



Smithsonian  
*Archives of American Art*

A Finding Aid to the Boris Mirski Gallery  
Records, 1936-2000, bulk 1945-1972,  
in the Archives of American Art

Ryan Evans

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Archives of American Art  
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<https://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions>  
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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Boris Mirski Gallery records
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.mirsbori
<b>Date:</b>	circa 1936-2000 (bulk 1945-1972)
<b>Extent:</b>	6.2 Linear feet
<b>Creator:</b>	Boris Mirski Gallery (Boston, Mass.)
<b>Language:</b>	Collection is in English.
<b>Summary:</b>	The Boris Mirski Gallery records measure 6.2 linear feet and date from 1936-2000, bulk 1945-1972. They include gallery administrative files; artist files including correspondence, exhibition and loan paperwork as well as photographic documentation of artwork; gallery correspondence; financial materials including outgoing and incoming invoices and sales records; printed materials promoting the gallery and its artists; press materials; and a number of photographs of Boris Mirski at events and with others, as well as photographs of artwork. Artists particularly well represented in the collection include David Aronson, Leonard Baskin, Hyman Bloom, Esther Geller, Rico Lebrun, Michael Mazur, Arthur Polonsky, Ben Shahn, Mitchell Siporin, Barbara Swan, and Karl Zerbe.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

The Boris Mirski Gallery records were donated by Deborah Mirski Brown, Boris Mirski's daughter from 1989-1996, with additions in 2007 and 2017.

### Related Materials

Related materials include Archives of American Art's Oral history interview with Boris Mirski, 1973 June 19.

### Processing Information

The collection was processed and a finding aid prepared by Ryan Evans in 2018.

### Preferred Citation

Boris Mirski Gallery records, 1936-2000, bulk 1945-1972. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

## Restrictions

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## Biographical / Historical

The Boris Mirski Gallery (est. 1944; closed 1979) was a gallery in Boston, Massachusetts owned and operated by Boris Mirski (1898-1974). The gallery evolved out of various businesses owned by Mirski from the late 1910s, including his first formal gallery established alongside a framing shop on Charles Street in Beacon Hill in 1927. The gallery moved to its final incarnation on the lower level of 166 Newbury in 1972, and closed in 1979 following the gallerist's death in 1974.

Boris Chaim Mirski, born 1898, immigrated to the United States at the age of fourteen, leaving behind his troubled youth as a Lithuanian Jew in a harsh political climate that included frequent pogroms. At the advice of his mother, an activist in the resistance, Boris acquired a number of marketable skills including metalwork and framing, which allowed him to establish a lucrative business while he developed opportunities to show art that interested him. Early in his career this included a home for non-western and "primitive" art styles from around the globe, as well as the work of emerging local artists. Mirski's gallery created opportunities for artists working against the generally conservative tradition of the Boston School, and helped establish an identity for the local avant-garde. The gallery program had strong ties with the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston alumni and faculty, and frequently hosted exchange shows with New York City's Downtown Gallery, whose director Edith Halpert acted as a mentor. While exhibiting artists showed a range of sculpture, painting, and drawing at the gallery, there was a tendency towards highly expressive figurative artwork sometimes referred to as Boston Expressionism, often associated with the first generation Jewish American experience. Gallery artists included David Aronson, Leonard Baskin, Hyman Bloom, Esther Geller, Rico Lebrun, Michael Mazur, Arthur Polonsky, Ben Shahn, Mitchell Siporin, Barbara Swan, and Karl Zerbe.

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## Scope and Contents

The records of the Boris Mirski Gallery, which showed the avant-garde art of the Boston Expressionist school, as well as New York and international modern art styles and non-western art, measure 6.2 linear feet and date from 1936-2000, bulk 1945-1972. They include gallery administrative files; artist files including correspondence, exhibition and loan paperwork as well as photographic documentation of artwork; gallery correspondence; financial materials including outgoing and incoming invoices and sales records; printed materials promoting the gallery and its artists; press materials; and a number of photographs of Boris Mirski at events and with others, as well as photographs of artwork. Artists particularly well represented in the collection include David Aronson, Leonard Baskin, Hyman Bloom,

Esther Geller, Rico Lebrun, Michael Mazur, Arthur Polonsky, Ben Shahn, Mitchell Siporin, Barbara Swan, and Karl Zerbe.

The administrative files cover a number of topics including documents related to various properties, mortgages, and insurance, copyrights, legal cases, administrative events, and select group exhibitions at the gallery.

