



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Ruth Gikow papers, 1933-1982, in the Archives of American Art

Sabine Lipten

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Ruth Gikow papers
Date:	1933-1982
Identifier:	AAA.gikoruth
Creator:	Gikow, Ruth, 1915-1982
Extent:	2 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	The Ruth Gikow papers measure 2 linear feet and date from 1933-1982. The papers document Gikow's life and career as a figurative painter and illustrator through biographical material; personal and professional correspondence with family, galleries, universities, and colleagues; autobiographical essays and writings on art broadly, lists of artwork and other writings; personal business files such as sale records and price lists; exhibition catalogs, news clippings, and other printed material; and photographs of Gikow and her artwork.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Material on D230 was lent by Gikow in 1965. Gikow and her husband Jack Levine donated the remainder in 1978 and 1983, which was microfilmed in 1994 with grants from the Henry and Lucy Moses Fund, the Lucius N. Littauer Foundation, the Samuel Bronfman Foundation, and the Louis and Anne Abrons Foundation. After microfilming, an addition to the collection was donated by Levine in May 1999. Papers of Jack Levine donated at the same time have been cataloged separately.

Available Formats

Portions of the collection and material lent for microfilming are available on 35mm microfilm reels D230 (frames 692-1388), and reels 4874-4875 at the Archives of American Art offices and through interlibrary loan. Researchers should note that the arrangement of material described in the container inventory does not reflect the arrangement of the collection on microfilm.

Processing Information

The collection was processed, and a finding aid prepared by Sabine Lipten in 2023.

Preferred Citation

Ruth Gikow papers, 1933-1982. 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 References Services for more information.

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Biographical / Historical

Ruth Gikow (1915-1932) was a New York based painter, illustrator, and serigrapher. Gikow was born in Ukraine, emigrating to New York City with her parents in 1920. She studied under John Steuart Curry at the Cooper Union Art School from 1932-1935. She also studied with Louis Ross, Louis Schanker and Raphael Soyer. In 1935 Gikow became a Works Progress Administration artist, and in 1939 Gikow was awarded a commission to paint a mural titled *Children's Indoor and Outdoor Activities* for the children's wing of Bronx Hospital. Her other mural work included a live demonstration at the 1943 New York City World's Fair, and commercial murals for department stores across the city. Her career also involved illustrating books such as an edition of *Crime and Punishment* and *History of the Jews in America* by Deborah Pessin; and co-founding the American Serigraph Society in which she developed her technique with silk screen printing. In 1946 Gikow married painter Jack Levine.

Her paintings are in the collection of several art museums including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Whitney, the Museum of Modern Art, and the National Institute of Arts and Letters in New York, the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C., the Philadelphia Museum of Art, as well as collections at Brandeis University, and New York University.

Scope and Contents

The Ruth Gikow papers measure 2 linear feet and date from 1933-1982. The papers document Gikow's life and career as a figurative painter and illustrator through biographical material, correspondence, writings, personal business files, printed material and photographic material. Biographical material contains resumes, Gikow's passports, a transcript from a *Jewish Home Show* radio interview and an audio interview with Gikow done by Karl E. Fortess. Correspondence is between Gikow and her family, critics and galleries, and from colleagues including Karl Fortess and Lee Nordness, and one letter each from Werner Drewes, Jo Hopper, and Raphael Soyer. Writings consist of essays by Gikow on her life and career and on art and artists more broadly. Other writings include an annotated appointment calendar, lists of her artwork and miscellaneous notes.

Personal business records document Gikow's career through sale records and price lists, as well as receipts and correspondence related to the production of a catalog of her work. Also present is an exhibition file documenting an exhibition of Gikow's paintings memorializing the Kent State University shootings. Printed material is comprised of exhibition announcements and catalogs, news and magazine clippings, advertisements and brochures that Gikow illustrated, along with a book Gikow illustrated titled *History of Jews in America*. Of note is a published book on Gikow's work entitled *Gikow* by Matthew Josephson. Photographic material contains photographs of Gikow, her husband Jack Levine, her studio, other artists, including Chaim Gross, Jacob Lawrence, and Raphael Soyer, and her works of art.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as six series.

- Series 1: Biographical Material, 1933-1972 (5 Folders: Box 1)
- Series 2: Correspondence, 1949-1981 (0.5 Linear feet: Box 1)
- Series 3: Writings, circa 1950-1980 (0.2 Linear feet: Box 1)
- Series 4: Personal Business, circa 1954-1980 (5 Folders: Box 1)
- Series 5: Printed Material, circa 1933-1982 (0.6 Linear feet: Box 1-2)
- Series 6: Photographic Material, circa 1939-1975 (0.4 Linear feet: Box 2)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Artists' studios -- Photographs
Jewish artists
Painting, Modern -- 20th century -- New York (State) -- New York
Social realism
Women artists
Women painters
Women printmakers

Types of Materials:

Interviews
Sound recordings

Occupations:

Illustrators -- New York (State) -- New York
Muralists -- New York (State) -- New York
Painters -- New York (State) -- New York
Printmakers -- New York (State) -- New York
Serigraphers -- New York (State) -- New York

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Material, 1933-1972

5 Folders (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Biographical material contains resumes, seven of Gikow's passports, her college yearbook from Cooper Union, a transcript from a *Jewish Home Show* radio interview and an audio recorded interview with Gikow done by Karl E. Fortress. Accompanying the audio tape interview is a letter from Fortress regarding the sending of the tape.

