



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Piri Halasz Papers, circa
1950-2017, in the Archives of American Art

Deborah Tint

August 10, 2010

Archives of American Art
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Washington, D.C. 20001
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions>
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/>

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Piri Halasz papers
Identifier:	AAA.halapiri
Date:	circa 1950-2017
Extent:	1.6 Linear feet 0.179 Gigabytes
Creator:	Halasz, Piri
Language:	English .
Summary:	The papers of Piri Halasz are dated circa 1950-2017, and measure 1.6 linear feet and 0.179 GB. The collection consists of correspondence with Clement Greenberg and a number of well-known artists; writings including article and book manuscripts, drafts of lectures, talks, and born-digital presentations; interview transcripts and sound recordings; exhibition reviews; research; biographical material; photographs; and printed material documenting Halasz's activities as an art critic, writer and curator.

Administrative Information

Provenance

Donated 2010 and 2017 by Piri Halasz.

Processing Information

The collection was processed by Deborah Tint in 2010. The 2017 addition was merged with the original donation and the finding aid was updated by Hilary Price in 2018.

Preferred Citation

Piri Halasz papers, circa 1950-2017. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions on Access

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 Note

Piri Halasz (b. 1935) is an art critic, writer, lecturer, teacher, curator, and blogger who focuses on the New York art scene and politics from the 1940s to the present. She corresponded with a number of well-known artists; her long-standing association with Clement Greenberg is represented in her correspondence, articles and interviews.

Halasz, a native New Yorker, attended Barnard College where she majored in English literature. After her graduation in 1956, Halasz worked at *Time* magazine for six years as a researcher, primarily in business news, before being promoted to writer. For the next six years, she wrote articles covering a range of subjects including obituaries, celebrities, books, current trends, and world affairs. Her 1966 cover story for *Time*, "Swinging London," was a cultural snapshot of mid-1960s London that resulted in an invitation to write *A Swinger's Guide to London*. Published by Coward McCann in 1967, it was republished in 2010 as part of the Authors Guild "Back in Print" program.

In 1967 Halasz was assigned to write the art page of *Time*. Her 1969 article about Helen Frankenthaler attracted the attention of Clement Greenberg and they became close friends. Greenberg encouraged her to leave *Time*, which she did in 1969.

She returned to Columbia in 1974 to pursue graduate studies in art history and obtained her PhD in 1982; a substantial section of Halasz's dissertation was devoted to Greenberg's philosophy. Halasz has since pursued a career as an art critic, writer, lecturer, teacher, curator, and blogger. In 1996 she launched "From the Mayor's Doorstep," an online column of art criticism and politics which became a blog in 2010.

Halasz has taught at Columbia University, Hunter College, C. W. Post Center Long Island University, Molloy College, and Bethany College. She has published articles, primarily on art, in *The New York Times*, *Smithsonian Magazine*, *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, *Arts Magazine*, *Art in America*, *ARTnews* and *NYArts*.

Her self-published book, *A Memoir of Creativity: Abstract Painting, Politics and the Media, 1958-2008* (iUniverse, 2009), is an insider's view of the publishing industry, the New York art scene and an explication of her theory of "multi-referential imagery. This theory posits that abstract painting refers to imagery that is unconsciously significant to the artist which then triggers recognition in the viewer.

Ms. Halasz lives and works in New York City.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Piri Halasz are dated circa 1950-2017, and measure 1.6 linear feet and 0.179 GB. The collection consists of correspondence with Clement Greenberg and a number of well-known artists; writings including article and book manuscripts, drafts of lectures, talks, and born-digital presentations;

interview transcripts and sound recordings; exhibition reviews; research; biographical material; photographs; and printed material documenting Halasz's activities as an art critic, writer and curator.

The series titled "Greenbergiana" contains various materials related to Greenberg, including an interview Halasz conducted with Greenberg in 1991, a questionnaire filled out by artist Pat Lipsky Sutton concerning Greenberg's ideas about her work, and items concerning his death and memorial services.

Correspondence contains letters from Anthony Caro, Helen Frankenthaler, Clement Greenberg, Jules Olitski, Larry Poons, Anne Truitt, and others. There is a folder of greeting cards, some with original artwork, from artists of her acquaintance. Also found is correspondence with publishers about articles submitted by Halasz for consideration. Photographs are of Halasz and colleagues.

Writings include drafts of published and unpublished articles about Pablo Picasso, Ad Reinhardt, Abraham Rattner, Jennings Tofel, Larry Poons, Stanley William Hayter, Morris Louis, Manhattan museums, Randy Bloom and other subjects. There are transcripts of lectures and talks given by Halasz, and transcripts of interviews she conducted with Stanley William Hayter and Randy Bloom. The series also contains a manuscript for her 1985 novel, *The Artist's Widow* and supplemental material related to her book, *A Memoir of Creativity, 1956-2008*. Born-digital material includes two PowerPoint presentations related to Halasz's lectures.

"A Year in the Life of Present Modernism," an exhibition curated by Halasz, was held in 1997-1998 at the Tribes Gallery, New York City. Documentation includes printed material, photographs, and biographical information about Halasz and participating artists.