The artist files document each gallery artist's exhibition history in the gallery and include correspondence with the artist as well as files documenting significant outside exhibitions, projects and the placement of artworks. While exhibiting artists showed a range of sculpture, painting, and drawing at the gallery, there was a tendency towards highly expressive figurative artwork sometimes referred to as Boston Expressionism, often associated with the first generation Jewish American experience.

The gallery correspondence, primarily with patrons and institutions, is arranged alphabetically with select regular correspondents of the gallery having their own file, in addition to a folder of holiday cards.

The financial files include both outgoing and incoming transactions as invoices and sales records, organized by patron or vendor.

The printed materials are a records of the printing activities of the gallery as well as a press archive, with select printed materials from outside the gallery reflecting the activities of the gallery and gallery artists.

The photographic materials include both images that include the gallerist as well as images that document artworks.

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## Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 6 series.

- Series 1: Administrative Files, circa 1948-1995 (0.5 Linear feet; Box 1)
- Series 2: Artist Files, circa 1945-2000 (2.7 Linear feet; Boxes 1-4, OV 7)
- Series 3: Gallery Correspondence, circa 1936-1976 (1 Linear feet; Boxes 4-5)
- Series 4: Financial Files, circa 1958-1974 (1.2 Linear feet; Boxes 5-6)
- Series 5: Printed Material, circa 1944-1981 (0.7 Linear feet; Box 6, OV 8)
- Series 6: Photographic Material, circa 1945-1976 (0.1 Linear feet; Box 6)

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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:

Art galleries, Commercial -- Massachusetts -- Boston  
Expressionism (Art)  
Jewish artists  
Modernism (Art)  
New York school of art  
Sculptors

Types of Materials:

Photographs

Names:

Aronson, David, 1923-2015  
Baskin, Leonard, 1922-2000  
Bloom, Hyman, 1913-  
Geller, Esther  
Lebrun, Rico, 1900-1964  
Mazur, Michael, 1935-2009  
Mirski, Boris, 1898-1974  
Polonsky, Arthur  
Shahn, Ben, 1898-1969  
Siporin, Mitchell, 1910-1976  
Swan, Barbara, 1922-  
Zerbe, Karl, 1903-1972

Occupations:

Art dealers  
Painters

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Administrative Files, circa 1948-1995

#### *0.5 Linear feet (Box 1)*

The administrative files cover a number of topics including documents related to various properties, mortgages, and insurance, copyrights, legal cases, administrative events, and select group exhibitions at the gallery.

Box 1, Folder 1	Mortgages, Loans, and Insurance, circa 1958-1969
Box 1, Folder 2	L.W. Cushing & Co. (weather vane copyright), 1953, 1971
Box 1, Folder 3	Modern Artist Group of Boston Panel Discussion, circa 1948
Box 1, Folder 4	Holiday and Other Group Shows, circa 1960-1970
Box 1, Folder 5	Artist Contract, Hale and Dorr, circa 1965
Box 1, Folder 6	African Art Objects Inventory, circa 1963
Box 1, Folder 7	Artwork Inventory and Checklist, circa 1960-1969
Box 1, Folder 8-10	Boris Mirski Gallery v. Alfred Duca, circa 1950-1966
Box 1, Folder 11	Artists Correspondence (split with gallery partner Allen Fink), 1967
Box 1, Folder 12	Inaugural Exhibition, <i>North American Indian and Eskimo Art and Paintings of the Old West</i> (May, 1972), circa 1972
Box 1, Folder 13	Letters of Condolence, circa 1974
Box 1, Folder 14	Estate of Boris Mirski, circa 1974-1995

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## Series 2: Artist Files, circa 1945-2000

### 2.7 Linear feet (Boxes 1-4, OV 7)

The artist files document each gallery artist's exhibition history in the gallery and include correspondence with the artist as well as files documenting significant outside exhibitions, projects and the placement of artworks.

Box 1, Folder 15	Joseph Abelow, circa 1961-1970
Box 1, Folder 16-17	Marta Adams, circa 1945-1952
Box 1, Folder 18	Josef Albers, circa 1948-1957
Box 1, Folder 19	Harold Altman, circa 1950
Box 1, Folder 20-23	David Aronson, circa 1964-1969
Box 2, Folder 1-5	Leonard Baskin, circa 1952-2000
Box 2, Folder 6	Leonard Baskin, Solo Show (May, 1971), circa 1970-1971
Box 2, Folder 7	John Bergschneider, circa 1954
Box 2, Folder 8	Hyman Bloom, circa 1945-1947
Box 2, Folder 9	George Brewster, circa 1969-1971
Box 2, Folder 10-11	Nathaniel Burwash, circa 1954-1971
Box 2, Folder 12	George Constantine, circa 1960-1961
Box 2, Folder 13	Hester Curtis, circa 1971
Box OV 7	Hester Curtis, 1971
Box 2, Folder 14	Hermon di Giovanni, circa 1950-1959
Box 2, Folder 15	Alfred Duca, circa 1960
Box 2, Folder 16	Mary Frank, circa 1962-1969
Box 2, Folder 17	Esther Geller, circa 1945-1955
Box 2, Folder 18	Timothy Hull, circa 1968-1969



