



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Leonard Bocour Papers and Business Records, 1933-1993, in the Archives of American Art

Jean Fitzgerald

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Leonard Bocour papers and business records
Date:	1933-1993
Identifier:	AAA.bocoleon
Creator:	Bocour, Leonard, 1910-1993
Extent:	11.8 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	The papers of American art collector, paint manufacturer, lecturer, and painter, Leonard Bocour measure 11.8 linear feet and date from 1933 to 1993. Found within the papers are biographical material; miscellaneous correspondence with artists and colleagues, including Helen Frankenthaler, Chaim Gross, Philip Guston, Alex Katz, Jack Levine, Morris Louis, David Oxtoby, and Philip Pearlstein; diaries, daily calendars, notes and writings; personal business records and the business records of Bocour Artist Colors, Inc.; transcripts of interviews with Bocour; and printed material.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The Leonard Bocour papers and business records were donated by his widow, Ruth Bocour, in 1994.

Related Material

Additional Leonard Bocour papers may be found at the Syracuse University Library, Special Collections Research Center.

Processing Information

The papers were processed to an intermediate level in August 2004 by Jean Fitzgerald.

Preferred Citation

Leonard Bocour papers and business records, 1933-1993. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions on Access

The collection is open for research. Use requires an appointment.

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Biographical Note

American art collector, paint manufacturer, lecturer, and painter, Leonard Bocour (née Leonard Bogdanoff) was born in 1910 in New York City. He studied at the National Academy of Design and at the Art Students League. In 1928, he met German artist Emil Ganso who taught him how to make artists' colors.

In 1932, Bocour established Bocour Hand Ground Artist Colors and sold paint directly to artists, greatly increasing his contacts and acquaintances in the art community. In this Depression era, Bocour often gave away paint to struggling artists who later became successful. Because artists would sometimes trade art work for tubes of paint, Bocour was able to build an impressive art collection that he would later loan for exhibition. He also donated numerous works of art to schools and museums.

Over the years, Bocour maintained a close relationship with artists, most notably Helen Frankenthaler, Philip Guston, Jack Levine, Morris Louis, and Philip Pearlstein. In the late 1930s, Bocour decided to increase his business by selling through retailers and wholesalers, gradually building a successful business.

From 1945 to 1955, Bocour joined the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine and for many years taught a summer technical course. In 1947, he developed Magna, an acrylic resin miscible with oil or turpentine that had the same consistency as oil paint, but dried in a fraction of the time. In 1960, Bocour introduced Aqua-Tec which is an acrylic polymer emulsion miscible with water.

From 1952 to 1970, Samuel Golden was Bocour's partner in the capacity of production manager. A merger with Zipatone, Inc. was carried out in 1982, but was dissolved in 1987. Zipatone, Inc. moved the company to Chicago, but Bocour remained in New York as president and consultant.

Beginning in the early 1960s, Bocour lectured at art schools and various arts organizations, discussing drawing, painting, and different art media as well as demonstrating his own products. He was a member of the National Art Materials Trade Association (NAMTA) and was president of the Art Material Manufacturers' Association, inducted into its Hall of Fame in 1974. Leonard Bocour died on Labor Day 1993.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of American art collector, paint manufacturer, lecturer, and painter, Leonard Bocour measure 11.8 linear feet and date from 1933 to 1993. Found within the papers is biographical material, including identity cards, membership cards, and award certificates. Miscellaneous correspondence is primarily with artists and colleagues, including Helen Frankenthaler, Chaim Gross, Philip Guston, Alex Katz, Jack Levine, Morris Louis, David Oxtoby, and Philip Pearlstein and discuss exhibitions and other art-related topics. Also found are diaries and annotated daily calendars; personal business records regarding personal finances, donations, and lectures; business records for Bocour Artist Colors, Inc., including contracts, business correspondence, financial documentation, and printed material; notes and writings including address books and writings by Bocour and others; transcripts of interviews with Bocour that discuss his early career; and printed material including clippings, exhibition announcements and catalogs, booklets, and brochures.

Arrangement

The collection has been arranged into eight series primarily according to type of material. Materials within each series have been arranged chronologically, except for the Receipts for "Private Deals" and the Business Card File

which are arranged alphabetically. Oversized material from various series has been housed in Box 13 and OV 14 and is noted in the Series Description/Container Listings Section at the appropriate folder title.

