

Amherst Center for Russian Culture

Aleksis Rannit Materials

1975-1993

Accession Number: CRC07-005

Summary: The Aleksis Rannit Materials contain correspondence between Aleksis Rannit and Thomas P. Whitney and Marguerite Whitney; poetry and other writings by Aleksis Rannit; professional materials; and a selection of poetry books written by Aleksis Rannit.

Quantity: 1 linear foot

Containers: 1 banker's box

Processed: September 2015

Processed by: Triin Vallaste, Russian Center Assistant

Finding Aid Date: October 2015

Prepared by: Triin Vallaste, Russian Center Assistant

Edited by: Stanley Rabinowitz, Director, Center for Russian Culture

Access: There is no restriction on access to the Aleksis Rannit Materials for research use. Particularly fragile items may be restricted for preservation purposes.

Copyright: Requests for permission to publish material from the Aleksis Rannit Materials should be directed to the Director of the Amherst Center for Russian Culture. It is the responsibility of the researcher to identify and satisfy the holders of all copyrights.

Description of the Collection

Biography

Aleksis Rannit was an Estonian poet, critic and literature researcher. He (born Alexey Konstantinovich Dolgoshev) was born on October 14, 1914 in Kallaste, Governorate of Livonia, Russian Empire (nowadays in Tartumaa, Republic of Estonia). He spent part of his childhood in Saint Petersburg and returned to Estonia in 1921. In 1939, he graduated from the University of Tartu. He studied applied arts. He did research on Lithuanian literature and knew personally many Lithuanian authors.

From 1938 to 1940 he worked as a correspondent of the Riga newspaper *Segodnya*. In 1940 he married Lithuanian opera singer Gražina Matulaitytė (1899–1993), moved to Kaunas, where he worked until 1941 as a translator at the Kaunas State Drama Theatre, and later as a librarian at the Lithuanian National Library (until 1944).

In 1944, as the Red Army was approaching Lithuania, Rannit emigrated to Germany, where he continued with his studies at the Institute of applied arts in Freiburg (1946–1950). In 1953, he moved to the United States. From 1954 to 1960 he worked at the public library of New York, in its Slavic collection. In 1956 he defended his master's thesis on art history (annotated critical biography of Ciurlionis) at Columbia University. In 1961, Rannit became Curator of the Slavic and East European collections at the Yale University Library. He received honorary doctor of letters degrees from Stockholm University in 1978 and from the University of South Korea in Seoul in 1981. Rannit was a founding member of International Association of Arts Critics, represented the Estonian authors at the PEN club, and belonged to the editorial staff of *Continent*.

Rannit started writing poems in Russian, since 1930 wrote in Estonian. Rannit's writings include poetry in Estonian and in English translation, and several works of literary and art criticism. He has published seven collections of poetry. Among his major publications are *Akna raamistuses* (1937), *Käesurve* (1945), *Suletud avarust* (1956), *Kuiv hiilgus* (1963), *Kaljud* (1969), *Line* (1970), *Sõrmus* (1972), *Donum Estonicum: Poems in Translation* (1976), *Cantus Firmus* (1978), and *Helikeeli* (1982). Rannit's works have been translated into English, Russian, Hungarian, Lithuanian and German.

Alexis Rannit died on January 5, 1985 in New Haven, Connecticut, USA.

Scope and Content Note

The collection consists of Aleksis Rannit's personal and professional letters with related materials to Thomas P. Whitney and Marguerite Whitney as well as both manuscripts and published versions of Rannit's poetry and other writings. The collection also contains nine poetry books written by Rannit – in Estonian, some with English translations, some inscribed to Thomas P. and Marguerite Whitney. In addition, there are greeting cards, programs, and newspaper articles.

History of the Collection

The Aleksis Rannit Materials were donated to the Amherst Center for Russian Culture by Marguerite Whitney in 2005.

Series Description

This collection consists of correspondence with related materials from Aleksis Rannit to Thomas P. Whitney and Marguerite Whitney from 1975 to 1984.

