Guide to the Bismuth-Lemaître Papers

GEN MSS 754

by Beinecke staff

2010

P. O. Box 208330
New Haven, CT 06520-8330
beinecke.library@yale.edu
http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/
# Table of Contents

Collection Overview ................................................................. 3
Requesting Instructions .................................................................. 3
Administrative Information ............................................................. 3
  Immediate Source of Acquisition ............................................... 3
  Conditions Governing Access .................................................... 3
  Conditions Governing Use .......................................................... 4
Preferred Citation ........................................................................... 4
Processing Information ................................................................. 4
Associated Materials ....................................................................... 4
Maurice Lemaître (b.1926) ............................................................... 4
Lettrism ............................................................................................ 5
Scope and Contents ......................................................................... 5
Collection Contents ......................................................................... 6
  Computer media ............................................................................ 6
Selected Search Terms .................................................................... 8
Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
P. O. Box 208330
New Haven, CT 06520-8330
beinecke.library@yale.edu
http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/

**CALL NUMBER:** GEN MSS 754

**CREATOR:** Lemaître, Maurice, 1926-

**TITLE:** Bismuth-Lemaître papers

**DATES:** 1920–2009

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 225.26 linear feet (270 boxes) + 4 broadside folders

**LANGUAGE:** French

**SUMMARY:** The Bismuth-Lemaître Papers is comprised of material created and compiled by Maurice Lemaître, documenting the Lettrism movement from its inception in 1945 to the present day and Lemaître's own cultural and political activities as a leader of the movement. According to Lemaître's wishes, the title of the collection incorporates his birth name in order to reflect his heritage.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.lemaitre

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.lemaitre.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to beinecke.images@yale.edu.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box

Administrative Information

**Immediate Source of Acquisition**


**Conditions Governing Access**

In-process collection. As of August 2018, this collection is closed to readers temporarily, and will reopen when processing is complete. For more information, please consult the Closed Collections Schedule on the Beinecke Web site, at www.library.yale.edu/beinecke.
Maurice Lemaître (b.1926)

Maurice Lemaître, born Moïse Bismuth in Paris in 1926, was a leading voice of the mainstream Lettrism movement in the 1950s and 1960s, and continues to be one of its most active and outspoken proponents to this day. Lemaître joined the Lettrism movement in 1949/1950, four years after it was founded by Isidore Isou. He produced several important theoretical works of the early 1950s, including *Système de Notation pour les lètries* (1952), *Qu’est-ce que le Lettrisme?* (1954) and *Bilan Lettriste* (1955), as well as practical applications in experimental painting, music, book design, theater, and cinema. When Guy Debord led a schism away from the group around Isou in 1952, Lemaître became the leading spokesman of the movement’s “moderate” wing, which he defended through polemical engagements against Debord and the Lettrist (later the Situationist) International.

In addition to being a major theoretician and practicing artist, Lemaître became increasingly important as the movement’s publisher, not only editing but also financing the publication of the first Lettrist revues, including *Front de la Jeunesse*, *Poésie nouvelle*, and *Ur*, among others. He helped organize the first Lettrist exhibitions in the United States, and also provided support for the next generation of Lettrists, including...
Roland Sabatier and Alain Satié, at crucial points in their careers. The second series of *Ur* (1963-1967) was an important venue for Lettrist experimentation for such artists and became the launchpad for the Centre de Créativité.

Over the course of his career, Lemaître worked to preserve an historical record of the cultural and political activity of the Lettrism movement. He acquired manuscripts and tracts from Isou and Gabriele Pomerand documenting the first years of the movement from 1945 to 1950, and himself kept notes, letters, tracts, essays, artwork, and the related production materials documenting the movement’s output from 1950 onwards.

**Lettrism**

Lettrism was the first avant-garde movement to emerge from the postwar generation in Europe. Its origins are deeply rooted in the Second World War; from the beginning its leaders situated the movement explicitly vis-à-vis currents of European Modernism—particularly Dada and Surrealism—that were well-established in the years leading up to the war. Lettrism was central to the younger generation’s confrontation with both the legacies of modernist experimentation (political and philosophical as well as aesthetic) and the wartime experience itself. The movement’s development in the immediate postwar years is also integral to the proliferation of new avant-garde movements across Europe that came together to form a distinctly new cultural climate in the second half of the last century.

**Scope and Contents**

The Bismuth-Lemaître Papers is comprised of material created and compiled by Maurice Lemaître, documenting the Lettrism movement from its inception in 1945 to the present day and Lemaître’s own cultural and political activities as a leader of the movement. According to Lemaître’s wishes, the title of the collection incorporates his birth name in order to reflect his heritage.