Box 2, Folder 19	Reed Kay, circa 1964-1965
Box 2, Folder 20	Jack Kramer, circa 1962-1963
Box 2, Folder 21	Leonard Lasser (Primitive Art, Inc.), circa 1962-1972
Box 2, Folder 22-23	Rico Lebrun, circa 1959-1968
Box 2, Folder 24	Jack Levine, circa 1947-1950
Box 2, Folder 25	Hubert Lieberman, circa 1948-1955
Box 2, Folder 26	Lloyd Lillie, circa 1962-1969
Box 2, Folder 27	Michael Linenthal, circa 1959
Box 3, Folder 1	George Lothrop (Betty Carpenter Collection), circa 1961
Box 3, Folder 2	Michael Mazur, circa 1963-1966
Box 3, Folder 3	Walter Meigs, circa 1957-1963
Box 3, Folder 4	Seong Moy, circa 1954-1955
Box 3, Folder 5-7	Carl Nelson, circa 1945-1979
Box 3, Folder 8	Stavros Pappasavos, circa 1967-1968
Box 3, Folder 9	Rudolfo Paras-Perez, circa 1967-1969
Box 3, Folder 10	Marianna Pineda, circa 1962-1966
Box 3, Folder 11-12	Arthur Polonsky, circa 1946-1966
Box 3, Folder 13	Waldemar Raemisch, circa 1960
Box 3, Folder 14	Joyce Reopel, circa 1959-1966
Box 3, Folder 15	Renee Rothbein, circa 1960-1969
Box 3, Folder 16	Aubrey Schwartz, circa 1959-1963

Box 3, Folder 17	Henry Schwartz, circa 1953-1965
Box 3, Folder 18	Ben Shahn, circa 1947-1969
Box 3, Folder 19	Mary Shore, circa 1957-1965
Box 3, Folder 20	Mitchell Siporin, circa 1951-1955
Box 3, Folder 21	Noemi Smilansky, circa 1967-1970
Box 3, Folder 22	Barbara Swan, circa 1945-1964
Box 3, Folder 23	Lois Tarlow, circa 1967-1968
Box 3, Folder 24	Jean Tock, circa 1951-1953
Box 3, Folder 25	Harold Tovish, circa 1965-1967
Box 3, Folder 26	Charles Wadsworth, circa 1959-1965
Box 3, Folder 27	Hui-Ming Wang, circa 1968-1970
Box 3, Folder 28	Elbert Weinberg, circa 1963-1969
Box 4, Folder 1	Neil Williver, circa 1958-1961
Box 4, Folder 2	Melvin Zabarsky, circa 1960-1965
Box 4, Folder 3	Karl Zerbe, circa 1948-1974

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## Series 3: Gallery Correspondence, circa 1936-1976

### *1 Linear foot (Boxes 4-5)*

The gallery correspondence, primarily with patrons and institutions, is arranged alphabetically with select regular correspondents of the gallery having their own file, in addition to a folder of holiday cards.

Box 4, Folder 4	A, circa 1962-1971
Box 4, Folder 5	Art Dealers Association of America, Inc., circa 1966-1967
Box 4, Folder 6	B, circa 1962-1971
Box 4, Folder 7	C, circa 1946-1969
Box 4, Folder 8	D, circa 1962-1969
Box 4, Folder 9	Downtown Gallery, circa 1947-1970
Box 4, Folder 10	E, circa 1961-1970
Box 4, Folder 11	F, circa 1963-1971
Box 4, Folder 12	Thomas Ford, circa 1958-1967
Box 4, Folder 13	G, circa 1961-1972
Box 4, Folder 14	Grace Borgenicht Gallery, circa 1962-1970
Box 4, Folder 15	H, circa 1936-1969
Box 4, Folder 16	I, circa 1964-1967
Box 4, Folder 17	Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, circa 1960-1970
Box 4, Folder 18	J, circa 1964-1969
Box 4, Folder 19	K, circa 1955-1973
Box 4, Folder 20	Kinkade & Co., circa 1962-1968
Box 4, Folder 21	L, circa 1961-1972
Box 4, Folder 22	M, circa 1959-1972

