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Guide to the Robert L. Blake Papers, 1943-1988

Contains the professional papers of Robert L. Blake, Coordinator of the Department of Medical Illustration in the Duke University School of Medicine.

2004

### Descriptive Summary

**Collection Title:** Robert L. Blake Papers, 1943-1988

**Creator:** Blake, Robert L.

**Extent:** 4 record storage boxes, 2,000 items, 6 linear feet

**Processed By:** Archives staff and Emily Glenn

**Date Completed:** July 2003

**Encoded By:** Emily Glenn

### Biographical Note

Robert L. Blake was raised in Pennsylvania and was known in his high school as the quasi-official class artist. One of his early jobs, during the 1930s, was as a fashion photographer in the clothing firm of Kraft and Phillips of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Blake photographed, but also began drawing more seriously while working near the firm's fashion artists.

In 1942, Blake arrived at Duke University as part of an alternative service program for conscientious objectors, Civilian Public Service Unit #61. At Duke University, Blake was one of many attendants in the hospital operating rooms. It was in the rooms that Blake noticed Elon Clark, then director of the Department of Medical Art and Illustration and coordinator of the Medical Art Facility. After three months in the operating room, Blake moved to Elon Clark's studio to continue drawing, this time paying more attention to anatomy than style.

Together with Elon Clark, Blake helped to create a laboratory for the pioneering work of making facial prostheses. The prostheses were used for accident victims, cancer patients, or people with congenital defects. Blake was interested in creating items that were not perfect, but which perfectly complemented the body of the person receiving the prostheses. Instead of a plastic model, Blake learned to make a plaster case of a real nose on a real person to preserve the texture of the pores and natural appearance of the skin. In 1949, Blake became part of the Duke faculty, and finally Coordinator of Medical Art (around 1971) and Acting Director of Audiovisual Education, following Elon Clark's retirement.

In addition to creating simple teaching drawings and pigments for dying scars, Blake illustrated covers for University publications, created posters and signs for campus events, and lettered citations and certificates for various departments and schools. Blake was responsible for lettering the scrolls presented to the members of the Half-Century Club (Duke Alumni who graduated more than 50 years ago), a job that increased markedly each year. Bob Blake also prepared a Poison Control Center exhibit which was shown around the world during the 1960s. He used his three children as the models for pictures of children venturing into dangerous medicine cabinets or broom closets.

In his personal time, Blake continued to paint using watercolors. He showed his own paintings in various areas of the Medical Center, mostly scenes from rural and coastal North Carolina. His work was exhibited annually at the Morehead Planetarium in Chapel Hill, N.C., for more than 20 years.

Blake retired in 1983 having illustrated approximately 500 scientific articles for medical journals, drawings for over 50 textbooks. In 1988, he stated that he continued to turn out about 75 watercolor paintings per year.

As of 2003, the Department of Medical Illustration is known as the Department of Medical Art, part of Educational Media Services, within the Duke University School of Medicine. Audiovisual Education,

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continued by Sam Agnello, also became part of Educational Media Services.

Robert Blake was married to Hildur Blake, a nurse at Duke University. Together they had three children.

### Collection Overview

Anatomical and Medical Illustrations, ca. 1956-1979; Building Illustrations, ca. 1948-1970; Designs and Lettering, ca. 1953-1960; Clippings and Commercially Published Works, 1959-1981; Photographs, ca. 1944-1966, n.d.; Oversized Anatomical and Medical Illustrations, ca. 1948-1976; Oversized Illustrations of People and Hospital Scenes, ca. 1950-1981; Other Oversized Illustrations and Comics; Oversized Illustrations of Buildings, ca. 1948-1952; Civilian Public Service Unit #61, Illustrations and Photographs, 1943-1944, 1988; Photographic Negatives of Photographs and Illustrations.

### Online Catalog Headings

Blake, Robert L.

Duke University. School of Medicine. Educational Media Services.

Medical Illustration.

Duke University. Hospital.

Civilian Public Service. Camp No. 61 (Durham, N.C.)

World War, 1939-1945 -- Conscientious objectors -- United States -- 20th century.

### Related Material

Sam A. Agnello Papers.

Duke University Medical Center Archives.

Elon H. Clark Papers.

Duke University Medical Center Archives.

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Detailed Description of the Collection

**Anatomical and Medical Illustrations, ca. 1956-1979**

Posters contains in Box 1 have been disassembled for preservation purposes. Both posters were originally mounted on posterboard. Captions of items have been transcribed onto item labels, when applicable. Several items listed within this series have been moved to the flat map cabinet, drawer 2.

**Box 1**

Brain section, pencil, n.d.

