and Galleries
(Henry Moore Institute Archive)

The Anton Lesseman (1899–1971) Archive was acquired for the Henry Moore Institute Archive of Sculptors' Papers in 2013. Lesseman was a sculptor who undertook his art education in the United Kingdom, attending Bradford School of Art and, after service in the First World War, Chelsea School of Art before finally settling in West Yorkshire where he returned to teach art in Bradford and make work.

Lesseman, whilst not gaining the same profile, was a contemporary of sculptors that included Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth. The collecting focus of the Henry Moore Institute Archive is to document sculptural practice and theory in Britain from 1850 to the present day, therefore the unique collection of Lesseman's sculptures, drawings, photographs, autobiography manuscript and poetry were a prime candidate for acquisition. The acquisition was highly unusual, as Lesseman and his Archive are fiction. His history and Archive were created by contemporary artist Paul Becker as part of his practice and facilitated through a Research Fellowship awarded to him by the Henry Moore Institute in 2011.

The Institute develops its Archive through a long established partnership with Leeds Museums and Galleries and seeks to reflect both historical and contemporary practice through its ongoing acquisition programme. Becker began his Fellowship with the goal of fabricating the life of an imaginary artist as a polar opposite to high profile and well-known figures, primarily Henry Moore. Becker sought to create the figure and documentary history of Lesseman as a counter to the accepted art-historical canon and to offer a means of reconsidering British art in the post-war period.

Using the Institute's extensive Research Library, and referring to several mid-twentieth century sculptors' papers, Becker was able to write a compelling, detailed and convincing autobiography of Lesseman. This was augmented by further archival materials created, under Becker's direction, by four artists in response to the autobiography. Lesseman's Archive is therefore rare, as it evidences contemporary sculptural practice whilst simultaneously offering the means to reflect on sculptural history.

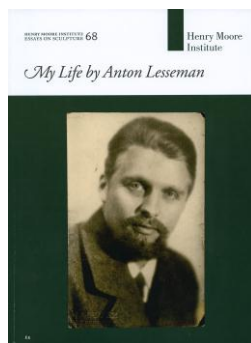
Becker presented the collection as a gift which was formally approved and accepted for acquisition by Leeds Museums and Galleries as owner of the Archive. The collection is now catalogued, (Collection Reference: 2013.172), and available for consultation by appointment.

Since the collection was acquired it has been the subject of research, including the publication of *My Life by Anton Lesseman*, Issue 68 of the Henry Moore Institute *Essays on Sculpture* series which includes extracts from Lesseman's autobiography and an interview with Becker. Also a selection of material from the Archive was recently the subject of a display in the Henry Moore Institute Research Library.

The Institute welcomes all researchers wishing to consult the Lesseman Archive and looks forward to the collection's further study and the outcomes this will generate.

For further information about the Henry Moore Institute Archive please visit:
www.henry-moore.org/hmi/archive

Essays on Sculpture are available from the Henry Moore Institute bookshop and website: www.henry-moore.org/hmf/shop/hmi-essays-on-sculpture-series



Softback, 40pp
228mm x 168mm
27 colour illustrations
ISSN 2047-2471
ISBN 978-1-905462-42-1