- Series 1: Biographical Material, 1940s-1990s (Box 1; 4 folders)
- Series 2: Miscellaneous Correspondence, 1950s-1990s (Box 1-4, 13, OV 14; 3.8 linear feet)
- Series 3: Diaries and Annotated Calendars, 1955-1987 (Box 4-5; 19 folders)
- Series 4: Personal Business Records, circa 1961-1992 (Box 5-7, 13; 2.2 linear feet)
- Series 5: Business Records for Bocour Artist Colors, Inc., circa 1942-1992 (Box 7-9, 13; 2.3 linear feet)
- Series 6: Notes and Writings, 1960-1993, undated (Box 9-10; 0.8 linear feet)
- Series 7: Interview Transcripts, 1970s-1980s (Box 10; 5 folders)
- Series 8: Printed Material, 1933-1993, undated (Box 10-13; 1.8 linear feet)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Collectors and collecting -- New York (State) -- New York
Drawing -- Technique
Paint industry and trade -- New York (State) -- New York
Painting -- Equipment and supplies
Painting -- Technique

Types of Materials:

Diaries
Interviews

Names:

Bocour Artist Colors (Firm)

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Material, 1940s-1990s

4 Folders (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Biographical material consists of biographical notes, identity and membership cards, award certificates for Bocour, and a photocopy of his son's birth certificate.

Box 1, Folder 1 Biographical Notes and Birth Certificate for Peter Bocour, 1947-1990

Box 1, Folder 2 Identity Cards and Blood Donation Card, 1944-1984

Box 1, Folder 3 Membership Cards, 1950-1990

Box 1, Folder 4 Award Certificates, 1950-1980

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Series 2: Miscellaneous Correspondence, 1950s-1990s

3.8 Linear feet (Box 1 -4, 13, OV 14)

Scope and Contents: Correspondence consists primarily of letters exchanged with business colleagues and artists including Helen Frankenthaler, John Grillo, Chaim Gross, Philip Guston, Grace Hartigan, Alex Katz, Jack Levine, Morris Louis, Eugene Massin, Nathan Oliveira, David Oxtoby, and Philip Pearlstein, discussing exhibitions and other art-related topics. There are single letters from Anthony Caro, actor Robert DeNiro, Jimmy Ernst, Philip Evergood, Emil Ganso, Leon Golub, Frederick Hartt, Helen Hayes, Al Held, Joseph Hirshhorn, Ibram Lassaw, Jacob Lawrence, Roy Lichtenstein, Bill Mauldin, Alice Neel, Kenneth Noland, Jules Olitski, Gabor Peterdi, Ad Reinhart, George Rickey, James Rosenquist, Moses Soyer, Raphael Soyer, Frank Stella, and Jack Tworok.

Box 1, Folder 5-74	Miscellaneous Correspondence, 1954-1972, undated Notes: Oversized material housed in Box 13, Folder 1, and OV 14.
Box 2, Folder 1-71	Miscellaneous Correspondence, 1973-1977 Notes: Oversized material housed in Box 13, Folder 1.
Box 3, Folder 1-66	Miscellaneous Correspondence, 1978-1984
Box 4, Folder 1-59	Miscellaneous Correspondence, 1985-1993 Notes: Oversized material housed in Box 13, Folder 1.
Box 13, Folder 1	Oversized Illustrated Letter from Jeffrey Dunn, undated
Box 13, Folder 1	Oversized Letter from Ann Marie Rousseau, undated
Box 13, Folder 1	Oversized Exhibition Poster Enclosed in Letter from James Suzuki, 1973
Box 13, Folder 1	Oversized Letter from David Oxtoby, 1973
Box 13, Folder 1	Oversized Letter from David Sutherland, 1986
Box 13, Folder 1	Oversized Letter from Jonah Kinigstein, 1991
Box OV 14	Two Oversized Letters from David Oxtoby, 1968, 1969
Box OV 14	Oversized Exhibition Poster Enclosed in Letter from T. Kawashima, 1972

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Series 3: Diaries and Annotated Calendars, 1955-1987

19 Folders (Box 4, 5)

Scope and Contents: Thirty-two diaries and nine annotated calendars contain brief notes about daily activities.

Contents:

Box 4, Folder 60-63	Diaries, 1955-1963
Box 5, Folder 1-12	Diaries, 1964-1987
Box 5, Folder 13-15	Annotated Calendars, 1970-1986

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Series 4: Personal Business Records, 1961-1992

2.2 Linear feet (Box 5-7, 13)

Scope and Contents: Personal Business Records include documents concerning Bocour's art collection and his public outreach activities. These records reflect business transactions not directly related to the operations of Bocour Artist Colors, Inc. Bocour's donations were primarily of art work to schools and museums. His lectures focused on drawing and painting and demonstrated his paint products.

