



# Smithsonian

*Archives of American Art*

## A Finding Aid to the Byron Browne papers, 1920-1979, in the Archives of American Art

Allessandra Liberati

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2023 June 21

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## Collection Overview

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| <b>Repository:</b> | Archives of American Art  |
| <b>Title:</b>      | Byron Browne papers   |
| <b>Date:</b>       | 1920-1979   |
| <b>Identifier:</b> | AAA.browbyro  |
| <b>Creator:</b>    | Browne, Byron, 1907-1961  |
| <b>Extent:</b>     | 2.1 Linear feet   |
| <b>Language:</b>   | English .   |
| <b>Summary:</b>    | The Byron Browne papers measure 2.1 linear feet and date from 1920-1979 and document the life and work of Byron Browne through biographical materials, correspondence, personal business records, printed materials, photographic materials, and artwork. |

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Papers were lent for microfilming in 1963 and 1978 by Rosalind Bengelsdorf Browne.

### Separated Materials

The Archives of American Art also holds microfilm of material lent for microfilming (reels 97 and NBB 1-NBB 2) including correspondence, clippings, receipts, contracts, sketches and descriptions related to mural commissions. Loaned materials were returned to the donor and are not described in the collection container inventory.

### Related Materials

Also found in the Archives of American Art is an oral history interview with Rosalind Bengelsdorf conducted by Irving Sandler in 1968 and the Rosalind Bengelsdorf Browne papers.

### Available Formats

Material lent for microfilming is available on 35mm microfilm reels 97 and NBB 1-NBB 2 at Archives of American Art offices and through interlibrary loan.

### Processing Information

This collection was processed, and a finding aid prepared, by Alessandra Liberati in 2023.

### Preferred Citation

Byron Browne papers, circa 1920-1979. 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.

## Conditions Governing Use

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## Biographical / Historical

Byron Browne (1907-1961) was born in Yonkers, New York on June 26, 1907, as George Byron Browne and was a painter, sculptor, and educator in New York City. He helped found the American Abstract Artists, an organization centered in New York that was devoted to exhibiting abstract art, with his wife Rosalind Bengelsdorf and Balcomb Greene in 1935. Browne specialized in still life in the Synthetic Cubism style and was influenced by his friends John Graham, Arshile Gorky, and Willem de Kooning. By the 1950s Browne migrated to creating more romantic imagery. Browne started his early career as an academic artist and won numerous awards at the National Academy including the Third Hallgarten Prize for still-life composition. His career consisted of creating murals under the Works Progress Administration for the Chronic Disease Hospital and the 1939 New York World's Fair. He also taught painting at the Art Students League of New York from 1948 to 1959 and went on to then teach at New York University. A survivor of the Great Depression, Browne would continue to struggle to sell art beyond the 1930s, when his most notable work was created. Browne's work is represented at over eighty permanent art museum collections. Browne died on December 25, 1961, in New York City at age 54.

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## Scope and Contents

The Byron Browne papers measure 2.1 linear feet and date from 1920-1979. Biographical materials include documents regarding tributes to Browne after his death and his career, a self-portrait, and film with recorded audio. Correspondence is with friends, artists, and family members and consists mainly of holiday and sympathy cards addressed to Rosalind, the majority dating after Browne's death. Correspondence regarding art donations by Rosalind and other professional activities as well as documents regarding Browne's time spent teaching for the Art Students League of New York and New York University are included. Other financial documents relating to his art expenses and newspaper and magazine clippings are present. Various exhibition announcements are present, as are photographs of both Browne and his artwork.

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## Arrangement

This collection is arranged in 6 series:

- Series 1: Biographical Materials, Biographical Materials, 1960-1973 (0.4 Linear feet: Box 1, OV 4, FC03, FC04)
- Series 2: Correspondence, 1952-1979 (0.7 Linear feet: Box 1)
- Series 3: Personal Business Records, 1930-1977 (0.3 Linear feet: Box 1)
- Series 4: Printed Materials, 1920-1979 (0.3 Linear feet: Box 2, OV 6)
- Series 5: Photographic Materials, 1920-1979 (0.2 Linear feet: Boxes 2-3)
- Series 6: Artwork, 1930-1969 (0.2 Linear feet: Box 3, OV 5)

## Names and Subject Terms

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

### Subjects:

Art, Abstract  
Cubism

### Types of Materials:

Interviews  
Motion pictures  
Sound recordings

### Names:

Bengelsdorf, Rosalind, 1916-1979  
United States. Works Progress Administration

### Occupations:

Educators -- New York (State) -- New York  
Painters -- New York (State) -- New York  
Sculptors -- New York (State) -- New York

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Biographical Materials, 1960-1973

*.4 Linear feet*

Scope and Contents: Biographical materials includes a Resume/CV, tributes to Browne after his death, calendar sheets from the month of Browne's death, and two motion picture recordings containing audio.

