
Summary Information

Call number: C1178
Repository: Princeton University Library. Special Collections. Manuscripts Division
One Washington Road Princeton, New Jersey 08544 USA
Size: 4 linear feet
2 archival boxes, 1 oversize flat box
Language(s) of Material: English
Arabic
French
Abstract: Consists of manuscripts, photographs, and ephemera by and about the Lebanese-American philosophical essayist, novelist, mystical poet, and artist Kahlil Gibran, who, by fusing elements of Eastern and Western mysticism, achieved lasting fame with such poetic works as The Prophet (1923) and Jesus, the Son of Man (1928). This material was collected by William H. Shehadi.
Location: Box 1 of this collection is stored in special vault facilities. See Access for details.
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Kahlil Gibran -- Jubran Khalil Jubran (in Arabic) -- was a Lebanese-American philosophical essayist, novelist, poet, and artist. He was born in Bsharri, Lebanon, but spent much of his productive life in the United States. Due to his family's poverty, Gibran did not receive any formal schooling during his youth in Lebanon. However, priests visited him regularly and taught him about the Bible as well as the Syriac and Arabic languages. During these early days, he began developing ideas that would later form some of his major works. Gibran immigrated with his parents to America in 1895. The family settled in Boston's South End, which had a large Lebanese-American community. It was there that school officials placed Gibran in a special class for immigrants to learn English. One of his English teachers being unfamiliar with the Arabic language suggested that Gibran Anglicize the spelling of his name in order to make it more acceptable to American society; since then he became known as Kahlil Gibran.

In his early teens, the artistry of Gibran's drawings caught the eye of his teachers, and in 1898 his drawings were used for book covers. He held his first art exhibition in 1904 in Boston, and it was there that he met Mary Haskell, who was to be his benefactor all his life. In 1908, he went to study art with Auguste Rodin in Paris; and in 1912, he settled in New York City at the West Tenth Street Studio for Artists in Greenwich Village. There he devoted himself to writing literary essays and short stories, both in Arabic and in English, and to painting. While most of Gibran's early writings were in Syriac and Arabic, most of his work published after 1918 was in English.

Gibran's literary and artistic work is highly romantic and was influenced by the Bible, Friedrich Nietzsche, and William Blake. His writings in both languages, which deal with such themes as love, death, nature, and a longing for his homeland, are full of lyrical outpourings and are expressive of his deeply religious and mystic nature. His best-known work is The Prophet, a book composed of twenty-six poetic essays. During the 1960s, the book became especially popular with the American counterculture and New Age movements, and it remains popular to this day, having been translated into more than 20 languages. Gibran died in New York City, but his wish was to be buried in Lebanon. Mary Haskell and his sister, Mariana, fulfilled this wish by purchasing the Mar Sarkis Monastery in Bsharri, Lebanon, where he was buried. Kahlil Gibran remains the most popular Lebanese-American writer.

William Shehadi, M.D., was born in Providence, R.I., of Lebanese parents. He graduated from the School of Medicine of the American University of Beirut and was an emeritus professor of New York Medical College.

The collection consists of manuscripts of four published books, miscellaneous manuscript pages of unpublished works, photographs, ephemera, and printed material by and about the Lebanese author Kahlil Gibran, collected by William H. Shehadi. Included are fragments of four unpublished poems: "Lullaby," "The Last Guest," "Untitled," and "Poverty and Sundry Aphorisms." There are eleven manuscripts of the thirty-four parables and poems in the published version of Gibran's book The Madman (1918); seven of the twenty-four parables and poems of Gibran's work The Forerunner (1920); the prologue, nineteen of the twenty-six sermons, and the epilogue/farewell of Gibran's highly
acclaimed book The Prophet (1923); and twenty-eight manuscript pages of the book The Earth Gods (1931), which corresponds to pages one to twenty-seven (or two thirds) of the published book. All the manuscripts contain numerous corrections, annotations, and deletions, some of them written in Arabic. Several of the chapters appear to be earlier drafts, as they are different from the final works. Included are original photographs of Gibran's studio in New York City, his grave, and scenes from Lebanon. There is a copy of William Shehadi's book Kahlil Gibran, a Prophet in the Making (published by The American University of Beirut, 1991); eleven posters; cards and postcards with his artwork; Lebanese commemorative stamps; pamphlets; envelopes and folders with inscriptions in the hand of Shehadi; and newspaper clippings.

Fifty-six printed books by and about Gibran, published in several languages including Arabic, French, Italian, Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese, and Yiddish, came with the collection. These were transferred to the Rare Books Division and have been catalogued separately.

Access and Use

Access
Restricted. Consult curator for access.

Restrictions on Use and Copyright Information
Single photocopies may be made for research purposes. No further photoduplication of copies of material in the collection can be made when Princeton University Library does not own the original. Inquiries regarding publishing material from the collection should be directed to RBSC Public Services staff at rbsc@princeton.edu. The library has no information on the status of literary rights in the collection and researchers are responsible for determining any questions of copyright.

Acquisition and Appraisal

Custodial History
All material was collected by William H. Shehadi.

Provenance and Acquisition

Appraisal
No appraisal information is available.

Processing and Other Information

Preferred Citation
Identification of specific item; Date (if known); William H. Shehadi Collection of Kahlil Gibran, Box and Folder Number; Special Collections, Princeton University Library.
Works Cited


Encoding


Descriptive Rules Used

Finding aid content adheres to that prescribed by Describing Archives: A Content Standard.