Box 4, Folder 23	Burton Machinist, circa 1963-1973
Box 4, Folder 24	Stanley Marcus, circa 1967-1968
Box 4, Folder 25	N, circa 1961-1973
Box 4, Folder 26	Nordness Gallery, circa 1960-1968
Box 4, Folder 27	O, circa 1963-1967
Box 4, Folder 28	P, circa 1960-1972
Box 4, Folder 29	Q,R, circa 1959-1973
Box 4, Folder 30	Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, circa 1961-1963
Box 4, Folder 31-32	S, circa 1961-1971
Box 5, Folder 1	T,U,V, 1965, 1971
Box 5, Folder 2	W, circa 1962-1973
Box 5, Folder 3	Traore Yacuba, circa 1972-1974
Box 5, Folder 4	X,Y,Z, circa 1962-1970
Box 5, Folder 5	Holiday Cards, circa 1946-1976

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## Series 4: Financial Records, circa 1958-1974

### 1.2 Linear feet (Boxes 5-6)

The financial files include both outgoing and incoming transactions as invoices and sales records, organized by patron or vendor.

#### 4.1: Gallery Invoices, circa 1961-1974

Box 5, Folder 6	A, circa 1962-1970
Box 5, Folder 7	B, circa 1962-1972
Box 5, Folder 8	C, circa 1962-1971
Box 5, Folder 9	D, circa 1962-1970
Box 5, Folder 10	E, circa 1962-1974
Box 5, Folder 11	F, circa 1962-1971
Box 5, Folder 12	G, circa 1961-1970
Box 5, Folder 13	H, circa 1962-1974
Box 5, Folder 14	Hartford Arts Foundation, circa 1965-1966
Box 5, Folder 15	I, circa 1962-1971
Box 5, Folder 16	J, circa 1962-1971
Box 5, Folder 17	K, circa 1962-1973
Box 5, Folder 18	L, circa 1962-1971
Box 5, Folder 19	M, circa 1962-1973
Box 5, Folder 20	N, circa 1963-1969
Box 5, Folder 21	O, circa 1962-1974
Box 5, Folder 22	P, circa 1962-1973
Box 5, Folder 23	R, circa 1962-1971

Box 5, Folder 24 S, circa 1962-1973

Box 5, Folder 25 T, circa 1962-1973

Box 5, Folder 26 U,V, circa 1966-1969

Box 5, Folder 27 W, circa 1962-1971

#### 4.2: Vendor Receipts and Invoices, circa 1958-1973

Box 5, Folder 28-29 A-B, circa 1963-1967

Box 5, Folder 30-31 Boston Crating Co./Boston Truck Co., circa 1963-1964

Box 5, Folder 32 City of Boston, circa 1961-1972

Box 5, Folder 33 C, circa 1964-1972

Box 5, Folder 33 D-G, circa 1963-1969

Box 6, Folder 1 H, circa 1963-1971

Box 6, Folder 2 I, circa 1959-1972

Box 6, Folder 3 J, circa 1960-1972

Box 6, Folder 4 K, circa 1963-1967

Box 6, Folder 5 L, circa 1959-1971

Box 6, Folder 6 M, circa 1964-1973

Box 6, Folder 7 N, circa 1963-1970

Box 6, Folder 8 P,Q, circa 1962-1971

Box 6, Folder 9 R, circa 1958-1971

Box 6, Folder 10 S, circa 1963-1973

Box 6, Folder 11 U,V, circa 1963-1970

Box 6, Folder 12 Sales Tax, circa 1963-1970

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## Series 5: Printed Materials, circa 1944-1981

*0.7 Linear feet (Box 6, OV 8)*

The printed materials are a records of the printing activities of the gallery as well as a press archive, with select printed materials from outside the gallery reflecting the activities of the gallery and gallery artists.

Box 6, Folder 13-14	Gallery Invitations and Pamphlets, circa 1945-1970
Box 6, Folder 15	Gallery Poster Invitations, circa 1955-1968
Box 6, Folder 16-19	Other Invitations and Pamphlets, circa 1953-1973
Box 6, Folder 20	Gallery Press, circa 1946-1962
Box 6, Folder 21-23	Clippings, circa 1944-1981
Box OV 8	Clippings on Board, circa 1944-1947

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## Series 6: Photographic Materials, circa 1945-1976

### *0.1 Linear feet (Box 6)*

The photographic materials include both images that include the gallerist as well as images that document artworks.

Box 6, Folder 24            Images including Boris Mirski, circa 1945-1969

Box 6, Folder 25            Images of Artworks, circa 1950-1976

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