A small amount of biographical material includes curricula vitae, identifications cards, drawings by Halasz, and photographs of Halasz at various stages in life.

Interviews include one transcript and nineteen sound recording on cassettes of artists, relatives of artists, historians, and curators. All interviews were conducted by Halasz as research for various writing projects. Interviewees include artists Randy Bloom, Frank Bowling, Stanley William Hayter, Larry Poons, Peter Reginato, Ann Walsh, and James Walsh.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as six series:

- Series 1: "Greenbergiana," 1989-1996 (Box 1; 1 folder)
- Series 2: Correspondence, 1968-2007 (Box 1, 3; 0.2 linear feet)
- Series 3: Writings and Related Materials, 1966-2013 (Boxes 1-4, 1.1 linear feet; ER01, 0.179 GB)
- Series 4: "A Year in the Life of Present Modernism," 1996-1998 (Box 2; 1 folder)
- Series 5: Biographical Material, circa 1950-2017 (Box 4; 1 folder)
- Series 6: Interviews, 1979-2004 (Box 4; 0.3 linear feet)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Types of Materials:

Interviews

Sound recordings

Names:

Greenberg, Clement, 1909-1994
Hayter, Stanley William, 1901-1988
Poons, Larry
Rattner, Abraham
Reinhardt, Ad, 1913-1967

Occupations:

Art critics -- New York (State) -- New York
Art historians -- New York (State) -- New York
Authors -- New York (State) -- New York

Container Listing

Series 1: "Greenbergiana", 1989-1996

1 Folder (Box 1)

Materials relating to Greenberg consist of letters and cards concerning his death and memorial services, the transcript of an interview Halasz conducted with Greenberg in 1991, and a questionnaire about Greenburg completed by Pat Sutton. Also included are two issues of *The Edmonton Review* containing an interview with Greenberg and a tribute to him.

Box 1, Folder 1

Materials Relating to Greenberg 1989-1996

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Series 2: Correspondence, 1968-2007

0.2 Linear feet (Boxes 1 and 3)

Among the correspondence are letters and greeting cards, several from artists, including original artwork by David Edison and Francine Tint.

Box 1, Folder 2	Frankenthaler, Helen, 1983-2000
Box 1, Folder 3	Greenberg, Clement, 1969-1989
Box 1, Folder 4	Greeting Cards, 1987-2007
Box 3, Folder 1	Miscellaneous, 1968-1985
Box 1, Folder 5	Miscellaneous, 1983-1998
Box 1, Folder 6	Olitski, Jules, 1984-1990
Box 1, Folder 7	Truitt, Anne, 1983-1997

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Series 3: Writings and Related Materials, 1966-2013

1.1 Linear feet (Boxes 1-4)

0.179 Gigabytes (ER01)

Included are partial drafts and final texts of articles (published and unpublished) and lectures. Also found are related materials such as correspondence about and contracts for lectures, and correspondence concerning articles not present in Halasz's papers.

The lecture titled "1946: As it Saw Itself" is about Ad Reinhardt. Included with this text is a reworking of Ad Reinhardt's *Tree of Modern Art* drawing by Smithsonian Fellows to commemorate Halasz's departure from her position of fellow. The folder titled "National Museum of American Art" contains the text of a talk about Abraham Rattner. Materials regarding "Ella Blooms at the Gershwin" include the article published in *Lingo* #7, a photograph and the transcript of an interview with Randy Bloom.

The series also contains a manuscript for Halasz's 1985 novel, *The Artist's Widow* and supplemental material related to her book, *A Memoir of Creativity, 1956-2008*. Born-digital material includes two PowerPoint presentations related to lectures.

Articles, Published

Box 1, Folder 8	"The Impact of Expressionism in N.Y. in the 1940s", 1981
Box 1, Folder 9	Correspondence in response to Article on Multi-Referential Imagery, 1983
Box 1, Folder 10	Interview with Stanley William Hayter, and Article, 1983-1984
Box 1, Folder 11	Correspondence regarding "Growing up Progressive," 1988-1990
Box 1, Folder 12-13	"Ella Blooms at the Gershwin," 1991-1997 (2 folders)
Box 3, Folder 2	<i>Art in America</i> , 1982
Box 3, Folder 3	<i>ARTnews</i> , 1973-1979
Box 3, Folder 4	<i>Arts Magazine</i> , 1978-1985
Box 3, Folder 5	<i>A Gathering of the Tribes</i> Website, 2004-2010
Box 3, Folder 6	<i>Night Magazine</i> , 1997-1999
Box 3, Folder 7	<i>NYArts</i> , 1998-2005
Box 3, Folder 8	<i>Smithsonian Magazine</i> , 1973-1986
Box 3, Folder 9	Assorted Articles, 1966-1969

Articles, Unpublished

- Box 2, Folder 1 "Response to an Exhibition" and "A Postscript to Picasso at the MOMA", 1980
- Box 2, Folder 2 "N.Y. Museum Exhibitions... Multi-Referential Imagery", 1983
- Box 2, Folder 3 "Morris Louis and His Critics;" "Poons and Steiner: Growing Up; "2 Years and 3 Months", 1986-1987
- Box 3, Folder 10-11 Book, *The Artist's Widow*, 1985
- Box 2, Folder 4 Book Reviews of *A Memoir of Creativity, 1956-2008*, by Piri Halasz, 2006-2009
- Box 3, Folder 12 Book Reviews, Correspondence, and Prize, *A Memoir of Creativity*, 2009-2013

