BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Johannes Alexander Gaertner, Professor of Art History at Lafayette College, was born in Berlin-Lichterfelde, Germany, on April 26, 1912, the son of Carl Eugen Gaertner (1884-1937), a bookkeeper and cashier, then clerk at the Board of Justice in Berlin-Moabit, and Fanny Horwitz Gaertner. JAG’s father was Lutheran, his mother Jewish (“mosaischer religion”); JAG was baptized (September 8, 1912) and confirmed (March 6, 1927) in the Lutheran Church (Pauluskirche zu Berlin-Lichterfelde). Following an education at the Schiller-Gymnasium in Berlin-Lichterfelde, JAG studied at the Friedrich-Wilhelm-Universität in Berlin and the Ruprecht-Karls-Universität in Heidelberg. He was awarded the Doctor of Theology at Heidelberg in 1936 with a major in Christian Archaeology and a dissertation entitled “Johann Gottfried Herders Anschauungen über eine christliche Kunst.” That same year, JAG left Germany for Sullana, Peru, to take a position as a private tutor to a German family. He lived in Peru for nine years, working first as a private language teacher in Lima and later as an assistant manager of the Libreria Internacional del Peru in Lima. On May 21, 1941, he married Gerda Sara Meyer, a German Jew who had left Germany in 1939 and who worked as a fashion designer in Peru. The daughter of Richard Meyer and Erna Brauer Meyer, Gerda was born on February 4, 1916, in Berlin-Schöneberg and died on November 1, 2004, in St. Luke’s Hospital, Bethlehem, PA. Johannes and Gerda had one daughter, Susanna Barbara, born in Kew Gardens General Hospital in New York on March 21, 1947; she attended Bryn Mawr College.

In 1945, with the help of Walter Muir Whitehill, director of the Boston Athenaeum, the Gaertners emigrated to New York. The couple lived at 61-05 39th Avenue, Apt. G6, Woodside, New York, and JAG worked for Frederick Ungar Publishing Co. In 1947, JAG joined the Faculty of Lafayette College; he and Gerda moved to Easton in 1948, where they lived at 2 East Campus, then 228 McCartney Street before purchasing a house in 1972 at 409 Clinton Terrace. Hired as an Instructor in the Department of Languages at Lafayette College, JAG was fluent in several languages: he studied German for 12 years, Latin for nine years, English for seven years, Greek for six years, French and Italian for four years each, Hebrew for three years, and Spanish informally. In 1948, he became an Assistant Professor of Languages. In 1954, two years after he became a naturalized U.S. citizen, his title was Assistant Professor of Languages and Fine Arts, in 1958 Associate Professor of Languages and Fine Arts, with tenure. JAG became Acting Head of Lafayette’s newly-formed Department of Art and Music in 1965 and Head the following year. In 1967, he was promoted to the rank of Professor of Art History. In 1969 and again in 1972, he was reappointed Head of the Department of Art and Music. JAG retired in 1977 and was granted emeritus status, a year after the Board of Trustees approved the division of the Departments of Art and Music. Late in life, he and Gerda moved to Kirkland Village in Bethlehem, PA; he lost both legs to diabetes, but, enabled by artificial limbs and a walker, he still attended classical music concerts at the Williams Center. JAG died on January 28, 1996, in Easton Hospital; his ashes, and those of his wife, are interred at Lafayette College in the Simon Center, the building once known as Jenks Hall that housed the Art Department.
JAG was the author of a book on American Art in Germany (*Prisma der Demokratie: Ausdruck und Selbstdkritik in der Malerei Amerikas*, 1961), a volume of German poetry (*Diapason, s.a.*), two collections of Latin verse (*Vox Humana*, 1954, and *Cantus Firmus*, 1966), *Worldly Virtues: A Catalogue of Reflections* (1990), and numerous essays, short stories, plays, and poems. He was a fellow of the International Institute of Arts and Letters and an active member of the College Art Association, American Institute of Archaeology, American Society for Aesthetics, Medieval Academy of America, Renaissance Society, as well as a number of other professional groups. He is especially remembered for a series of lectures he hosted at Lafayette from 1976 to 1984 called “Fortnightly Lectures for Ladies.”

**SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

The Gaertner papers (14 record center boxes; 14 cubic feet) document JAG’s 30 years on the Faculty at Lafayette College (1947-77) with folders on his teaching, scholarship, and service. Also included are numerous personal files, beginning with his birth in Germany in 1912 and continuing through his departure, during the Nazi years, to Peru and his subsequent immigration to the U.S. A prolific writer, JAG left manuscripts and typescripts of essays and creative writing in German, English, Spanish, and Latin. Unfortunately, with the exception of the early work in German, most of these are undated. Also, some of the letters in JAG’s voluminous correspondence files are undated; undated letters are inserted at the end of the chronological sequence in each file.

**INVENTORY**

**Box 1**

Teaching—Syllabi and Course Materials

1.1 Art I, Introduction to Fine Arts—1951, 1952
1.2a-b Art I, Ancient Art—1971, 1972/73, 1974/75
1.5a-c Art III, Renaissance and Baroque Art—1971-75
1.7a-c Art V, American Art—1972-74

**Box 2**

Teaching—Syllabi and Course Materials

2.1 Art VI, Archaeology—undated
2.3 Art VIII, Seminar—1975
2.4 Art 9 and 10, Drawing and Design I—1971
2.5a-b Art 15, Contemporary Art—1972
2.6 History of Music I—1952, 1953
2.7 Greek—1953 (Part 1)
2.8 Greek—1953 (Part 2)
2.9 Various Course Materials (Part 1)
Box 3
Teaching—Student/Alumni Correspondence and Student Papers
3.3 Christine Capone—1973, 1977-78
3.4 Norman Dollin—1949, 1951
3.5 Philip Dunne—1956-58, 1970-71, 1976
3.7 Edward Greenberg—1977-78, 1980
3.11 Dennis Malin—1956
3.12 Vicki Meyers—1977-79
3.15 Martin Mitchell—(Part 2) 1980-90
3.16 Gary Navarre—1957
3.19 Peter Rees—1956-59, 1964-65
3.20 Douglas Robinson—1976-78
3.23 Mary Ann Salajan—1960
3.25 José de Sanchez—1971
3.26 Aprile Scharf—1981-83
3.28 Geoffrey Scott—1970
3.29 Charles A. Sherno—1961-62
3.30 Howard Slatkin—1976
3.32 Kenneth Wapnick—1962-65
3.33 Daniel Weinberger—1958-59
3.34 Frank Whitten—1953-54, 1956-57
3.35 Vladimir Zernin—1953-58
3.36 Misc. Student Correspondence—1940s, 1950s, 1960s
3.37 Misc. Student Correspondence—1970s, 1980s
3.38 Advisees—Course Petitions, etc.
3.39 Student Papers, A-L
3.40 Student Papers, M-Z
Box 4

Scholarship: Published and Unpublished (Essays, Stories, Plays, Poems)

Writings in German (arranged chronologically)


4.2 1936-37—“Der Tag- und Nachtturm” (1936); “Erfüllung,” “Chidher,” “Der Besuch,” “Die Männer im Wald” (1937)

4.3 1930s—“Descensus ad Inferos,” “Cancan und Striptease,” “Künstlerbiographien,” “Quartblock,” “Zur Protestantischen Kunst,” “Was ist religiöse Kunst?”, “Eine philosophische Stunde,” Theologisches Aufsätze


4.5 1930s?—“Ein Hause in Seebe”

4.6 1943—“Capriccios” (1943)


4.8 1960-61—“Parodien über das Thema ‘Es regnet durch’” (1960; see also 4.1); “Amerikanisierung der europäischen Verkehrsverhältnisse?”, “Prisma der Demokratie”


4.10 1960s—“Die deutsche Graphik des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts,” “Philipp Otto Runge”