Lower leg, pencil, 1965

Eye, colored pencil, 1956 (1)

Eye, colored pencil, 1956 (2)

Eye, pencil, n.d., (1)

Eye, pencil, n.d. (2)

Eye, pencil, n.d. (3)

[Flat map cabinet: Drawer 2] - Eye, pencil, 1969

[Flat map cabinet: Drawer 2] - Eye, pencil, 1972

[Flat map cabinet: Drawer 2] - Eye, pencil, 1979

[Flat map cabinet: Drawer 2] - Eyelid, pencil, no date

Heart, pencil, n.d. (1)

Heart, pencil, n.d. (2)

Heart, pencil, ca. 1974

Heart, Prolapse of non-coronary aortic cusp with aortic insufficiency, pencil, 1979

Heart, aneurysm, pencil, 1979

Heart, pencil, 1979

Breast, pencil, n.d. (1)

Breast, pencil, n.d. (2)

Breast (artery and vein detail), n.d.

[Flat map cabinet: Drawer 2] - Liver and kidneys (with George Lynch)

Sacrum and rectum, n.d.

Rectum and rectourethralis M., n.d.

Urinary tract, color glossy, n.d.

Urology (for Dr. Dees), pencil, n.d., 3 items

[Flat map cabinet: Drawer 2] - Unidentified [suture, kidney?], pencil, no date

Unidentified [heart?], n.d.

Unidentified, 1980, pencil

Untitled poster: photographs of sketches of eye, foot/ankle, esophagus, heart, upper leg dissection, 1965-1968

Poster:

*Growth of a Surgical Halftone*

, no date

### **Building Illustrations, ca. 1948-1970**

Duke University, West Campus, 1962

F.G. Hall laboratory, n.d.

Perkins Library, 1948

Clock tower, 1948

Woman's College Auditorium, 1948

Unidentified west campus building, 3 views, 1968-1970

### **Designs and Lettering, ca. 1953-1960**

*News Bulletin*

lettering, ca. 1953

Davison Club, certificate, ca. 1969-1970

Davison Club, charter members plaque, 1970

Poison Control Center, exhibit, 1960

### **Clippings and Commercially Published Works, 1959-1981**

General clippings, 1959-1981

*Science*

, 1976

*Archives of Internal Medicine*

, 1972

*Dermatology Clinic*

, 1978

Pamphlets, brochures, and cards

### **Photographs, ca. 1944-1966, n.d.**

Robert Blake, n.d.

Personal, 1944, 1945, 1966, n.d.

## **Oversized Anatomical and Medical Illustrations, ca. 1948-1976**

### **Box 2**

Aneurysm bypass, pencil and watercolor, 1976

Maxillary artery surgery, pen and ink/watercolor, n.d., 7 folders

Larynx, pen and ink/pencil, ca. 1948

Toe and nail, 1972

Liver and kidneys, by Blake and George Lynch, no date

## **Oversized Illustrations of People and Hospital Scenes, ca. 1950-1981**

Nurses, n.d.

Maternity scene with mother and child, n.d.

Maternity ward with infants, n.d.

Parents and newborn leaving hospital, n.d.

Woman's Auxiliary of Duke Hospital, n.d.

Pediatric patient getting a shot, n.d.

Nurse checking on a patient laying in bed, n.d.

A Day at Duke Hospital, n.d.

Surgery using ultraviolet light, n.d.

Surgery preparation, n.d.

X-ray equipment, microscope, and breathing machine in use, n.d.

Chest x-ray area, n.d.

Hospital functions composite, n.d.

Chief Residents, Ob-Gyn, pen and ink,

1974-1975

1975-1976

1976-1977

1977-1978

1978-1979

1979-1980

1980-1981

### **Other Oversized Illustrations and Comics**

Comic, Bob Blake after Serre [anatomical man picking up skin suit no. 1374], pencil, n.d.

Comic, Medical artist, Bell Building, and Hospital, 1977

Medical students in lecture, pen and ink, ca. 1960

Book jacket label, From the Library of Hildur and Bob Blake, n.d.

Duke Poison Control Center exhibit, layout for 5 panels, ca. 1955

### **Oversized Illustrations of Buildings, ca. 1948-1952**

Duke Chapel, 1944

Chapel, ca. 1948-1949

Entrance to the Duke University School of Medicine (Davison Building), n.d.

Hospital entrance, ca. 1940s

Duke University Medical Center, 1952

Unnamed hospital department, n.d.

### **Civilian Public Service Unit #61, Illustrations and Photographs, 1943-1944, 1988**

#### **Box 3**

Service, 1943-1944

Photographs, ca. 1943-1944

Reunion program, 1988

Reunion photographs, 1988

Slides of CPS workers in typical work scenes, with accompanying descriptions, 1944

### **Photographic Negatives of Photographs and Illustrations**

#### **Box 4**

Female pelvis, pen and ink, n.d.

Male pelvis, pen and ink, n.d.

Duke Hospital, 1950

CPS workers, ca. 1943-1944, 11 Files

Two people and old car [west campus?], n.d.

Robert L. Blake, frontal view, n.d.

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Robert L. Blake, profile, n.d. (1)

Robert L. Blake, profile, n.d. (2)