



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Guild Art Gallery Records, circa 1933-1937, in the Archives of American Art

Eden Orellove and Stephanie Ashley

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Guild Art Gallery records
Date:	circa 1933-1937
Identifier:	AAA.guilart
Creator:	Guild Art Gallery
Extent:	1 Linear foot
Language:	Collection is in English.
Summary:	The records of New York's Guild Art Gallery measure 1.0 linear feet and date from circa 1933-1937. Records document the operation of the gallery for the duration of its existence from August 1935-1937, through correspondence, including some with artists, exhibition files, business and financial records, printed material, a scrapbook, a sketch by Anna Walinska, and photographs of artwork and the gallery.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Margaret Lefranc, co-founder of the Guild Art Gallery, donated the records to the Archives of American Art in 1981.

Related Materials

Also found among the holdings of the Archives of American Art are the Anna Walinska papers, 1927-2002.

Available Formats

The bulk of the collection was digitized in 2023 and is available on the Archives of American Art website. Materials which have not been digitized include blank pages, blank versos of photographs, and duplicates. In some cases only relevant pages of publications have been digitized.

Processing Information

The collection was processed to a minimal level and a finding aid prepared by Eden Orelove in 2016, with funding provided by the Smithsonian Institution Collections Care and Preservation Fund. The collection was further processed by Stephanie Ashley in 2023 and was digitized in 2023 with funding provided by Rosina Rubin.

Preferred Citation

Guild Art Gallery records, circa 1933-1937. 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.

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Biographical / Historical

Founded by painter Anna Walinska (1906-1997) and painter and illustrator Margaret Lefranc (1907-1998), the Guild Art Gallery opened in August 1935 at 37 West 57th Street in New York. Walinska and Lefranc were known for their promotion of modern art and their gallery was the venue for Arshile Gorky's first solo exhibition in the city. The gallery was also committed to promoting Jewish artists during a time of growing antisemitism at home and abroad.

In 1935 Walinska and Lefranc were quoted in *Art Digest* as stating that their plans for the new gallery were to "exhibit, without charge, the work of contemporary artists, whether known or unknown; to develop, through a receptive audience, a better understanding of the creative expression and the problems of creative expression and the problems of contemporary society; and to illustrate the relationship of painting with the other arts." The gallery's opening exhibition featured work by both Walinska and Lefranc, as well as by Boris Aronson, Don Forbes, Henry Major, Rosa Newman, Philip Reisman, Ben-Shmuel, Ary Stillman, and, notably, Arshile Gorky. Gorky's first solo exhibition in New York was subsequently held at the gallery in December 1935.

Walinska's interest in promoting Jewish artists is evidenced in records of a 1936 letter writing campaign to seek prospective Jewish clients for the work of School of Paris painter Sigmund Menkes and, in particular, his painting *The Torah*. Walinska wrote in her letters "It seems to me in view of the fact that a renewed interest in Jewish culture has been awakened by recent world events, that effort should be made towards a development and conservation of Jewish Art." Jewish artists were represented in three-quarters of the gallery's inaugural exhibition season, and consistently thereafter.

Walinska and Lefranc initially sponsored lectures on modern art to generate income but outgoing 1936 letters indicate the gallery was struggling financially and Walinska and Lefranc sought support from prominent and wealthy figures in the art and business worlds such as Winslow Ames, George Gershwin, Juliana Force, A. Conger Goodyear, William Randolph Hearst, Albert C. Barnes, and Alfred H. Barr.

After almost two years in operation, the Guild Art Gallery closed in 1937.

Scope and Contents

The records of New York's Guild Art Gallery measure 1.0 linear feet and date from circa 1933-1937. Records document the operation of the gallery for the duration of its existence from August 1935-1937, through correspondence, including some with artists, exhibition files, business and financial records, printed material, a scrapbook, a sketch by Anna Walinska, and photographs of artwork and the gallery.

Correspondence is with artists, business associates, and museums, and in particular records the gallery's efforts to build a client base, establish financial security, and foster the market for modern art. Of note is more detailed documentation of the gallery's representation of painter Lloyd Ney, and records documenting Walinska's attempt to

promote the work of Sigmund Menkes which are indicative of the extent to which the gallery was concerned with the development and promotion of art by Jewish artists.

Exhibition files including announcements, catalogs, and price lists, printed material including press clippings, and a dismantled scrapbook of printed material, primarily document the exhibition history of the gallery and provide details of its focus on modern art and the extent of the publicity the gallery received.