4.11 1967-68—JAG Biographie

4.12 1969-72—JAG Biographie


4.15 Undated—“Anmut, Eleganz and Tugend” (fragments) (Part 1)

4.16 Undated—“Anmut, Eleganz and Tugend” (fragments) (Part 2)


4.18 Undated—Fragment of a Novel (“Man wollte etwas sagen …”)

4.19 Undated—Poems: “Lob des Lebens”

4.20 Undated—Poems: “Verse und Sprache für Linka”

4.21 Undated—Poems: “Diapason” sequence (and others)

4.22 Undated—Poems
4.23 Undated—“Kleine Privat-Anthologie” (others’ poetry)

Box 5

Writings in English, A-M (arranged alphabetically—most are undated)


5.2 “Aristocratic Attitudes,” “Archaeology, History, Art History, Cultural History, and Anthropology,” “Art as the Function of an Audience,” “Art Debunking Art” (1972)

5.3 [“A Bar on Third Avenue”] (play), “The Biedermeier-Image,” “Bildende Künste—Mittwoch, September 1, 1976” (see also Writings in German)


5.5 “Frederick Knecht Detweiler” (biography), “Dialectic Thought in Thomas Mann’s The Magic Mountain,” “Does Latin Toughen the Mind?”

5.6 “Education for a Conquered Country,” “Elegy for the Ladies of Yore,” “Endangered Species,” “The End of Modern Art”

5.7 Essays on Aesthetics (Part 1): “Myth and Pattern,” “Art as the Function of an Audience and Other Essays,” “Interpreting Works of Art”

5.8 Essays on Aesthetics (Part 2): “Music and Non-objective Painting,” “Terms of Aesthetic Approval in English, French, and German”

5.9 Essays on Aesthetics (Part 3): “What Is a Cultured Man?”, “Censorship of Art—the Futile Debate,” “Color and Light in Personal Names”

5.10 Essays on Aesthetics (Part 4): “Tastemaking,” “Remarks on the Compatibility of Marxist and Non-Marxist Aesthetics”


5.12 Goya: “The Interpretation of Paintings”

5.13 Goya: Research Notes/Correspondence

5.14 Goya: “Goya, the Duchess of Alba, and the Two Majas”/“Response to ‘A Duchess Who Ensnared Goya’” (1950)

5.15 “Happiness,” “The Hiaman and His World,” “Horace,” “How Dead Is a Dead Art?” , “How To Avoid Busing and Most Other Hassles” (1975), “How To Be a Foreigner in America,” “How to Deal with Sadistic, Retrogressive, Death-Obsessed Establishment Types”

5.18 “Medieval Dress”: Typescripts (1989)
5.19a-c “Medieval Dress”: “Late Medieval Dress”
5.20 “Medieval Dress”: “Buttons and Bows,” “Why 1340? The Dating of a Fashion Change”

Box 6
Writings in English, M-Z (arranged alphabetically—most are undated)
6.1 “Medieval Dress”: Research Essays
6.4 “Parables” (1992)
6.6 “Reading and Writing,” “Reflections,” “The Renaissance and We,” “Rilke’s Duino Elegies,” “The Roman Temple and Its Logic,” “Rustle of Spring”
6.7 “The Semantics of Interpretation,” “Short Speech to be Held before a Showing of Slides in the Modern Mind on April 24, 1949,” “Silva,” “Sixty Sentences on Art and Aesthetics,” “A Slight Change Only,” “Sphinxes in the Classroom,” “Stating the Obvious,” “Strategies of Counter-Criticism,” “The Street in Modern Painting,” “The Structure of Patterns in the Biography of Artists,” “Styles as Semantic Phenomena”
6.8 “A Tale of Three Students,” “Talking about Art,” “Theology and Aesthetics,” “That we should dress us fairly for our end,” “Thoughts on My Life,” “Thrashing”
6.9a-b “Time and Chance”: Manuscript and Typescript
6.12 “Worldly Virtues”: Contract, Proofs, Reviews
6.13a-c “Worldly Virtues”: Manuscripts and Typescripts
6.15 Untitled Essays
6.16 Untitled Notes (Part 1)
6.17 Untitled Notes (Part 2)
6.18 Poems
Box 7
Writings in English—Longer Works
7.1 “Literature as Diary” (Part 1) (1949, 1950, undated [early])
7.2 “Literature as Diary” (Part 2) (1954)
7.3 “Literature as Diary” (Part 3) (1954)
7.4 “Literature as Diary” (Part 4) (1956, 1958)
7.5 “Literature as Diary” (Part 5) (1962-63)
7.6 “Literature as Diary” (Part 6) (1970)
7.7 “Literature as Diary” (Part 7) (1971-72)
7.8 “Literature as Diary” (Part 8) (1977)
7.10a-f “Passages and Entries” (1976?): Complete Text in Various Stages of Editing