Box 5, Folder 16-17	Personal Income Tax Returns, 1974-1979
Box 5, Folder 18	List of Art Work in Bocour Collection, 1986
Box 5, Folder 19	Appraisal Reports on Art Work Owned by Bocour, 1989
Box 5, Folder 20	Miscellaneous Receipts, 1961-1992
Box 5, Folder 21-31	Correspondence Regarding Donations of Art Work, 1961-1968
Box 6, Folder 1-34	Correspondence Regarding Donations of Art Work, 1969-1992
Box 6, Folder 35-61	Correspondence Regarding Lectures and Demonstrations, 1961-1977, undated Notes: Oversized material housed in Box 13, Folder 2.
Box 7, Folder 1-65	Correspondence Regarding Lectures and Demonstrations, 1978-1987
Box 13, Folder 2	Oversized Poster and List of Lectures by Bocour for Tempo Gallery, undated

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Series 5: Business Records for Bocour Artist Colors, Inc., circa 1942-1992

2.3 Linear feet (Box 7-9, 13)

Scope and Contents: These records document business transactions conducted by Bocour Artist Colors, Inc. and include financial records, correspondence with other companies, and business- related printed material. Files marked as "Private Deals" reflect Bocour's practice of trading tubes of paint and other art products in exchange for original art work.

Box 7, Folder 66	Trademark Application, 1942-1943
Box 7, Folder 67	Court Documents Concerning Name Change to Bocour, 1949-1951
Box 7, Folder 68	Leases, 1958-1983
Box 7, Folder 69-72	Contracts with Samuel Golden, 1954-1968
Box 7, Folder 73	Structural File Concerning Purchase of Shares of Samuel Golden, 1973
Box 8, Folder 1	Contract with Oskar Vangerow, 1975
Box 8, Folder 2	Contract with Rick Farrell, 1977
Box 8, Folder 3	Contract with Plaid Enterprises, Inc., 1977
Box 8, Folder 4	Contract with Union Local 810, 1981-1983
Box 8, Folder 5	Contract with Zipatone, Inc., 1982
Box 8, Folder 6	Tax Records, 1977-1987
Box 8, Folder 7	Records Concerning Stocks, 1982-1985
Box 8, Folder 8-13	Correspondence with Inter-Society Color Council, 1971-1982, undated
Box 8, Folder 14-22	Correspondence with Heinz Jordan & Co., Ltd., 1972-1986
Box 8, Folder 23-39	Correspondence with Zipatone, Inc., 1979-1991
Box 8, Folder 40-51	Correspondence with Oskar Vangerow KG, 1976-1992
Box 8, Folder 52	Address List of Customers, undated
Box 8, Folder 53-54	Notes from Meetings, 1982-1983
Box 8, Folder 55	Miscellaneous Notes, undated
Box 8, Folder 56	Ledger of Comparative Balance Sheets, 1946-1948

Box 8, Folder 57	Ledger of "L. B. Deals", 1963-1978
Box 8, Folder 58-59	Ledger of Annual Sales Totals, 1967-1982 Notes: Oversized material housed in Box 13, Folder 4.
Box 8, Folder 60-71	Receipts for "Private Deals," Paintings Received, 1963-1971
Box 8, Folder 72-80	Receipts for "Private Deals," Paintings Not Received, 1959-1971
Box 9, Folder 1-10	Receipts for "Private Deals," Paintings Not Received, 1959-1971
Box 9, Folder 11-13	Receipts for Miscellaneous Deals, 1971-1978
Box 9, Folder 14	Invoices from Tiffany & Co., 1985-1987
Box 9, Folder 15	Comparative Sales Report, 1963-1965
Box 9, Folder 16-18	Product Inventories, 1981
Box 9, Folder 19	Notes about Products, undated
Box 9, Folder 20	Reports: Product Sales & Costs and Salesmen's Performance, 1983-1984
Box 9, Folder 21	Reports: Sales Representative's Commission, 1984-1988
Box 9, Folder 22-41	Auditor's Reports, 1955-1983
Box 9, Folder 42-44	Label Designs, 1961-1972, undated Notes: Oversized material housed in Box 13, Folder 11.
Box 9, Folder 45	Miscellaneous Booklets, 1963-1965
Box 9, Folder 46	Brochures for Aqua-Tec Paint, undated
Box 9, Folder 47	Brochures for Bellini Paint, undated
Box 9, Folder 48	Brochures for Casein Paint, undated
Box 9, Folder 49	Brochures for Magna Paint, undated
Box 9, Folder 50	Brochures for Miscellaneous Products, undated Notes: Oversized material housed in Box 13, Folder 12.
Box 9, Folder 51	Price Lists and Order Forms, 1964-1979
Box 9, Folder 52	Art Material Directory, 1980