Talks

- Box 2, Folder 5 "1946: As it Saw Itself", 1981
- Box 2, Folder 6 National Museum of American Art, 1981
- Box 2, Folder 7 Symposium on Jennings Tofel, 1984
- Box 2, Folder 8 CAA Talk, AICA Panel on the Education of Art Critics; Boston Museum School, 1986
- Box 2, Folder 9 "The Current Scene and the Coverage Thereof", 1987
- Box 2, Folder 10 "An Atypically Modernist Childhood: How Does it Play?", 1996
- Box 2, Folder 11 "Ad Reinhardt's *Tree of Modern Art* Revisited", 1998
- Box 2, Folder 12 "Last Year, This Year in the Big Apple", 1998
- Box 2, Folder 13 "What Do They Really Want in N.Y. (Artwise, That Is?)", 2000
- Box 2, Folder 14 "The New York Art Establishment", 2000
- Box 4, Folder 1 Assorted Talks and Related Material, 1995-2010
includes born-digital, see ER01
- Folder ER01 Talks, PowerPoints, 2005-2010

0.179 Gigabytes (2 computer files)

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Series 4: "A Year in the Life of Present Modernism", 1996-1998

1 Folder (Box 2)

This series documents an exhibition curated by Halasz at the Tribes Gallery, New York City. Among the items are promotional reviews, exhibition views and biographical materials about Halasz and the seven artists represented: Randy Bloom, Frank Bowling, John Adams Griefen, Roy Lerner, Jill Nathanson, Pat Lipsky Sutton, and Francine Tint.

Box 2, Folder 15

Materials Relating to Exhibition, 1996-1998

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Series 5: Biographical Material, circa 1950-2017

1 Folder (Box 4)

Biographical material contains curricula vitae, identification cards, drawings by Halasz, and photographs of Halasz at various stages in her life.

Box 4, Folder 2

Biographical Material, circa 1950-2017

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Series 6: Interviews, 1979-2004

0.3 Linear feet (Box 4)

Interviews consist of one transcript and nineteen sound recordings on cassettes with various artists, relatives of artists, curators, and critics. All interviews were conducted by Halasz as research for her writing projects. A supplemental inventory with additional information about the interviews is filed in box 4, folder 4. Halasz's 1991 interview with Clement Greenberg is arranged in the series "Greenbergiana," and a few published interview transcripts are arranged with writings.

Interviews are arranged in rough alphabetical order by interviewee.

Archival audiovisual recordings must be digitized for research access. Researchers may access digitized audiovisual materials in the Archives' Washington, D.C. or New York, N.Y. Research Centers by appointment.

Box 4, Folder 4	Interview with Jenny Allen, 1979 <i>1 Sound cassette</i> Relative of Abraham Rattner
Box 4, Folder 3	Interview with Randy Bloom and Sholto Ainslee, Transcript, 1991
Box 4, Folder 4	Interview with Randy Bloom, 1996 <i>1 Sound cassette</i>
Box 4, Folder 4	Interview with Randy Bloom, 2003 <i>1 Sound cassette</i>
Box 4, Folder 4	Interview with Frank Bowling, 1997 <i>1 Sound cassette</i>
Box 4, Folder 4	Interview with Frank Bowling, 1998 <i>1 Sound cassette</i>
Box 4, Folder 4	Interview with Milton Brown, 1981 <i>1 Sound cassette</i>
Box 4, Folder 4	Interview with Alexander Eliot, 1987 <i>1 Sound cassette</i>
Box 4, Folder 4	Interview with Beatrice Farwell, 1987 <i>1 Sound cassette</i>
Box 4, Folder 4	Interview with Rae Ferren, 1997 <i>1 Sound cassette</i> Widow of John Ferren
Box 4, Folder 4	Interview with Charles Hargens, 1979

- 1 Sound cassette*
School friend of Abraham Rattner
- Box 4, Folder 5 Interview with Stanley William Hayter, 1983
1 Sound cassette
- Box 4, Folder 5 Interview with Charlotte Park (Brooks), 1995
1 Sound cassette
- Box 4, Folder 5 Interview with Larry Poons, 1987
1 Sound cassette
- Box 4, Folder 5 Interview with Jeffrey Potter, 1997
1 Sound cassette
Friend and biographer of Jackson Pollock
- Box 4, Folder 5 Interview with Esther Rattner, 1979
1 Sound cassette
Widow of Abraham Rattner
- Box 4, Folder 5 Interview with Peter Reginato, 2004
1 Sound cassette
- Box 4, Folder 5 Interview with Maurice Tuchman, 1987
1 Sound cassette
- Box 4, Folder 5 Interview with Ann Walsh, 2003
1 Sound cassette
- Box 4, Folder 5 Interview with James Walsh, 2003
1 Sound cassette

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