Business and financial records provide a variety of ways to examine the gallery's day-to-day operations and accounts. In addition to artist account ledgers and agreements, this series records balances, charges, deposits, and receipts and includes two notebooks with handwritten accounts of activities at the gallery for 1937.

Additionally, there is a pen and ink sketch by Anna Walinska, black and white copy prints of artwork by gallery artists, and a few original photos of the gallery's interior and exhibitions.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 7 series.

- Series 1: Correspondence, 1935-1937 (10 folders; Box 1)
- Series 2: Exhibition Files, 1935-1937 (5 folders; Box 1)
- Series 3: Business and Financial Records, 1935-1937 (13 folders; Box 1)
- Series 4: Printed Material, 1935-1937 (7 folders, Box 1)
- Series 5: Scrapbook, 1935-1937 (4 folders; Box 1)
- Series 6: Sketch and Photographs, circa 1933-1937 (4 folders; Box 1)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Jewish artists
Women art dealers

Types of Materials:

Scrapbooks

Names:

Gorky, Arshile, 1904-1948
Lefranc, Margaret
Menkes, Sigmund, 1896-1986
Ney, Lloyd Raymond, 1893-1964 or 5
Walinska, Anna

Functions:

Art galleries, Commercial -- New York (State)
Artist-run galleries -- New York (State)

Container Listing

Series 1: Correspondence, 1935-1937

10 Folders (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Correspondence is with business associates, prospective clients, museums, and other art institutions and organizations including Alfred H. Barr, Alfred C. Barnes, Cincinnati Art Museum, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Julianna Force, Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and others. Artists represented in the correspondence include Saul Baizerman, Emlen Etting, Arshile Gorky, Chaim Gross, Jean Liberte, William Littlefield, Gwen Lux, Philip Reisman, Theodore Roszak, Raphael Soyer, Gilbert Wilson, and others.

Of note are three folders of correspondence with artist Lloyd Ney. In addition to writing of his work and arrangements with the gallery to show his paintings, Ney writes of a disagreement with dealer Bruce Lockwood over ownership of his paintings. Related correspondence with Lockwood and lawyer Arthur Eastburn is also included here.

Also of note are two folders of letters and related material documenting the gallery's efforts to promote the work of Sigmund Menkes, in particular his painting *The Torah*. Records include a signed agreement with the gallery to be sole agents for *The Torah*, name and address lists of prospective clients, outgoing letters sent to them and some responses, two letters from Menkes, biographical notes about Menkes and the history of the painting, and marked up exhibition catalogs with prices of Menkes's work.

Arrangement: Undated correspondence is arranged alphabetically by correspondent and dated correspondence is arranged chronologically. Correspondence with Sigmund Menkes and Lloyd Ney is arranged separately in named files.

Available Formats: Series has been digitized in entirety.

Box 1, Folder 1	Correspondence, B-W, circa 1935-1937
Box 1, Folder 2	Correspondence, Chronological, 1935
Box 1, Folder 3	Correspondence, Chronological, 1936 January-May
Box 1, Folder 4	Correspondence, Chronological, 1936 June-December
Box 1, Folder 5	Correspondence, Chronological, 1937
Box 1, Folder 6	Correspondence, Sigmund Menkes, 1935-1936
Box 1, Folder 7	Correspondence, Sigmund Menkes, 1936
Box 1, Folder 8	Correspondence, Lloyd Ney, 1935-1936 January
Box 1, Folder 9	Correspondence, Lloyd Ney, 1936 February-1937 March

Box 1, Folder 10

Correspondence, Lloyd Ney, Dispute with Bruce Lockwood, 1935-1936

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Series 2: Exhibition Files, 1935-1937

5 Folders (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Exhibition records include artist biographies and press releases about exhibitions, exhibition announcements and catalogs, price lists, notes, and checklists documenting the gallery's exhibition history.

Available Formats: Series has been digitized in entirety, with the exception of duplicates.

