



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Irena Brynner Papers, 1914-2003, in the Archives of American Art

Ricky Gomez

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Irena Brynner papers
Date:	1914-2003
Identifier:	AAA.bryniren
Creator:	Brynner, Irena
Extent:	14.2 Linear feet
Language:	The collection is in English, French, Russian, and German.
Summary:	The papers of jeweler Irena Brynner measure 14.2 linear feet and date from circa 1914 to 2003. The papers document Brynner's career as a jeweler in California and New York through biographical material including sound recordings of her diary; correspondence with family, friends, and art organizations; diaries, notebooks, and other writings; exhibition announcements, news clippings, and other printed material; photographs and slides; artwork including eight sketchbooks; and eleven scrapbooks.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The Irena Brynner papers were donated to the Archives of American Art by Ragnar D. Ness, executor of the Irena Brynner Estate, in 2004.

Related Materials

Also found in the Archives of American Art is an oral history interview with Irena Brynner conducted by Arline M. Fisch, 2001 April 26-27.

Processing Information

The collection was processed and a finding aid prepared by Ricky Gomez in 2019.

Preferred Citation

Irena Brynner papers, circa 1914-2003. 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 audiovisual recordings in this collection must use access copies. Contact References Services for more information.

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Biographical / Historical

Irena Brynner (1917-2003) was jeweler, sculptor, and opera singer who worked primarily in New York City. Brynner was born in Vladivostok, Russia. Her father was a member of the Swiss diplomatic corp, and she spent her youth living in China, Japan, and France. Brynner immigrated to the United States prior to World War II where she began her career as jeweler. Brynner was the cousin of actor, Yul Brynner, and worked in the San Francisco Bay area through the 1950s before moving to New York City. Brynner held exhibitions across the United States, throughout Europe, and in Japan.

Scope and Contents

The papers of jeweler Irena Brynner measure 14.2 linear feet and date from circa 1914 to 2003. The papers document Brynner's career as a jeweler in California and New York through biographical material including sound recordings of her diary; correspondence with family, friends, and art organizations; diaries, notebooks, and other writings; exhibition announcements, news clippings, and other printed material; photographs and slides; artwork including eight sketchbooks; and eleven scrapbooks.

Biographical material includes family records and certificates, consular papers, and address books. Also included are 30 sound cassettes primarily of Brynner reading her diary in Russian and a radio interview with Brynner.

Correspondence is with family, friends, artists and art organizations and galleries. Much of the correspondence is in English, French and Russian. Included are correspondence between Brynner and her cousin, actor Yul Brynner.

Writings primarily consist of diaries and notebooks, lectures, and pieces from writing classes Brynner attended in the 1990s.

Personal business records consist primarily of inventories and price lists of the various jewelry pieces Brynner created. There are also shipping receipts and loan agreements with various art organizations.

Printed materials consist primarily of exhibition announcements and press releases. There are also news clippings and magazine articles related to Brynner's jewelry.

Artwork primarily consists of sketches and sketchbooks of jewelry designs and sculpture designs.

Scrapbooks include various materials such as newspaper clippings, photographs, and exhibition announcements.

Photographic material includes personal photographs, photographs of jewelry, negatives of both personal photographs and photographs of jewelry, and slides of jewelry.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 8 series

- Series 1: Biographical Material, circa 1930-2002 (1.6 linear feet; Boxes 1-2, 14-15)
- Series 2: Correspondence, circa 1930-2003 (2.3 linear feet; Boxes 2-4)
- Series 3: Writings, circa 1930-2003 (0.8 linear feet; Boxes 4-5)
- Series 4: Personal Business Records, 1942-2003 (1.0 linear feet; Boxes 5-6)
- Series 5: Printed Material, 1932-2000 (0.9 linear feet; Boxes 6, 16, OV 18)

- Series 6: Artwork, circa 1949-1998 (1.0 linear feet; Boxes 6-7, 17)
- Series 7: Scrapbooks, 1948-1997 (1.4 linear feet; Boxes 7-8, 16)
- Series 8: Photographs, circa 1914-2002 (5.2 linear feet; Boxes 8-13, 17)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Women artists
Women sculptors

Types of Materials:

Diaries
Sketchbooks
Sound recordings

Occupations:

Jewelers -- New York (State) -- New York
Opera singers -- New York (State) -- New York
Sculptors -- New York (State) -- New York

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Material, circa 1930-2002

1.6 Linear feet (Boxes 1-2, 14-15)

Scope and Contents: Biographical material includes family records and certificates, consular papers, address books, membership and identification documents, passports and travel documents, and resumes. Also included are 30 sound cassettes primarily of Brynner reading her diary in Russian and a radio interview with Brynner.

