



# Smithsonian

*Archives of American Art*

## A Finding Aid to the Mercury Galleries records, 1937-1943, in the Archives of American Art

Christopher DeMairo

The processing of this collection received Federal support from the Smithsonian Collections Care and Preservation Fund, administered by the National Collections Program and the Smithsonian Collections Advisory Committee.

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# Table of Contents

Collection Overview .....	1
Administrative Information .....	1
Scope and Contents.....	2
Biographical / Historical.....	2
Arrangement.....	2
Names and Subjects .....	2
Container Listing .....	4
Series 1: Gallery Files, 1937-1943.....	4

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Mercury Galleries records
<b>Date:</b>	1937-1943
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.mercgall
<b>Creator:</b>	Mercury Galleries (New York, N.Y.)
<b>Extent:</b>	0.2 Linear feet
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Summary:</b>	The records of Mercury Galleries measure 0.2 linear feet and date from 1937 to 1943. The collection sheds light on the gallery's brief existence through correspondence, printed material including exhibition catalogs, announcements, press releases, and newspaper clippings, photographs of artwork, one transcript from a radio discussion, and flyers from WPA art tours.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

The collection was donated by Bernard B. Braddon, co-owner of Mercury Galleries, in 1981.

### Related Materials

Also found in the Archives of American Art is an oral history interview with Bernard Braddon and Sidney Paul Schectman conducted by Avis Berman, October 9, 1981.

### Available Formats

Portions of the collection are available on 35mm microfilm reels 3890 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

This collection was processed and a finding aid prepared by Christopher DeMairo in 2022.

### Preferred Citation

Mercury Galleries, 1937-1943. 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

Mercury Galleries was established in 1938 in New York, New York, by Sidney Paul Schectman (also known as Paul Kollmer) and Bernard Braddon. The gallery exhibited contemporary drawings, paintings, and sculptures and was known for its abstract expressionist and surrealist art shows.

Cornell graduates Schectman and Braddon opened Artmart Galleries in late 1937 in the loft of a building owned by family. They priced contemporary art between \$5 and \$50 regardless of who created it and any artist could exhibit and sell their original work there for a fee. Artists who exhibited there included Cleo Hartwig, Stanley William Hayer, and many more. Schectman and Braddon repeated this business model at Mercury Galleries the following year, and later organized the Circuit Art Association using the same idea.

Located in close proximity to the Whitney Museum, Mercury held *The Ten: Whitney Dissenters* (1938), featuring artists Adolph Gottlieb, Ralph Rosenborg, Mark Rothkowitz (Rothko), Ben-Zion, Joe Solman, Nahum Tschacbasov, Lou Schanker, Louis Harris, Earl Kerkam (guest), and Ilya Bolotowsky. Schectman, Braddon, and Louis Harris (a member of The Ten) broadcast a radio discussion titled "What's Wrong with American Art," in support of the show. The exhibition catalog foreword was written jointly by Schectman, Braddon, and Rothko.

Another notable Mercury Galleries group show was *Visions of Other Worlds* (circa 1937-1940), with works by surrealist painters Joan Miro, Yves Tanguy, Max Ernst and others, African sculpture, and drawings by patients of psychiatric institutions in France. Schectman and Braddon were introduced to African art through visiting exhibitions and by the collector Ladislos Segy.

In addition to those mentioned above, other artists exhibited at Mercury during its short existence included Henri Matisse, Zoltan Hecht, Jackson Pollock, Salvador Dali, poet Rachel Mack Wilson, Hananiah Harari, and John Rood.

The gallery closed in 1940.

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## Scope and Contents

The records of Mercury Galleries measure 0.2 linear feet and date from 1937 to 1943. The collection sheds light on the gallery's brief existence through printed material including exhibition catalogs, announcements, press releases, and newspaper clippings, correspondence with artists, museums, and galleries, photographs of artwork, one transcript from a radio discussion, and flyers from WPA art tours.

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## Arrangement

Due to the small size of this collection the papers are arranged as one series.

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## Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Abstract expressionism  
Surrealism

Types of Materials:

Interviews

Names:

Anton, Harold  
Ben-Zion, 1897–1987  
Harris, Louis, 1902-1970  
Kerkam, Earl, 1891-1965  
Rothko, Mark, 1903-1970

Functions:

Art galleries, Commercial -- New York (State)

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Gallery Files, 1937-1943

#### 0.2 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Found here is correspondence with artists, museums, and gallery visitors; newspaper clippings, bulletins, and flyers from Artmart Galleries and Mercury Galleries; exhibition schedules, catalogs, announcements, and some press releases; photographs of artwork by Cleo Hartwig, John Rood, Nicholas Takis, M. Rizzuto, and Rachel Mack Wilson; and a transcript from the radio discussion titled "Whats Wrong with American Art" featuring Schectman, Braddon, and "The Ten" artist Louis Harris.

Also found are flyers from the WPA art tours, an inventory of artwork, and an artist file for Harold Anton, which includes a promissory note, an exhibition catalog, a draft of an essay entitled "Antonism," and two photographs.

Box 1, Folder 1	Anton, Harold, 1938, undated
Box 1, Folder 2	Artmart Galleries, 1937-1938, undated
Box 1, Folder 3	Gallery Bulletins, 1937-1940
Box 1, Folder 4	Correspondence, 1938-1939, undated
Box 1, Folder 5	<a href="#">Exhibition Announcements, Catalogs, and Press Releases, 1937-1940</a>
Box 1, Folder 6	Inventory of Paintings, undated
Box 1, Folder 7	Photograph, Exhibition Installation, undated
Box 1, Folder 8	Photographs, Artwork, undated
Box 1, Folder 9	Printed Material, Clippings, 1938-1943
Box 1, Folder 10	Printed Material, WPA Art Tour Flyers, undated
Box 1, Folder 11	"Proposal by Mercury Galleries to the Ten", circa 1938
Box 1, Folder 12	"What's Wrong with American Art," Radio Show Transcript, Sidney Schectman, Louis Harris, Bernard Braddon, 1938

*[Return to Table of Contents](#)*