



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Nicholas Wilder
Gallery Records, 1944-1984, bulk
1968-1979, in the Archives of American Art

Jayna M. Hanson

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Nicholas Wilder Gallery records
Identifier:	AAA.nichwild
Date:	1944-1984 (bulk 1968-1979)
Extent:	2.4 Linear feet
Creator:	Nicholas Wilder Gallery
Language:	English .
Summary:	The records of the Nicholas Wilder Gallery of Los Angeles measure 2.4 linear feet and date from 1944 through 1984, with the bulk of materials dating from 1968-1979. Scattered documentation of the contemporary art gallery's fourteen years of operation include artists' inventory cards, photographic transparencies, letters and correspondence, invitations, notes, business and financial documents, and printed materials.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The Nicholas Wilder Gallery records were donated to the Archives of American Art in 1998 by Matthew Curtis Klebaum, a friend of Wilder's and a former employee of the James Corcoran Gallery.

Related Material

Also found in the Archives of American Art is an oral history interview with Nicholas Wilder conducted by Ruth Bowman on July 18, 1988.

Nicholas Wilder Gallery records, 1927-1980, are also located at the Getty Research Institute.

Processing Information

The records were processed by Jayna M. Hanson in 2008 with funding provided by the Getty Foundation.

Preferred Citation

Nicholas Wilder Gallery records, 1944-1984. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions on Access

The collection is open for research. Use requires an appointment.

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Historical Note

In April 1965, Nicholas Wilder (1937-1989) founded his contemporary art gallery at 814 North La Cienega Boulevard in Los Angeles, California. His interest in art started at Amherst College where he worked for the art department as a slide technician. While in graduate school at Stanford University, he worked at the Lanyon Gallery in Palo Alto, California. An initial offer of financial backing to open a gallery inspired a move to Los Angeles. Although that offer fell through, Wilder remained determined. In late 1964, Wilder sold shares of his future gallery to friends in order to secure funds. He bought the shares back shortly after opening.

The Nicholas Wilder Gallery's first show featured Edward Avedisian. The gallery expanded and featured artists from New York and California, including: Joe Goode, John McCracken, Kenneth Noland, Helen Frankenthaler, Jules Olitski, Cy Twombly, Ed Moses, Ken Price, Agnes Martin, John Altoon, Sam Francis, Billy Al Bengston, and Hans Hofmann. The gallery helped start the careers of American artists such as Robert Graham, Tom Holland, Ron Davis, and Bruce Nauman. In 1970, the gallery moved to 8225 ½ Santa Monica Boulevard. Through its fourteen years of operation, the gallery held a new show every month. Wilder's openings represented a large source of pride and he ensured that every opening reception included a stocked bar for his clients.

Initially, the gallery succeeded through Wilder's talents and passion for art. At its peak, the Nicholas Wilder Gallery sold two million dollars worth of art per year. However, in the mid-1970s a change in attitude within the art world affected sales. According to Wilder, many artists no longer painted for expression but as a viable business venture. Furthermore, he claimed that buyers would not risk collecting works from a younger or less well-known artist. In addition to these factors, Wilder attributed the decline of his gallery to his extravagance and lack of business sensibilities. Eventually, the gallery faced financial problems and Wilder recognized the need to leave the business.

The Nicholas Wilder Gallery closed on December 31, 1979. Wilder informed his employees that he would close a year in advance and ensured that all of his artists found a new gallery for representation. He moved to New York after leaving his gallery and became an artist. Nicholas Wilder passed away in 1989 from AIDS-related causes.

Scope and Content Note

The records of the Nicholas Wilder Gallery of Los Angeles measure 2.4 linear feet and date from 1944 through 1984, with the bulk of materials dating from 1968 to 1979. Scattered documentation of the contemporary art gallery's fourteen years of operation include artists' inventory cards (the bulk of the collection), photographic transparencies, letters and correspondence, invitations, notes, business and financial documents, and printed materials.

The majority of records date from the period after the gallery moved to La Cienega Boulevard to Santa Monica Boulevard in Los Angeles, California. Very few records pertaining to specific exhibitions or openings are included in this collection. However, there is one exhibition catalog and scattered gallery invitations which were used as scrap paper. Other materials include business records that contain financial materials and notes. Printed Materials contain popular newspapers and magazines that reflect Wilder's interests, invitations to other galleries, auction catalogs, and business cards. Correspondence includes scattered gallery correspondence, Wilder's personal correspondence and documents, and holiday cards.

