



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Rosalind Bengelsdorf Browne Papers, 1910s-1980, in the Archives of American Art

Jayna M. Josefson

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Women's History Initiative and the National Collections Program

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Rosalind Bengelsdorf Browne papers
Date:	1910s-1980
Identifier:	AAA.bengrosa
Creator:	Bengelsdorf, Rosalind, 1916-1979
Extent:	3.2 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	The papers of painter and critic Rosalind Bengelsdorf Browne measure 3.2 linear feet and date from the 1910s to 1980. The papers document Browne's career through biographical materials including sketches and photographs, correspondence with friends, artists, and institutions, writings, professional files, and printed material.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The collection was donated in 1978 and 1979 by Rosalind Bengelsdorf Browne and her son, Stephen B. Browne.

Related Materials

The Archives of American Art also holds an interview of Rosalind Bengelsdorf Browne conducted 1968 January 29, by Irving Sandler. Also found are the papers of Rosalind Bengelsdorf Browne's husband: the Byron Browne papers, 1930-1963.

Available Formats

Material microfilmed on 35mm microfilm reels 2013-2016 is available for use at Archives of American Art offices and through interlibrary loan.

Processing Information

The collection received a preliminary level of arrangement after donation and was partially microfilmed onto 35mm microfilm reels 2013-2016. A scrapbook of clippings was dismantled. In 2021, the collection was processed and a finding aid prepared by Jayna Josefson.

Preferred Citation

Rosalind Bengelsdorf Browne papers, 1910s-1980. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

This collection is open for research. Access to original papers requires an appointment and is limited to the Archives' Washington, D.C. Research Center.

Researchers interested in accessing born-digital records or audiovisual recordings in this collection must use access copies. Contact Reference Services for more information.

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Biographical / Historical

Rosalind Bengelsdorf Browne (1916-1979) was an abstract painter, critic, educator, and writer active in New York City, New York.

Born in New York City in 1916, Rosalind Bengelsdorf studied at the Art Students' League as a teenager. She continued her study of art under her mentor Hans Hofmann, developing her artistic beliefs and style of abstract painting. In 1936, she became a founding member of the American Abstract Artists of New York City. That same year, she joined the Works Progress Administration (WPA) Federal Arts Project and completed murals at the Central Nurses Home on Welfare Island under Burgoyne Diller.

In 1940, Bengelsdorf married fellow artist Byron Browne, and the couple decided that she would end her art career to focus on teaching and writing. Browne subsequently worked as an art critic for *Pictures on Exhibit*, *The New York Star*, and *Woman's Day* and taught at the New School for Social Research until the late-1970s. After her husband's death in 1961, she returned to painting.

Rosalind Bengelsdorf Browne died in Manhattan in 1979.

Scope and Contents

The papers of painter and critic Rosalind Bengelsdorf Browne measure 3.2 linear feet and date from the 1910s to 1980. The papers document Browne's career through biographical materials including sketches and photographs, correspondence with friends, artists, and institutions, writings, professional files, and printed material.

Biographical material includes a transcript of an interview with Susan C. Larsen. Correspondence includes letters from Ethel Baziotes, Romare Bearden, Sid Gotcliffe, and Philip Evergood. Writings include sound recordings of a monologue by Browne concerning her husband Byron Browne and Sam Kootz. Professional files may include correspondence, printed material, writings, and agreements relating to Browne's various roles as a critic, an artist, and an educator. Of note are files on the American Abstract Artists organization and the WPA Federal Art Project.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 5 series.

- Series 1: Biographical Material, 1910s-1980 (Box 1; 0.4 linear feet)
- Series 2: Correspondence, 1929-1979 (Box 1, 0.6 linear feet)
- Series 3: Writings and Notes, 1934-1978 (Box 2; 0.3 linear feet)
- Series 4: Professional Files, 1930-1978 (Boxes 2-3; 1.7 linear feet)
- Series 5: Printed Material, 1930-1979 (Box 4; 0.2 linear feet)

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Women art critics
- Women artists
- Women educators
- Women painters

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

- American Abstract Artists
- Browne, Byron, 1907-1961
- O'Connor, Francis V.

Occupations:

- Art critics -- New York (State) -- New York
- Educators -- New York (State) -- New York
- Painters -- New York (State) -- New York

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Material, 1910s-1980

0.4 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Found are biographical materials as well as scattered artworks, an interview, personal business records, and photographs. Artworks consist of unsigned pencil and pastel sketches and sketchbooks. Biographical materials include address books, resumes, passports, ID and membership cards to various New York City institutions, report cards and school projects, and a wallet containing Mexican coins, circa 1910. Personal business records consist of rental agreements, tenant organization material, vehicle records, and receipts.

Box 1, Folder 1-2	Address Books, 1930-1970s
Box 1, Folder 3	Artwork, Collage, 1949
Box 1, Folder 4	Artwork, Sketchbook, circa 1930
Box 1, Folder 5	Artwork, Sketches, circa 1930-circa 1960
Box 1, Folder 6	Biographical Sketches and Resumes, circa 1960
Box 1, Folder 7	Health Records, 1930s
Box 1, Folder 8	Identification Cards and Passports, circa 1916-1974
Box 1, Folder 9	Interview Transcript, with Susan Carol Larsen, 1975
Box 1, Folder 10	Membership Cards, 1934-1980
Box 1, Folder 11-12	Personal Business Records, 1931-1975
Box 1, Folder 13	Photographs, of Rosalind Bengelsdorf Browne, circa 1936-circa 1950
Box 1, Folder 14	Photographs, of Exhibition, 1937
Box 1, Folder 15	Photographs, of Works of Art, 1960s
Box 1, Folder 16-19	School Records, 1924-1933
Box 1, Folder 20	Wallet, 1910s

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Series 2: Correspondence, 1929-1979

0.6 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Browne's correspondence is with family, friends, institutions, and artists. Found are letters from Ethel Baziotis, Romare Bearden, Philip Evergood, Nancy Galantiere, Sid Gotcliffe, Lee Hall, Jacob Kainen, Lucien Lareau, and Aline Saarinen. Also found are letters from graduate students taught by Browne in the 1970s. Some greeting and holiday cards contain original artworks by friends.