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Subject Headings

- Gibran, Khalil, 1883-1931 -- Manuscripts.
- Shehadi, Albert -- former owner.
- Shehadi, William -- former owner.
- American literature -- Lebanese American authors.
- Lebanese American authors -- Manuscripts.
- Lebanese Americans -- Drawings.
- Lebanese Americans -- Poetry.
- Mysticism and literature -- History -- 20th century -- Sources.
- Lebanon -- Photographs.
- Manuscripts, American -- 20th century.
- Photographs -- 20th century.
- Poems -- 20th century.
- Posters.
- Stamps.
- Middle East
Series 1: Manuscripts, 1918-1931

Size: 1 box

Description: This first series represents both published and unpublished Gibran material.

Arrangement: Folders are arranged by title in the order that they appear in Shehadi’s book.

Subseries 1A: Fragments, 1918-1931

Size: 4 folders

Arrangement: No apparent arrangement scheme.

Description: Consists of fragments of manuscripts for "Lullaby," "The Last Guest," and "Poverty and Sundry Aphorisms."

"Lullaby", undated

Size: 1 folder

Description: A one-page fragment headed "A lullaby sung by a mother to her dead child."

"The Last Guest", undated

Size: 1 folder

Description: These lines (8 pp.), according to Shehadi, may have been intended for but not included in the next fragment.

"Untitled", undated

Size: 1 folder

Description: Two pages.

"Poverty and Sundry Aphorisms", undated

Size: 1 folder

Description: Three pages.

Subseries 1B: The Madman, 1918

Size: 11 folders

Arrangement: Organized alphabetically by name.

Description: Consists of manuscripts for The Madman with corrections and notes.

Subseries 1B: The Madman, undated

Box: 1 Folder: 5-15
Subseries 1C: The Forerunner, 1920

Size: 7 folders

Arrangement: Organized alphabetically by name.

Description: Consists of manuscripts for The Forerunner with corrections and notes.

Subseries 1C: The Forerunner, undated

Description: Incomplete manuscript (20 pp.) with corrections and annotations, and notes in Arabic, which correspond to eleven of the thirty-four poems of the published work.

Box: 1 Folder: 16-22

Subseries 1D: The Prophet, 1923

Size: 4 folders

Arrangement: Organized alphabetically by name.

Description: Consists of manuscripts for The Prophet with corrections and notes.

Subseries 1D: The Prophet, undated

Description: Incomplete manuscript with corrections and annotations, which correspond to seven of the twenty-four parables and poems of the published work.

Box: 1 Folder: 23-26

Subseries 1E: The Earth Gods, 1931

Size: 1 folder

Arrangement: Organized alphabetically by name.

Description: Consists of manuscripts for The Earth Gods with corrections and notes.

Subseries 1E: The Earth Gods, undated

Description: Incomplete manuscript, consisting of a notebook with twenty-five written pages with many corrections and annotations. They correspond to pp. 1-27 (or about two thirds) of the Knopf printed version.

Box: 1 Folder: 27

Series 2: Photographs, 1918-1991

Size: 2 folders

Description: These include Gibran's studio on West 10th street in New York, his desk at the studio; photos of his grave, the Cedars of Lebanon; and photos of pages from the manuscript...
The Prophet. Also includes a copy of photograph of Gibran, his bedroom as a child in Lebanon, and a copy of a photograph of Gibran's bedroom which was transported from his New York City Studio apartment to the Museum in Bsharri, Lebanon. Many of the photographs are inscribed on the verso by Shehadi.

Arrangement: Folders are arranged first by original photographs, followed in the second folder by photograph copies.

Series 2: Photographs, undated
Box: 2 Folder: 1-2

Series 3: Miscellaneous Material, 1918-1991
Size: 7 folders
Size: 1 poster box

Description: Includes cards and postcards, copies of artwork, postage stamps, pamphlets, envelopes and folders, newspaper clippings, posters, and a copy of William Shehadi's book about Gibran's work.

Arrangement: Folders are arranged in alphabetical order by subject.

Shehadi, William, Kahlil Gibran, a Prophet in the Making, dates not examined
Box: 2 Folder: 3
Description: One volume.

Cards and Postcards, dates not examined
Box: 2 Folder: 4
Description: Includes blank cards depicting Gibran's artwork.

Copies of Artwork, dates not examined
Box: 2 Folder: 5
Description: Contains copies of Gibran's artwork and a CD-ROM with photographs of Gibran's art collection.

Envelopes and Folders, dates not examined
Box: 2 Folder: 6
Description: Contains the original enclosures which housed the manuscripts; most of which are inscribed by William Shehadi.

Newspaper Clippings, dates not examined
Box: 2 Folder: 7
Description: Contains clippings of articles about Gibran, in English and in Arabic.

Pamphlets, dates not examined
Box: 2 Folder: 8
Description: Includes pamphlets in English, Arabic, and French for seminars or dedications about Gibran.

Copies of Artwork, dates not examined
Box: 2 Folder: 9
Description: Includes a CD-Rom and copies of Gibran's artwork.

Posters, dates not examined
Box: 3
Description: Consists of eleven posters, in English and Arabic, of Gibran's artwork or of commemorative occasions about him.

Stamps, dates not examined

Description: Contains commemorative Lebanese postage stamps of Gibran.

Box: 3 Folder: 9