Box 1, Folder 1	Addresses, circa 1972
Box 1, Folder 2-13	Address Book, circa 1956-2002
Box 1, Folder 14-16	Business Cards, circa 1970-2002
Box 2, Folder 1	Certificates, 1952-1999
Box 2, Folder 2	Consular Papers, 1931-1947
Box 2, Folder 3-4	Guestbook, 1975-1999
Box 2, Folder 5	Identification and Membership Cards, 1985, 1988
Box 2, Folder 6	Passports and Travel Documents, 1987-2000
Box 2, Folder 7-8	Resume, 1978-1998
Box 2, Folder 9	Russian Notes and Forms, 1993-2002 Language: Russian.
Box 2, Folder 10	Miscellaneous, circa 1930- 2002
Box 14, Item 1-17	Oral Diary, 1975-1976 17 Sound cassettes Language: Russian.
Box 15, Item 1-10	Oral Diary, 1975-1976 10 Sound cassettes Language: Russian.
Box 15, Item 11-12	Radio Interview, 1987 2 Sound cassettes
Box 15, Item 13	Lesson with Raymond, undated 1 Sound cassette

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Series 2: Correspondence, 1940-2003

2.3 Linear feet (Boxes 2-4)

Scope and Contents: Correspondence is with family, friends, artists, art organizations, and galleries. Much of the correspondence is in English, French German, and Russian. Included are correspondence between Brynner and her cousin, actor Yul Brynner.

Arrangement: The series is arranged alphabetically by person or organization. Persons and organizations with fewer than four documents are filed in miscellaneous for that specific letter of the alphabet. The series is also arranged with the English, French, and German correspondence grouped together; Russian correspondence is separated and located at the end of the series.

Box 2, Folder 11	Richard Adams, 1971-1973
Box 2, Folder 12	Arthur P Jacobs Co., 1955
Box 2, Folder 13	American Craft Council, 1984-1999
Box 2, Folder 14	N. W. Ayer and Son, Inc., 1971-1972
Box 2, Folder 15	A, Miscellaneous, 1940-1995
Box 2, Folder 16	Sister Rose Benigna, 1946-1983
Box 2, Folder 17	Birthday Cards, 2002
Box 2, Folder 18	Vera Brynner, 1953-1956
Box 2, Folder 19	Yul Brynner, 1947-1981
Box 2, Folder 20-21	B, Miscellaneous, 1959-2002
Box 2, Folder 22	Zlatarne Ceje, 1982-1983
Box 2, Folder 23	C, Miscellaneous, 1963-2002
Box 2, Folder 24	Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, 1963-1964
Box 2, Folder 25	Cecil B. DeMille, 1955-1959
Box 2, Folder 26	Raymond and Nicole Didisheim, Galerier Florimont, 1984-1987
Box 2, Folder 27	The Diplomat, 1959
Box 2, Folder 28	D, Miscellaneous, 1957-2002
Box 2, Folder 29	The Element, 1980-1981
Box 2, Folder 30	E, Miscellaneous, 1958-2002

Box 2, Folder 31	Ruth and Max Frohlich, 1982-1998
Box 2, Folder 32	Mary Fukui, 1975-2002
Box 2, Folder 33	F, Miscellaneous, 1957-2001
Box 2, Folder 34	Galerie Atrium, 1981-1984
Box 2, Folder 35	Thomas Gentile, circa 1961
Box 2, Folder 36	Gold-Silber-Uhren-Schmuck, 1963-1966
Box 2, Folder 37	G, Miscellaneous, 1942-1998
Box 2, Folder 38	Legal, Hand-in-Hand Galleries, Ltd., 1985-1987
Box 2, Folder 39	Harpers Bazaar, 1960-1961
Box 2, Folder 40	Handwerkskammer Fur Oberbayern, 1963-1968
Box 2, Folder 41	Peter Hayes, 2002
Box 2, Folder 42	Charlotte Hennig, 1976
Box 2, Folder 43	Hessisches Landesmuseum, 1964-1965
Box 2, Folder 44	H, Miscellaneous, 1955-1992
Box 2, Folder 45	I, Miscellaneous, 1963-1984
Box 2, Folder 46	J, Miscellaneous, 1954-1998
Box 3, Folder 1	Konradin-Verlag Robert Kohlhammer, 1963-1968
Box 3, Folder 2	K, Miscellaneous, 1954-1997
Box 3, Folder 3	Lee Nordness Galleries, 1968-1972
Box 3, Folder 4	Louise, 1980-1998
Box 3, Folder 5	L, Miscellaneous, 1958-2002
Box 3, Folder 6	Maryknoll, 1949-1986
Box 3, Folder 7	Masa, 1965-1992
Box 3, Folder 8	Sheila Maxwell, 1981-1988