Box 1, Folder 1          Resume/CV, circa 1963

Box 1, Folder 2          Tributes to Byron Browne, circa 1961-1962

Oversize 4              Calendar Sheets (Dec. 1961-Feb.1962 Months Surrounding Browne's Death), circa 1962

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## Series 2: Correspondence, 1952-1979

### .7 Linear feet

Scope and Contents: Correspondence includes holiday and sympathy cards addressed to Rosalind, a letter from April Paul an art student and former subject of one of Browne's paintings, get well soon and birthday cards addressed to Rosalind, and general correspondence.

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| Box 1, Folder 3-5   | General Correspondence, circa 1961-1976             |
| Box 1, Folder 6     | April Paul, Art Student, circa 1976                 |
| Box 1, Folder 7     | Birthday Cards, circa 1970s                         |
| Box 1, Folder 8     | Get Well Soon Cards, circa 1971                     |
| Box 1, Folder 9     | Handmade Cards, circa 1962-1975                     |
| Box 1, Folder 10-13 | Holiday Cards, A-W, circa 1958-1972                 |
| Box 1, Folder 14    | Holiday Cards, Miscellaneous, circa 1961-1972       |
| Box 1, Folder 15    | Letters from Artist Lottery Fundraiser , circa 1952 |
| Box 1, Folder 16    | Letters to Byron Browne, circa 1957-1961            |
| Box 1, Folder 17-19 | Sympathy Cards, A-Y, circa 1961-1962                |
| Box 1, Folder 20    | Sympathy Cards, Miscellaneous, circa 1960s          |
| Box 1, Folder 21    | Weintraub Cancer Fund, circa 1959                   |

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## Series 3: Personal Business Records, 1930-1977

### .3 Linear feet

Scope and Contents: Personal business records includes documents regarding Browne's time as a teacher for the Art Students League of New York and New York University, membership cards and letters from various organizations, advertisement receipts for exhibitions, documents for professional expenses, and other business related documents.

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| Box 1, Folder 22 | Teaching Appointments and Contracts , circa 1952-1961  |
| Box 1, Folder 23 | Documentation Regarding Dispute with Kootz Gallery Over Artwork Sales, circa 1950-1977<br>Includes two sound cassettes titled: Rosalind Bengelsdorf Browne's Monologue Regarding Kootz's Treatment of Byron Browne, excerpted from original 1968 oral history recording. |
| Box 1, Folder 24 | Membership Cards and Letters, circa 1938-1963  |
| Box 1, Folder 25 | Exhibition Advertisement Receipts , circa 1956-1961  |
| Box 1, Folder 26 | Professional Expenses, circa 1953-1967   |
| Box 1, Folder 27 | Miscellaneous Business Documents, circa 1948-1965  |

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## Series 4: Printed Materials, 1920-1979

### .3 Linear feet

Scope and Contents: Printed Materials includes a booklet published including Rosalind Bengelsdorf as one of seven notable American women in the Depression Decade, surveys from the Whitney Museum of American Art, various art bulletins, a pamphlet for the American Geometric Abstraction of the 1930s, various floral tribute cards, newspaper clippings and articles, source materials, and exhibition catalogs and announcements.

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| Box 2, Folder 1   | Exhibition Catalogs and Announcements, circa 1943-1977                                |
| Box 2, Folder 2   | Seven American Women: The Depression Decade, circa 1976                               |
| Box 2, Folder 3   | Whitney Museum of American Art, Surveys, circa 1920-1969                              |
| Box 2, Folder 4   | Art Bulletins, circa 1939-1978  |
| Box 2, Folder 5   | American Geometric Abstraction of the 1930s, circa 1972                               |
| Box 2, Folder 6   | Floral Tribute Cards, circa 1961-1962   |
| Box 2, Folder 7   | Newspaper Clippings and Articles, circa 1928-1978                                     |
| Box 2, Folder 8-9 | Source Material, circa 1920s-1960s  |
| Oversize 6        | Miscellaneous Printed Materials (American League Against War and Facism) , circa 1938 |

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## Series 5: Photographic Materials, 1920-1979

### *.2 Linear feet*

Scope and Contents: Photographic materials consist of photographs of Browne and photographs, slides, and negatives of his artwork.

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| Box 2, Folder 10 | Photographs of Byron Browne, circa 1926-1960         |
| Box 2, Folder 11 | Photographs of Artwork, circa 1930s-1960s            |
| Box 3, Folder 1  | Photographs of Artwork, Negatives, circa 1930s-1960s |
| Box 3, Folder 2  | Photographs of Artwork, Slides, circa 1930s-1960s    |

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## Series 6: Artwork, 1930-1969

*.2 Linear feet*

Scope and Contents: Artwork consists of poster collages and various sketches and collages.

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| Box 3, Folder 3 | Sketches and Collages, circa 1960s                     |
| Box 3, Folder 4 | Self Portrait of Browne, circa 1945                    |
| Oversize 5      | Teaching Charts for Art Instruction, circa 1930s-1960s |

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