Writings in and about Latin

7.12 Correspondence
7.13 Poems
7.14 Notes and Materials

Writings in Spanish

7.16 Poems

Box 8
Book Reviews
8.1 Book Reviews (Part 1) (1950s + 1 from 1947)
8.2 Book Reviews (Part 2) (1960s)
8.3 Book Reviews (Part 3) (1970s and 1980s)
8.4 Book Reviews, Correspondence (Part 1) (1950s)
8.5 Book Reviews, Correspondence (Part 2) (1960s)
8.6 Book Reviews, Correspondence (Part 3) (1970s)

Correspondence with Editors and Publishers
8.7 Editors and Publishers, Correspondence (Part 1) (1949 and 1950s)
8.8 Editors and Publishers, Correspondence (Part 2) (1960s)
8.9 Editors and Publishers, Correspondence (Part 3) (1970s)
8.10 Editors and Publishers, Correspondence (Part 4) (1980s)
8.11 Frederick Ungar (1949)
8.12 International Institute of Arts and Letters (1953-65)
8.14 Walter Whitehill (Part 2) (1960-78)
8.15 Stuttgarter Zeitung (Joseph Eberle) (1959-70)
8.17 Arts in Society (Monika Jensen) (1971-72)
Correspondence, Professional and Personal
8.18 Correspondence (Part 1) (1930s)
8.19 Correspondence (Part 2) (1940s)
8.20 Correspondence (Part 3) (1950-54)
8.21 Correspondence (Part 4) (1955-59)
8.22 Correspondence (Part 5) (1960s)
[continued in Box 9]

Box 9
Correspondence, Professional and Personal [continued from Box 8]
  9.1 Correspondence (Part 6) (1965-69)
  9.2 Correspondence (Part 7) (1970-74)
  9.3 Correspondence (Part 8) (1975-79)
  9.4 Correspondence (Part 9) (1980s)
  9.5 Ingrid Brainard (1978-86)
  9.6 Stewart Easton (1978-88)
  9.7 Robert Ginsburg (1970-72)
  9.8 Martin Gosebruch (1960-88)
  9.9 Ilse Haase (1965)
  9.10 Hans Kusel (1942-55)
  9.11 Doris Lindell (1968-78)
  9.12 Heinrich Lützeler (1971-80)
  9.13 Hugh and Polly Moore (1951-52)
  9.14 Peter Oliver (1958-77)
  9.15 Charlotte Reepschläger (1970-88)
  9.16 Karl Heinz Schrey (1960s-1970s)
  9.17 Ivan Slavov (1973-74)
  9.19 Cynthia Tyler (1984-90) (calligraphy)
  9.20 Willis Van Debanter (1963-65) (alchemical transcripts)
  9.21 George Wuest (1952-66) (in Latin)

Lafayette Correspondence/College Matters
  9.22 Lafayette Correspondence (Part 1) (1947-49)
  9.23 Lafayette Correspondence (Part 2) (1950s)
  9.24 Lafayette Correspondence (Part 3) (1960s)
  9.25 Lafayette Correspondence (Part 4) (1970-74)
  9.26 Lafayette Correspondence (Part 5) (1975-79)
  9.27 Lafayette Correspondence (Part 6) (1980s)
  9.28 Lafayette Correspondence (Part 7) (1990s)