Box 3, Folder 9	Metalsmith, 1982-1987
Box 3, Folder 10	Minerals Engineering S.A., 1974
Box 3, Folder 11	Nicole and Raymond Mirande, 1977-2001
Box 3, Folder 12	Museum Bellerive, 1971-1972
Box 3, Folder 13-14	M, Miscellaneous, 1954-2002
Box 3, Folder 15	The Nihon Keizai Shimbun, 1969-1976
Box 3, Folder 16	Jadis Norman, circa 1992
Box 3, Folder 17	N, Miscellaneous, 1952-2001
Box 3, Folder 18	Haruko Ohnishi, 1975-1977
Box 3, Folder 19	Legal, Orsid Realty Company, 1998
Box 3, Folder 20	O, Miscellaneous, circa 1972
Box 3, Folder 21	B. Pejovic, 1974
Box 3, Folder 22	Portland State College, 1965
Box 3, Folder 23	Raymond and Anne Marie Probst, 1982
Box 3, Folder 24	P, Miscellaneous, 1947-2002
Box 3, Folder 25	Renwick Gallery, 1978-1997
Box 3, Folder 26-27	R, Miscellaneous, 1944-2002
Box 3, Folder 28	Schmuckmuseum Pforzheim, 1965-1967
Box 3, Folder 29	Legal, Kyriena Siloti, 1989
Box 3, Folder 30	Smith-Kettlewell institute of Visual Sciences, 1981-1983
Box 3, Folder 31	Society of North American Goldsmiths, 1989
Box 3, Folder 32	Jan Spalding, circa 1981
Box 3, Folder 33-34	Ralph Stackpole, 1949-1971
Box 3, Folder 35	John Stackpole, 1949-1953

Box 3, Folder 36	Stadtverwaltung, Pforzeim, 1965-1966
Box 3, Folder 37	Willy Steiger, 1942-1946
Box 3, Folder 38	Trademark Registration, Swiss Customs Administration, 1972-1973
Box 3, Folder 39-40	S, Miscellaneous, 1956-2003
Box 3, Folder 41	Ralph Turner, circa 1974
Box 3, Folder 42	T, Miscellaneous, 1956-2003
Box 3, Folder 43	Union of Czechoslovak Artists, 1967-1968
Box 3, Folder 44	Oppi Untracht, 1957-1990
Box 3, Folder 45	U, Miscellaneous, 1964-2001
Box 3, Folder 46	Van Arsdale Associates, inc., 1978-1981
Box 3, Folder 47	V, Miscellaneous, 1963-2002
Box 3, Folder 48	Walker Art Center, 1955-1959
Box 3, Folder 49	Paul Walter, circa 1981
Box 3, Folder 50	W, Miscellaneous, 1959-1999
Box 3, Folder 51	Legal, YMCA, 1992-1995
Box 3, Folder 52	Y, Miscellaneous, circa 1961
Box 3, Folder 53-55	Miscellaneous, 1936-1999
Box 3, Folder 56-64	Russian, 1944-2002
Box 4, Folder 1-12	Russian, 1942-2001

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Series 3: Writings, circa 1930-2003

0.8 Linear feet (Boxes 4-5)

Scope and Contents: Writings primarily consist of diaries and notebooks, lectures, music and concert materials, and pieces from writing classes Brynner attended in the 1990s.

Box 4, Folder 13	Concert Materials by Brynner and Others, circa 1990
Box 4, Folder 14	Diary, circa 1992
Box 4, Folder 15	French Diary, circa 1938
Box 4, Folder 16	Russian Diary, circa 1936
Box 4, Folder 17	Lectures, circa 1962
Box 4, Folder 18	"Life Story" Night Writing Class Pieces, 1992-1993
Box 4, Folder 19	Music, circa 1950-2002
Box 4, Folder 20	Notes and Fragments, circa 1985
Box 4, Folder 21-26	Notebooks, circa 1930-2003
Box 4, Folder 27	Perspectrive Lineaire, undated Language: French.
Box 4, Folder 28	Recipes, circa 1961
Box 5, Folder 1-2	Russian Papers, circa 1943 Language: Russian.
Box 5, Folder 3-4	Miscellaneous, circa 1948

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Series 4: Personal Business Records, 1942-2003

1 Linear foot (Boxes 5-6)

Scope and Contents: Series consists primarily of inventories and price lists of the various jewelry pieces Brynner created. There are also shipping receipts and loan agreements with various art organizations.