Box 1, Folder 11	Artist Biographies , 1935-1937
Box 1, Folder 12	Exhibition Catalogs and Press, circa 1935-1936
Box 1, Folder 13	Exhibition Catalogs and Press, 1937
Box 1, Folder 14	Exhibition Lists and Price Lists, 1936-1937
Box 1, Folder 15	Press Releases for Exhibitions, 1935-1937

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Series 3: Business and Financial, 1935-1937

13 Folders (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Series documents the operation of the gallery through a variety of business records which span the duration of the gallery's existence. Artist account ledgers/notebooks include records of exhibition and lecture expenses and some sales. Artist agreements includes copies of agreements for the gallery to act as sole agent for artists including Ahron Ben-Shmuel, Don Forbes, Arshile Gorky, Chaim Gross, Philip Reisman, and Jacques Zucker. Balance and deposit books provide a chronological running account of the gallery's balance of funds, deposits made, checks drawn, and details on the nature of transactions, such as artwork sold or bills paid. Banking records include paid checks; bills are primarily for telephone service. Business agreements include a copy of the August 1935 agreement between Walinska and Frankel to establish the business, and their subsequent resignation agreements from the Stone Trading Corporation under which the gallery operated. Also found is a February 1936 legal petition directing the gallery to vacate the West 57th Street premises for non-payment of rent. Daily record notebooks offer handwritten accounts and notes written back and forth, presumably between Walinska and Frankel, which provide a narrative about the overall running of the gallery and interactions with various artists and clients. Insurance records include policies for artwork. Order books record orders sent out, including for artwork, with names of recipients, whether an order was paid for, and the amount charged. Receipts are primarily for costs associated with operating the gallery, such as framing, advertising, and maintenance, with a few scattered receipts for artwork sales.

Available Formats: Series has been digitized in entirety with the exception of some of the routine checks included in the banking records and telephone bills.

Box 1, Folder 16	Artist Account Ledger/Notebook, 1935-1936
Box 1, Folder 17	Artist Account Ledger/Notebook, 1935-1936
Box 1, Folder 18	Artist Agreements, 1935-1936
Box 1, Folder 19	Balance and Deposit Book, 1935 August-1936 November
Box 1, Folder 20	Balance and Deposit Book, 1936 November-1937 July
Box 1, Folder 21	Banking Records, 1935-1937
Box 1, Folder 22	Bills and Receipts, 1935-1937
Box 1, Folder 23	Business Agreements and Petition, 1935-1937
Box 1, Folder 24	Daily Record Notebook, 1937 January-May
Box 1, Folder 25	Daily Record Notebook, 1937 May-June
Box 1, Folder 26	Insurance Records, 1936-1937
Box 1, Folder 27	Order Book, 1936 December-1937 April

Box 1, Folder 28

Receipt Books, 1936-1937

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Series 4: Printed materials, 1935-1937

7 Folders (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Printed materials include news clippings and articles from publications such as *American Magazine of Art*, *Art News*, and *Parnassus* about the gallery, including event calendars and listings in which the gallery is mentioned.

The bulk of this series has been digitized. Only relevant pages of some publications have been digitized.

Box 1, Folder 29	Calendars of Arts Events, 1935-1937
Box 1, Folder 30	Clippings about Guild Art Gallery, circa 1935-1937
Box 1, Folder 31	Clippings about Guild Art Gallery, 1935-1936 April
Box 1, Folder 32	Clippings about Guild Art Gallery, 1936 May-December
Box 1, Folder 33	Clippings about Guild Art Gallery , 1937 January-March
Box 1, Folder 34	Clippings about Guild Art Gallery, 1937 April
Box 1, Folder 35	Clippings about Guild Art Gallery, 1937 May-August

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Series 5: Scrapbook, 1935-1937

4 Folders (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Series houses one dismantled scrapbook documenting the history of the gallery through news clippings and other printed material.

Available Formats: Series has been digitized in entirety.

Box 1, Folder 36	Scrapbook, 1935-1936
Box 1, Folder 37	Scrapbook, 1935-1936
Box 1, Folder 38	Scrapbook, 1936-1937
Box 1, Folder 39	Scrapbook, 1936-1937

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Series 6: Sketch and Photographs, circa 1933-1937

4 Folders (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Series includes a pen and ink sketch by Anna Walinska. Photographs are of artwork by Enid Bell, Nathaniel Dirk, Donald Forbes, Chaim Gross, Milton Horn, Z. Mekes, Lloyd Ney, and Ary Stillman. and snaphots of the gallery. Also found are photos of the interior of the gallery and exhibition(s), including an exhibition of work by Lloyd Ney.

Available Formats: The bulk of this series has been digitized. Duplicates and blank versos of photographs have not been digitized.

Box 1, Folder 40	Pen and Ink Sketch by Anna Walinska, circa 1935
Box 1, Folder 41	Photographs of Artwork, Bell-Gross, circa 1935-1937
Box 1, Folder 42	Photographs of Artwork, Horn-Stillman, circa 1935-1937
Box 1, Folder 43	Photographs of Gallery Exhibition(s), circa 1937

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