Box 10
Department Files
  10.1 Correspondence (Part 1) (1950s)
  10.2 Correspondence (Part 2) (1960-64)
  10.3 Correspondence (Part 3) (1965-69)
10.4 Correspondence (Part 4) (1970-72)
10.5 Correspondence (Part 5) (1973-74)
10.6 Correspondence (Part 6) (1975-79)
10.7 Correspondence (Part 7) (1980s)
10.8 Department Annual Reports (1965/66-1970/71)
10.10 Music Department—Correspondence with Miriam Webb, Instructor (1969-75)
10.11 Art Department—Job Applicants (1957-59, 1977)

JAG’s Sabbaticals and Grants
10.12 Sabbaticals and Grants (Part 1) (1950s)
10.13a-b Sabbaticals and Grants (Part 2) (1960s)
10.14 Sabbaticals and Grants (Part 3) (1970s)
10.15 Publication Lists
10.16 Job Search (1953-83)
10.17 Salary and Appointment Letters (1947-77); Correspondence re Retirement Benefits
   (1976-79); Post-Retirement Jobs (1977)
10.18 Conferences—4th International Congress on Aesthetics, Athens (1960)
10.19 Conferences—5th International Congress on Aesthetics, Amsterdam (1964) (+ summer
   travel in Europe)
10.20 Conferences—International Congress on Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo (1980s)

Speeches
10.21 Speeches (Part 1) (1950s)
10.22 Speeches (Part 2) (1960s)
10.23 Speeches (Part 3) (1970s)
10.24 Speeches (Part 4) (1980s)
10.25 Speeches (Part 5) (Undated Materials)
10.26 Fortnightly Lectures for Ladies (1976-84)

Box11
Additional Department and College Files
11.1 Study Tours of Europe (1950s)
11.2 Study Tour of Europe (1981)
11.3 Dimensions Program (1982-84)
11.4 Other Teaching (1952-54, 1973-74), including Anthroposophism
11.5 Fine Arts Society (1956-65, 1977)
11.6 Lafayette Arts Fund (1967-69)
11.7 Lafayette Archaeology Society (1977)
11.8 Calligraphy
11.9 Art Department Exhibits—Arturo Cuetara (undated); Pop Art (1965); Myron Barnstone
   (1967-69)
11.11 Delta Kappa Epsilon
11.12 Articles about JAG

Personal Files
11.13 Family Photos
11.14 Official Documents (1912-72)
11.15 Immigration from Germany to Sullana, Peru (1939); Correspondence (1936-47) (see also 11.14, Official Documents)
11.16 Immigration from Peru to U.S. (1945); Correspondence (1938-49) (see also 11.14, Official Documents)
11.17 Correspondence with Gerda Gaertner, JAG’s wife (1931-50)
11.18 Correspondence re Berlin Gravesite of Carl Eugen Gaertner, JAG’s father (1936-86)
11.19 Correspondence with and about Fanny Gaertner, JAG’s mother (1940s)
11.20 Correspondence with Susanna Barbara Gaertner, JAG’s daughter (1950-58)
11.21 Apartment Rental in Woodside, NY (1947-48); House Purchase in Easton, PA (1972-91)
11.22 Personal Travel (Part 1) (1960s)
11.23 Personal Travel (Part 2) (1970s)
11.24 Delacroix Painting—Young Girl with Flowers
11.25 Death, 28 January 1996

**Box 12**
Diaries, Calendars, Address Books (1920s-1970s) (see also Box 13); Sympathy Cards (1996)

**Box 13**
Diaries, Calendars (1980s and 1990s); Notebooks, most undated (see also Box 12)

**Box 14**
Miscellaneous Research Notes and Materials, including postcards and slides; Memorabilia (Scrapbooks, Honorary Documents, etc.); Oversized Items

Compiled by June Schlueter, May 2015