Box 5, Folder 5	Account Book, 1959-1964
Box 5, Folder 6	Aaron Faber Gallery, 1987-1989
Box 5, Folder 7	Statements, Carrera Casting Corp., 1997-2001
Box 5, Folder 8	Concert Agreements, 1999-2000
Box 5, Folder 9	Deposit Books, American Trust Company, 1946-1961
Box 5, Folder 10	Fifty-50, 1984
Box 5, Folder 11-12	Goldsmith's Hall, 1971-1976
Box 5, Folder 13-14	Henes Products Corp., 1983-1990
Box 5, Folder 15	Hudson River Museum, 1986
Box 5, Folder 16	Inventory, undated
Box 5, Folder 17	Invoice Books, 1979-2001
Box 5, Folder 18	Invoices, 1944-2001
Box 5, Folder 19	Kipp Gallery, 1986-1987
Box 5, Folder 20	Ledger Book, 1950-1951
Box 5, Folder 21-23	Litton Educational Publishing, Inc., Van Norstrand Reinhold Co., 1968-1978
Box 5, Folder 24	Mobilia Gallery, 1996-2003
Box 5, Folder 25	Shipping Invoices, Museum of Contemporary Craft, 1962-1968
Box 5, Folder 26	Museum of Modern Art, 1964-1970
Box 5, Folder 27	New York Apartment, 1983-1986
Box 5, Folder 28-36	Price Lists, circa 1964-1997
Box 5, Folder 37	Registered Mail Receipts, 1979-2002

Box 5, Folder 38	Sales Records, circa 1974
Box 6, Folder 1	Santa Fe East, 1987-1988
Box 6, Folder 2	Customs and Shipping Invoices, Schenker's International Forwarders, Inc., 1970-1971
Box 6, Folder 3	Smithsonian Institution, 1979-1993
Box 6, Folder 4	Statements, 1942
Box 6, Folder 5	Miscellaneous, 1956-1999

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Series 5: Printed Material, circa 1932-2000

0.9 Linear feet (Boxes 6, 16, OV 18)

Scope and Contents: Printed materials consist primarily of exhibition announcements and press releases. There are also news clippings and magazine articles related to Brynner's jewelry. There are also news clippings related to Yul Brynner. Some exhibition announcements are located in oversized box 16.

Box 6, Folder 6	Articles, 1965-1997
Box 6, Folder 7	Aurum, 1984
Box 6, Folder 8-10	Concert Programs, 1985-2000
Box 6, Folder 11	Diamond International, 1983-1990
Box 6, Folder 12-20	Exhibition Announcements, 1955-2000
Box 16, Folder 1	Exhibition Announcements, 1963-1994
Box 6, Folder 21	Magazine and Newsletter Articles, circa 1956-1990
Box 6, Folder 22	News Clippings, English, circa 1951-1963
Box 6, Folder 23	News Clippings, French, 1962, 1985
Box 6, Folder 24-25	News Clippings, Russian, 1933-2000
Box 6, Folder 26	News Clippings, Yul Brynner, circa 1966
Box 6, Folder 27	Russian, circa 1932
Box 16, Folder 2	Studio Sign and Information, undated
Box 6, Folder 28	Miscellaneous, circa 1937
Oversize 18	Miscellaneous, 1957, 1981

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Series 6: Artwork, circa 1949-1998

1 Linear foot (Boxes 6-7, 17)

Scope and Contents: Artwork primarily consists of sketches and sketchbooks of jewelry designs and sculpture designs.

Box 6, Folder 29	Greeting Cards, circa 1975
Box 6, Folder 30	Illustrations by Helena Winkelman, 1998
Box 6, Folder 31-35	Sketches, undated
Box 7, Folder 1-5	Sketches, undated
Box 17, Folder 1-2	Sketches, circa 1971
Box 17, Folder 3	Sketch of Brynner by Merry Renk, 1988
Box 7, Folder 6-13	Sketchbooks, undated
Box 17, Folder 4	Sketchbook, circa 1949-1964

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Series 7: Scrapbooks, 1948-1997

1.4 Linear feet (Boxes 7-8, 16)

Scope and Contents: Scrapbooks include various materials such as newspaper clippings, photographs, and exhibition announcements.