Box 1, Folder 1	Passports, 1947-1972
Box 1, Folder 2	Resumes and Biographical Note, circa 1971
Box 1, Folder 3	Jewish Home Show Interview Transcript, 1970
Box 1, Folder 4	Karl E. Fortress Interview of Gikow, circa 1969 Includes 1 sound tape reel
Box 1, Folder 5	Cooper Union Women's Art School Yearbook, 1933

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Series 2: Correspondence, 1949-1981

0.5 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Correspondence is a mix of personal and professional letters with critics and galleries, universities, colleagues and family including Gikow's daughter Susanna Fisher Levine. Also found in this series is an address book. Correspondence is arranged chronologically.

Box 1, Folder 6	Ruth Gikow Correspondence, 1949-1964
Box 1, Folder 7	Ruth Gikow Correspondence, 1965-1970
Box 1, Folder 8	Ruth Gikow Correspondence, 1970-1973
Box 1, Folder 9	Ruth Gikow Correspondence, 1974-1975
Box 1, Folder 10	Ruth Gikow Correspondence, 1976-1978
Box 1, Folder 11	Ruth Gikow Correspondence, 1979-1981
Box 1, Folder 12	Ruth Gikow Correspondence, circa 1949-1981
Box 1, Folder 13	Address Book, circa 1949-1981

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Series 3: Writings, circa 1950-1980

0.2 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: The writings series contains essays by Gikow on her life as an artist and as an artist's wife and reflections on art and artists more broadly. Other writings include an annotated appointment calander, lists of her artwork and miscellaneous notes.

Box 1, Folder 14	Annotated Appointment Calendar, 1971
Box 1, Folder 15	Writings on Art and Process, circa 1950-1978
Box 1, Folder 16	Autobiographical Creative Essays, circa 1950-1978
Box 1, Folder 17	Autobiographical Creative Essays, Typescripts, circa 1950-1978
Box 1, Folder 18	Cowboys and Oracles Essay, circa 1950s
Box 1, Folder 19	Lists of Artwork, circa 1979
Box 1, Folder 20	Miscellaneous Notes, circa 1963-1980

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Series 4: Personal Business, circa 1954-1980

5 Folders (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Personal business document's Gikow's career through sale records and price lists, as well as receipts and correspondence related to the production of a catalog of her work. Also present is an exhibition file documenting an exhibition of Gikow's paintings memorializing the Kent State University shootings.

Box 1, Folder 21	Kent State Memorial Exhibition, 1971
Box 1, Folder 22	Sales and Consignment Records, circa 1954-1977
Box 1, Folder 23	Price Lists, circa 1961-1980
Box 1, Folder 24	Book Publishing, 1969-1972
Box 1, Folder 25	Miscellaneous Receipts, circa 1968-1976

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Series 5: Printed Material, circa 1933-1982

0.6 Linear feet (Box 1-2)

Scope and Contents: Printed material is comprised of news and magazine clippings, advertisements and brochures that Gikow illustrated, along with a book Gikow illustrated titled *History of Jews in America*; exhibition announcements and catalogs. Of note is a published book on Gikow's work entitled *Gikow* and associated promotional printed material.

Box 1, Folder 26	Clippings, circa 1947-1980
Box 1, Folder 27	Advertisement Illustrations, circa 1950s
Box 1, Folder 28	Cover Illustrated Programs, 1961, 1974
Box 1, Folder 29	Exhibition Announcements, circa 1946-1976
Box 1, Folder 30	Exhibition Announcement, Jacqueline Gikow, 1978
Box 1, Folder 31	Exhibition Catalogs, 1940-1948
Box 2, Folder 1	Exhibition Catalogs, 1949
Box 2, Folder 2	Exhibition Catalogs, 1950
Box 2, Folder 3	Exhibition Catalogs, 1953-1955
Box 2, Folder 4	Exhibition Catalogs, 1960-1964
Box 2, Folder 5	Exhibition Catalogs, 1965-1969
Box 2, Folder 6	Exhibition Catalogs, 1972-1976
Box 2, Folder 7	Exhibition Catalogs, 1978
Box 2, Folder 8	Exhibition Catalogs, 1979
Box 2, Folder 9	Exhibition Catalogs, 1980
Box 2, Folder 10	Exhibition Catalogs, 1981-1982
Box 2, Folder 11	History of the Jews, Book by Deborah Pessin, Illustrated by Gikow, 1957
Box 2, Folder 12	Gikow, Book by Matthew Josephson, 1970
Box 2, Folder 13	Reproductions of Artwork from Gikow Book, 1970
Box 2, Folder 14	Gikow Book Promotion, 1970

Box 2, Folder 15	Reproductions of Sketches, circa 1950-1972
Box 2, Folder 16-17	Miscellaneous Printed Material, circa 1933-1980

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Series 6: Photographic Material, circa 1939-1975

0.4 Linear feet (Box 2)

Scope and Contents: Photographic material contains photographs of Gikow, her husband Jack Levine, her studio, other artists, including Chaim Gross, Jacob Lawrence, and Raphael Soyer, along with works of art.

Box 2, Folder 18	Photographs of Gikow, circa 1950-1975
Box 2, Folder 19	Photographs of Gikow's Studio, circa 1961
Box 2, Folder 20	Photographs of Jack Levine, circa 1950-1975
Box 2, Folder 21	Photographs of Friends, circa 1950-1975
Box 2, Folder 22	Photographs of Gikow's Murals, circa 1939-1945
Box 2, Folder 23	Photographs of Gikow Artwork From Kennedy Gallery Collection, circa 1950-1972
Box 2, Folder 24-31	Photographs of Works of Art, circa 1950-1972

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