Box 1, Folder 21	General, circa 1940-circa 1960
Box 1, Folder 22	General, 1929
Box 1, Folder 23	General, 1930-1939
Box 1, Folder 24	General, 1940-1949
Box 1, Folder 25	General, 1950-1959
Box 1, Folder 26	General, 1960-1969
Box 1, Folder 27-28	General, 1970-1979
Box 1, Folder 29-30	Graduate Students and Researchers, 1972-1976
Box 1, Folder 31	Greeting and Holiday Cards, 1960s

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Series 3: Writings and Notes, 1934-1978

0.3 Linear feet (Box 2)

Scope and Contents: Series contains writings by Browne including typed drafts of works, some with annotations, and an illustrated mockup for an unpublished work entitled *Is Santa Claus Real?*. Sound recordings are of a monologue by Browne about her husband Byron Browne and artist Sam Kootz, dating from 1971.

Box 2, Folder 1	"Abstract Art and the WPA in New York," by Rosalind Bengelsdorf Browne, 1969
Box 2, Folder 2	"American Abstract Artists," by Rosalind Bengelsdorf Browne, Annotated, 1978
Box 2, Folder 3	Autobiography, Incomplete, circa 1970
Box 2, Folder 4-5	Is Santa Claus Real?, by Rosalind Bengelsdorf Browne, 1951
Box 2, Folder 6	Lecture, for Artists Union, 1936
Box 2, Folder 7-8	Monologue, by Rosalind Bengelsdorf Browne and Byron Browne, 1971-1977 4 Cassettes (Two cassettes are duplicate copies of the monologue recording.)
Box 2, Folder 9	Notebook and Notes, 1934-circa 1950

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Series 4: Professional Files, 1930-1978

1.7 Linear feet (Box 2-3)

Scope and Contents: Professional files form the bulk of the collection and encompass Browne's career as a painter, educator, critic and writer.

A file for American Abstract Artists comments on Browne's affiliation as a founding member of the organization and includes correspondence, printed material, and drafts of questionnaires, some of which are photocopies. Works Progress Administration material contains scattered information on Browne's work on murals at the Central Nurses Home.

Also found are files for schools at which Browne taught, most notably for the New School for Social Research; exhibition files; and files for publications such as the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, *The New York Star*, and *Pictures on Exhibit*. Of note is a file for Francis V. O'Connor's compiled work on the New Deal Art Projects in which Browne is included.

Box 2, Folder 10	Advertising Copy, 1939-1950
Box 2, Folder 11-12	American Abstract Artists, 1936-1939
Box 2, Folder 13	Annot Art School, 1934-1936
Box 2, Folder 14	Archives of American Art, 1965-1969
Box 2, Folder 15	Art News, 1950-1970s
Box 2, Folder 16	Art Students' League, 1930-1933
Box 2, Folder 17-18	Encyclopedia Judaica, 1944-1970
Box 2, Folder 19	Exhibition, "7 American Women: The Depression Decade," Vassar College Art Gallery, 1975-1977
Box 2, Folder 20	Exhibition, "Geometric Abstraction of the 1930s," Zabriskie Gallery, 1972-1973
Box 2, Folder 21	Exhibition, "The Survivors: Federal Arts Projects of the 1930s in New York State," Gallery Association of New York State Inc., 1976-1978
Box 2, Folder 22	Exhibition, University of New Mexico, 1973-1974
Box 2, Folder 23	Ford Foundation, 1960
Box 2, Folder 24	Fourth Dimension Holiday, Inc., 1968
Box 2, Folder 25	Job Applications, 1948-1972
Box 2, Folder 26-27	The New Deal Art Projects: an Anthology of Memoirs, by Francis V. O'Connor, 1964-1973
Box 3, Folder 1-10	The New School for Social Research, 1960s-1970s

Box 3, Folder 11	The New York Star, 1948-1949
Box 3, Folder 12-14	New York University, 1952-1968
Box 3, Folder 15	Provincetown Advocate, 1949
Box 3, Folder 16	Pictures on Exhibit, "Gallery Previews in New York", 1946-1950
Box 3, Folder 17	Teaching Concepts and Methods, 1970
Box 3, Folder 18	Whitney Museum of American Art, 1977-1978
Box 3, Folder 19	Woman's Day, 1965-1972
Box 3, Folder 20	Works Progress Administration, 1937-1939

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Series 5: Printed Material, 1930-1979

0.2 Linear feet (Box 4)

Scope and Contents: Printed materials include clippings and exhibition materials concerning Browne's career as an artist, critic, and writer. Also found is scattered exhibition material on her husband, Byron Browne. Travel souvenirs include maps and brochures.

Arrangement: Formerly, clippings were arranged in the form of a scrapbook which was dismantled before microfilming.

Box 4, Folder 1-2	Clippings, 1930-1966
Box 4, Folder 3-4	Exhibition Catalogs and Announcements, 1932-1979
Box 4, Folder 5	Travel Souvenirs, circa 1930s

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