Box 7, Folder 14-15	Scrapbook 1, 1985-1992
Box 7, Folder 16	Scrapbook 2, 1948-1959
Box 7, Folder 17-18	Scrapbook 3, 1960-1972
Box 8, Folder 1-2	Scrapbook 4, 1973-1980
Box 8, Folder 3	Scrapbook 5, 1980-1984
Box 8, Folder 4	Scrapbook 6, 1950-1982
Box 8, Folder 5	Scrapbook 7, 1959-1997
Box 8, Folder 6-7	Scrapbook 8, 1949-1982
Box 8, Folder 8	Scrapbook 9, 1960-1985
Box 8, Folder 9-11	Scrapbook 10, circa 1959
Box 16, Folder 3	Scrapbook 11, 1950-1963

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Series 8: Photographs, circa 1914-2002

5.2 Linear feet (Boxes 8-13, 17)

Scope and Contents: Photographic material includes personal photographs, photographs of jewelry, negatives of both personal photographs and photographs of jewelry, and slides of jewelry. Personal photographs include photographs of family members during her childhood, photographs with Yul Brynner, and photographs of family and friends.

Arrangement: Brynner's personal photographs are followed by photographs of jewelry, negatives, and slides. Slides in Box 13 were sorted and stored in individual slide boxes within the larger box.

Box 8, Folder 12	Irena Brynner, circa 1940-1980
Box 8, Folder 13-19	Irena Brynner at Work, circa 1950-1980
Box 17, Folder 5	Irena Brynner at Work, 1967
Box 8, Folder 20-23	Personal Photographs, circa 1914-2002
Box 9, Folder 1-12	Personal Photographs, circa 1914-2002
Box 9, Folder 13	Museum Class, 1969
Box 9, Folder 14	Vera Brynner, circa 1950-1960
Box 9, Folder 15	Yul Brynner, circa 1955-1985
Box 17, Folder 6	Sammy Davis Jr., 1967
Box 9, Folder 16	Brynner Home in Sakaki, Japan, circa 1937
Box 9, Folder 17	Brynner Home in Dairen, China, circa 1940
Box 9, Folder 18	Personal Photograph Albums, 1967-2000
Box 9, Folder 19-20	Concerts, 1990-2002
Box 10, Folder 1	Photograph Album, Concerts, 1991
Box 10, Folder 2	Mstislav Rostropovich, circa 1969
Box 10, Folder 3-4	Gallery Exhibition, circa 1960-1981
Box 10, Folder 5-6	Pieces for Church, 1960-1981
Box 10, Folder 7	Paintings, circa 1940-1990
Box 10, Folder 8-12	Sculpture, circa 1955-2000

Box 10, Folder 13	Photograph Album, Jewelry, circa 1980-1990
Box 10, Folder 14-15	Jewelry, Bracelets, circa 1950-2000
Box 10, Folder 16-18	Jewelry, Earrings, circa 1950-2000
Box 10, Folder 19-23	Jewelry, Necklaces, circa 1950-2000
Box 11, Folder 1-4	Jewelry, Pins and Cufflinks, circa 1950-2000
Box 11, Folder 5-9	Jewelry, Rings, circa 1950-2000
Box 11, Folder 10	Jewelry, Sculpture, circa 1950-2000
Box 11, Folder 11-16	Jewelry, Miscellaneous, circa 1950-2000
Box 17, Folder 7	Jewelry, Miscellaneous, 1967
Box 11, Folder 17	Copies of Jewelry Sent for Publishing, circa 1987
Box 11, Folder 18	Negatives of Personal Photographs, undated
Box 11, Folder 19	Negatives of Yul Brynner Modeling Jewelry, undated
Box 11, Folder 20-28	Negatives of Jewelry, undated
Box 11, Folder 29	Personal Slides, 1967-1980
Box 12, Folder 1	Personal Slides, 1967-1980
Box 12, Folder 2-12	Slides of Jewelry, circa 1950-2000
Box 12, Folder 13-15	Miscellaneous Slides, 1960-2002
Box 13, Folder 1-2	Slides, Rings, 1950-1979
Box 13, Folder 3	Slides, Rings, Bracelets, Hairpieces, Earrings, 1950-1979
Box 13, Folder 4	Slides, Earrings Necklaces, Earrings, Rings, Pins, 1950-1992
Box 13, Folder 5	Slides, Pins, Sculptures, Necklaces, 1950-1979
Box 13, Folder 6	Slides, Necklaces, 1950-1979

Box 13, Folder 7	Slides, Necklaces, Russian Jewelry not by Brynner, Miscellaneous Jewelry and Sculptures, (bulk circa 1970)
Box 13, Folder 8-11	Slides, Miscellaneous Jewelry and Sculptures, undated
Box 13, Folder 12	Slides, Miscellaneous Jewelry and Sculpture, "Hands at Work," "Louise's Slides", undated
Box 13, Folder 13	Slides, "Louise's Slides," Historical Museum Stockholm, Flowers, Tall Sails, Miscellaneous of Brynner with Family and Friends, undated

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