Series 1: Correspondence, 1975-1984

Subseries 1: Aleksis Rannit's letters to Thomas P. Whitney and Marguerite Whitney, 1975-1984

Subseries 2: Letters to Aleksis Rannit, 1979

Series 2: Writings, 1975-1983

Subseries 1: Poetry by Aleksis Rannit

Subseries 2: Other writings by Aleksis Rannit

Subseries 3: Scholarly articles on Aleksis Rannit

Subseries 4: Scholarly reviews of Aleksis Rannit's books

Subseries 5: Printed promotional material for Aleksis Rannit's books

Series 3: Professional Materials

Series 4: Illustrations

Series 5: Printed books written by Aleksis Rannit

Aleksis Rannit Materials

Series 1. Correspondence, 1975-1984

Subseries 1: Aleksis Rannit's letters to Thomas P. Whitney and Marguerite Whitney, 1975-1984

Box No.	Folder No.	Date	Description
1	1	1975-1984	6 envelopes
1	1	n.d.	1 blank postcard, 4 letters, 1 envelope
1	1	March 13, 1975	1 letter
1	1	Aug 1, 1975	1 letter, 1 envelope
1	1	Aug 21, 1975	1 letter, 1 envelope, 1 booklet
1	1	Sept 17, 1975	1 letter, 1 envelope
1	1	Oct 7, 1975	1 letter, 1 envelope
1	1	Nov 21, 1975	1 letter
1	1	Feb 8, 1979	1 letter
1	1	July 25, 1980	1 letter, 1 envelope
1	1	Oct 6, 1980	1 letter, 1 envelope
1	1	Oct 27, 1980	1 letter
1	1	Nov 14, 1980	1 letter
1	1	Dec 22, 1980	1 postcard
1	1	1982	1 letter
1	1	March 1982	1 letter
1	1	Aug 30, 1982	1 letter, 1 envelope
1	1	Sept 18, 1982	1 letter, 1 envelope
1	1	Oct 10, 1982	1 letter, 1 envelope

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1	1	Sept 22, 1983	1 letter
1	1	Feb 1984	1 letter
1	1	May 18, 1984	1 letter

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Series 1: Correspondence, 1975-1984

Subseries 2: Letters to Aleksis Rannit, 1979

Box No.	Folder No.	Date	Description
1	2	1979	A letter from Thor E. Wood, Chief of the Performing Arts Research Center at Lincoln Center
1	2	July 23, [?]	A letter from Henrietta Buckmaster, Art and Literature Editor of The Christian Science Monitor
1	2	Apr 4, 1982	A letter from Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

Series 2: Writings, 1975-1983

Subseries 1: Poetry by Aleksis Rannit

Box No.	Folder No.	Date	Description
1	3	n.d.	A typed manuscript of "A fin-de-siècle evening in Philae, Nubia"
1	3	n.d.	A typed manuscript of "Line"
1	3	Jan 16, 1975	5 published poems in "The Christian Science Monitor": "Waiting," "At the carpenter's place," "Longissimus dies," "The mirroring hour," "Renoir"
1	3	Sept 3, 1975	"For Naum Gabo," published in "The Christian Science Monitor"
1	3	Dec 3, 1975	"Windless," published in "The Christian Science Monitor"
1	3	1976	A calligraphic manuscript of "Talv" / "Winter"
1	3	March 1980	"Daybreak," published in "Yankee Magazine"
1	3	Oct 5, 1980	A calligraphic manuscript of "To rhyme or not to rhyme"

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1	3	Aug 23, 1982	A typed manuscript of "While listening to Alcestis"
1	3	Sept 7, 1982	Typed manuscripts of 6 poems: "Your soul has never lain," "To Steven Gilbert," "To a poet-falconer," "For Anne LeBaron," "Yaddo's," "To James Still."
1	3	Sept 20, 1982	A typed manuscript of "While listening to Alkestis": edited version

Series 2: Writings, 1975-1983

Subseries 2: Other writings by Aleksis Rannit

Box No.	Folder No.	Date	Description
1	4	1976	A published untitled essay in the exhibition booklet of "New Russian Artists". 1 letter to Thomas P. Whitney and Marguerite Whitney enclosed
1	4	1977	"Jacques Hnizdovsky: A Ukrainian Graphic Artist" in "The Graphic Art of Hnizdovsky." A letter to Marguerite Whitney enclosed
1	4	Feb 26, 1978	"The Estonia I Know," published in "The Boston Globe"
1	4	January 1979	"Eduard Wiiralt, an Estonian Etcher-Engraver," published in "The Yale University Library Gazette" Vol. 53, No. 3
1	4	Nov 28, 1980	"Commentary," published in "The 8 th International Conference on Art and Philosophy: Proceedings" Vol. 1
1	4	April 1981	"Thirteen drawings from the Norman Holmes Pearson Collection: Do