The collection consists of writings by Lemaître and others, including Isidore Isou; editorial files for the numerous serials published by Lemaître; screenplays, production material, and publicity material for Lemaître’s avant-garde films; correspondence with other Lettrists, including Isou, Gabriele Pomerand, Roland Sabatier, and Alain Satié, as well as editors, intellectuals, and museum and gallery directors; audio recordings of Lettrist readings and interviews, and video recordings of Lemaître’s films; and posters, photographs, fliers, tracts, exhibition catalogs and other material relating to Lettrism. The collection provides comprehensive documentation of the development and evolution of Lettrism, and also sheds light on the post-war avant-garde and related cultural movements in Europe, particularly France, during the second half of the twentieth century.
## Collection Contents

### Computer media

0.42 linear feet (2 boxes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. 221 MITSUBISHI LCD MONITOR SOFTWARE (Windows, Windows NT) TEST PATTERN INF FILE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call Number: 2010-genm-37536-0001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.5 _floppy_disk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restricted fragile material. Access copies of digital files may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| b. 221 IBM WORD 6 LEMFEENG.DOC = Entretiens sur le Lettrisme, version anglaise |
| Call Number: 2010-genm-37536-0002 |
| 13.5 _floppy_disk |
| Restricted fragile material. Access copies of digital files may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information. |

| b. 221 [no label information] |
| Call Number: 2010-genm-37536-0003 |
| 1 CD-R |
| Restricted fragile material. Access copies of digital files may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information. |

| b. 221 KAMI E NO MITCHI_1 |
| Call Number: 2010-genm-37536-0005 |
| 13.5 _floppy_disk |
| Restricted fragile material. Access copies of digital files may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information. |

| b. 221 PROJET LEMAITRE 2 WINDOWS 2 |
| Call Number: 2010-genm-37536-0006 |
| 13.5 _floppy_disk |
| Restricted fragile material. Access copies of digital files may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information. |

| b. 221 LEMAITRE 4 MAMAN AIX Juillet 1973. “Ce matin, Preud ton petit déjeuner |
| Call Number: 2010-genm-37536-0007 |
| 13.5 _floppy_disk |
| Restricted fragile material. Access copies of digital files may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information. |

| b. 221 LEMAITRE G. M.Lemaître / Dr Curtay Mai 94- |
| Call Number: 2010-genm-37536-0008 |
| 13.5 _floppy_disk |
| Restricted fragile material. Access copies of digital files may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information. |

| b. 221 Maman Aix 1973. Maman Paris 1973 Disquette no 4 non corrigée |
| Call Number: 2010-genm-37536-0009 |
| 13.5 _floppy_disk |
| Restricted fragile material. Access copies of digital files may be requested. Consult Access Services for further information. |
b. 221  
Disquette No 3 non corrigée M. Lemaître. S. Lemaître 3 cassettes Maman 1976 maman fin août 73 
maman (séance films) ma 25 dec. 73 
Call Number: 2010-genm-37536-0010  
13.5_floppy_disk  
Restricted fragile material. Access copies of digital files may be requested. Consult Access Services 
for further information.

b. 221  
M. Lemaître/ Dr Zeboulon (5 cassettes) 9.02.96 non-corrigée 2.03.96 WORKS sous WINDOWS 
Call Number: 2010-genm-37536-0011  
13.5_floppy_disk  
Restricted fragile material. Access copies of digital files may be requested. Consult Access Services 
for further information.

b. 221  
M. Lemaître/ Dr Zeboulon (2 cassettes) non-corrigée M. Lemaître/ Dr Curtay (1 cassette) WORKS 
sous WINDOWS 
Call Number: 2010-genm-37536-0012  
13.5_floppy_disk  
Restricted fragile material. Access copies of digital files may be requested. Consult Access Services 
for further information.

b. 243  
[no label information]  
Call Number: 2010-genm-37536-0013  
1 CD-R  
Restricted fragile material. Access copies of digital files may be requested. Consult Access Services 
for further information.

b. 243  
Maurice Lemaître Le Mariaje du Don et de la Volga (symphonic) + Bonus  
Call Number: 2010-genm-37536-0014  
1 CD-R  
Restricted fragile material. Access copies of digital files may be requested. Consult Access Services 
for further information.
Selected Search Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library’s online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects
Experimental films -- France
French literature -- 20th Century
Lettrism

Genres / Formats
Audiovisual materials
Born digital
Lettrist literature -- France -- Paris -- 20th Century
Motion pictures (visual works)
Photographic prints
Sound recordings
Video recordings

Names
Isou, Isidore
Lemaître, Maurice, 1926-
Pomerand, Gabriel, 1926-1972
Sabatier, Roland, 1942-
Satié, Alain, 1944-