Box 9, Folder 53	Directory of Suppliers, 1982
Box 9, Folder 54	Miscellaneous Printed Material, undated
Box 13, Folder 3	Oversized Address List of Customers, undated
Box 13, Folder 4	Oversized Ledger of Annual Sales Totals, 1967-1973
Box 13, Folder 5	Oversized Reports of Product Sales and Costs, 1983-1984
Box 13, Folder 6	Oversized Reports of Salesmen's Performances, 1984
Box 13, Folder 7-10	Oversized Sales Representative's Commission Report, 1984-1988
Box 13, Folder 11	Oversized Label Designs, 1972
Box 13, Folder 12	Oversized Brochure for Zipatone Products, undated

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Series 6: Notes and Writings, 1960-1993, undated

0.8 Linear feet (Box 9-10)

Scope and Contents: Notes consist primarily of address books and a file of colleagues' business cards. Writings by Bocour include autobiographical accounts, miscellaneous poems and typescripts about Emil Ganso, Eugene Massin, David Oxtoby, and various art-related topics. Writings by others include a transcript of the memorial service for Gandy Brodie, a typescript about Emil Ganso, and miscellaneous artists' resumés and typescripts on various art-related topics.

Box 9, Folder 55-56	Address Book, undated
Box 9, Folder 57	Address Book, 1969
Box 10, Folder 1-12	Business Card File, undated
Box 10, Folder 13	Miscellaneous Address Lists, undated
Box 10, Folder 14	Miscellaneous Notes, undated
Box 10, Folder 15-24	Writings by Bocour, 1966-1992, undated
Box 10, Folder 25-34	Writings by Others, 1960-1993, undated

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Series 7: Interview Transcripts, 1970s-1980s

5 Folders (Box 10)

Scope and Contents: Four interview transcripts describe Bocour's early life and career. The interview with Abraham Joshua Heschel was conducted under the auspices of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America and in it Dr. Heschel discusses his religious beliefs and his publications.

Box 10, Folder 35 Bocour Interviewed by Christopher Busa, undated

Box 10, Folder 36 Interview with Bocour, 1973

Box 10, Folder 37 "A Conversation with Dr. Abraham Joshua Heschel", 1973

Box 10, Folder 38 "Lee Solomon Talking to Ruth Bocour", 1974

Box 10, Folder 39 "Conversation with Leonard Bocour", 1988

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Series 8: Printed Material, 1933-1993, undated

1.8 Linear feet (Box 10-13)

Scope and Contents: Printed material consists primarily of clippings that reflect Bocour's enduring interest in art, artists, and art media. An exhibition catalog for Jacob Lawrence is autographed by the artist.

Box 10, Folder 40-57	Clippings, 1949-1974, undated
Box 11, Folder 1-29	Clippings, 1975-1993
Box 11, Folder 30	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs for the Bocour Collection, 1962-1978, undated
Box 11, Folder 31-38	Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs for Miscellaneous Artists, 1933-1992, undated
Box 11, Folder 39	Press Releases, 1972-1981
Box 11, Folder 40-42	Programs, 1950-1976
Box 12, Folder 1	Booklets "Let's Draw" and "Let's Paint" by Bocour, 1977
Box 12, Folder 2	Booklet "Start" by Jay Folb, undated
Box 12, Folder 3	Miscellaneous School Brochures, 1947-1972, undated
Box 12, Folder 4-5	Brochures for American Federation of Arts, 1965-1973
Box 12, Folder 6	Century Association Yearbook, 1984
Box 12, Folder 7	Board of Visitors Directory, Boston University, 1977
Box 12, Folder 8	NAMTA Membership Directory, 1983
Box 12, Folder 9	Miscellaneous Printed Material, 1962-1991, undated
Box 13, Folder 13	Oversized Clipping, 1967

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