			Writers Draw for the Right Reason?" published in "New Directions" Vol. 42
1	4	Oct 1981	"Homage to American Poets," published in "The Yale University Library Gazette" Vol. 56 No. 1-2
1	4	Spring 1982	"Victor Hugo's Night-Fallen Line," master proofs for "New Directions International Anthology" Vol. 44
1	4	July 1982	Victor Hugo's Night-Fallen Line," published in "New Directions International Anthology" Vol. 44
1	4	May 1983	"A note on James Still" – a typed manuscript of preface for James Still's "Poems" (Kentucky University Press, 1984)

Series 2: Writings, 1975-1983

Subseries 3: Scholarly articles on Aleksis Rannit

Box No.	Folder No.	Date	Description
1	5	Fall 1979	“Modernist Poetry: A Phenomenological Reading of Aleksis Rannit’s English Works” by Vincent B. Leitch, published in “Journal of Baltic Studies” Vol. 10, No. 3
1	5	Fall 1980	“Beneath the Surface of Foreign Words and/or Aleksis Rannit” by Wladimir Weidlé, published in “Journal of Baltic Studies” Vol. 11, No. 3

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Series 2: Writings, 1975-1983

Subseries 4: Scholarly reviews of Aleksis Rannit's books

Box No.	Folder No.	Date	Description
1	5	1978	A review of Aleksis Rannit and Eduard Wiiralt's "Cantus Firmus" by Vincent B. Leitch, published in "UNESCO Bulletin of Selected Books" Vol. 223, No. 2

Series 2: Writings, 1975-1983

Subseries 5: Printed promotional material for Aleksis Rannit's books

Box No.	Folder No.	Date	Description
1	6	[1976]	The Elizabeth Press's promotional booklet of Aleksis Rannit's "Donum Estonicum"
1	6	Dec 1976	A notice about Aleksis Rannit's "Donum Estonicum" in the "Yale weekly bulletin and calendar"
1	6	April 1977	The promotional booklet of the exhibition "Two Estonian artists" at the University of Virginia Art Museum (the foreword by Norman Holmes Pearson)
1	6	[1978]	The Elizabeth Press's promotional booklet of Aleksis Rannit's "Cantus Firmus"
1	6	April 1980	A notice of the publication of "New Directions" Vol. 40, in which Aleksis Rannit published a piece on Mihail Chemiakin and some of his poems
1	6	Sept 1982	An invitation to a talk by Aleksis Rannit at Beinecke Library

Series 3: Professional Materials

Box No.	Folder No.	Date	Description
1	7	Nov 1980	An article in "Novoye Russkoye Slovo" by Boris Filippov about art exhibition from Thomas Whitney collection, curated by Aleksis Rannit
1	7	[1982]	The promotional flyer of the publishing of "Estonian-English Dictionary" (Paul F. Saagpakk) by Yale University Press
1	7	1983	The booklet of the 46 th International P.E.N. Congress: the Estonian Center (with calligraphy by Aleksis Rannit)

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Series 4: Illustrations

Box No.	Folder No.	Date	Description
1	7	1957	Agaate Veeber's portrait of Aleksis Rannit

Series 5: Printed books by Aleksis Rannit

Box No.	Folder No.	Date	Description
1	8	1976	“Donum Estonicum. Poems in translation” (The Elizabeth Press)
1	9	1978	“Cantus Firmus” (The Elizabeth Press)
1	10	1981	2 copies of “Signum et verbum” (The Elizabeth Press)
1	11	1982	“Helikeeli. Seitsmes värsivihik“ [Sound languages. The seventh notebook of poems.] (Eesti Kirjanike Kooperatiiv)
1	12	1985	2 copies of “Valimik luuletisi 1932-1982” [Selected Poems 1932-1982.] (Estonian Learned Society in America.) 2 postcards enclosed
1	13	1993	“Stones of Estonia” (Estonian Learned Society in America)
1	14	n.d.	“Metal Flowers”