The bulk of the collection consists of artist files which include inventory cards and transparencies of works of art. Information on the inventory cards and transparencies may specify: date of creation, date of accession, potential collectors, purchase records, and titles. Notable artists include: Joe Goode, Tom Holland, Robert Graham, Billy Al Bengston, Cy Twombly, Ken Price, Ed Moses, Ron Davis, John McCracken, Kenneth Noland, Helen Frankenthaler, Jules Olitski, Agnes Martin, Edward Avedisian, John Altoon, Richard Yokomi, Sam Francis, Bruce Nauman, Hans Hofmann, and David Hockney. The majority of inventory cards reflect business at the gallery in the mid-late 1970s.

Financial records originating from the James Corcoran Gallery are included in this collection. The relationship between the two establishments is unclear although it seems that the James Corcoran Gallery moved into the space previously occupied by the Nicholas Wilder Gallery.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into four series:

- Series 1: Business Records, 1968-1978, 1980-1984, circa 1970s (Box 1; 5 folders)
- Series 2: Correspondence, 1974-1981, circa 1970s (Box 1; 4 folders)
- Series 3: Printed Material, 1976-1980, circa 1970s (Box 1; 9 folders)
- Series 4: Artist Files, 1944-1984, circa 1960s-1970s (Box 1-3; 2 linear feet)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Art dealers -- California -- Los Angeles
Artists -- California -- Los Angeles

Names:

Altoon, John, 1925-
Avedisian, Edward, 1936-2007
Bengston, Billy Al
Davis, Ron, 1937-
Francis, Sam, 1923-
Frankenthaler, Helen, 1928-2011
Goode, Joe, 1937-
Graham, Robert, 1938-
Hockney, David
Hofmann, Hans, 1880-1966

Holland, Tom, 1936-
James Corcoran Gallery
Martin, Agnes, 1912-2004
McCracken, John, 1934-2011
Moses, Ed, 1926-
Nauman, Bruce, 1941-
Noland, Kenneth, 1924-
Olitski, Jules, 1922-
Price, Kenneth, 1935-2012
Twombly, Cy, 1928-
Wilder, Nicholas
Yokomi, Richard

Functions:

Art galleries, Commercial -- California

Container Listing

Series 1: Business Records, 1968-1978, 1980-1984, circa 1970s

(Box 1; 5 folders)

This series includes financial materials, lists of works of art and notes and memoranda. Although these materials are scattered, one may find information concerning the financial problems facing the gallery in the late 1970s. Financial documents from the James Corcoran Gallery are included although they post-date the Nicholas Wilder Gallery. Many documents from the James Corcoran Gallery still refer to that of Wilder. Also found are receipts and bills from various vendors and businesses. Notes and Memoranda folders include phone messages, hand-written notes, and unidentified sketches which probably represent gallery plans. One folder of notes are found on the backs of invitations to openings at the Nicholas Wilder Gallery.

Materials are arranged by date with undated materials at the end.

Box 1, Folder 1	Financial Material, 1968-1970, 1976-1978, circa 1970s Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 2	Financial Material -- James Corcoran Gallery, 1980-1984 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 3	Lists of Works of Art, before 1980
Box 1, Folder 4	Notes and Memoranda (written on Nicholas Wilder Gallery invitations), circa 1970s
Box 1, Folder 5	Notes and Memoranda, 1975, 1978, circa 1970s

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Series 2: Correspondence, 1974-1981, circa 1970s

(Box 1; 4 folders)

This series includes scattered incoming letters and mailings as well as drafts of outgoing letters. Much of the outgoing correspondence is undated, hand-written, and only includes a first name. Also included are personal correspondence and biographical materials relating to Nicholas Wilder, theft notice mailings, and holiday cards.

Materials are arranged by date with undated materials at the end.

Box 1, Folder 6	Gallery Correspondence, 1974-1978, circa 1970s Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 7	Theft Notices -- Art Dealers Association of America, 1977-1978
Box 1, Folder 8	Nicholas Wilder Personal Correspondence and Documents, 1977-1978, 1980-1981
Box 1, Folder 9	Holiday Cards, 1977, circa 1970s

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Series 3: Printed Material, 1976-1980, circa 1970s

(Box 1; 9 folders)

This series includes scattered brochures and catalogs advertising rare book and Sotheby's auctions, various business cards, Nicholas Wilder Gallery stationery, invitations to openings at other galleries, and one catalog of an exhibition at the Nicholas Wilder Gallery. Magazines and newspapers reflect Wilder's interests in cars and popular culture.

Materials are arranged by date with undated materials at the end.

Box 1, Folder 10-11	Brochures and Auction Catalogs, 1976-1980, circa 1970s <i>(2 folders)</i>
Box 1, Folder 12	Business Cards, circa 1970s
Box 1, Folder 13	Exhibition Catalog -- Nicholas Wilder Gallery, 1977
Box 1, Folder 14-15	Invitations -- Other Galleries, 1977-1978, circa late 1970s <i>(2 folders)</i>
Box 1, Folder 16-17	Newspapers and Magazines, 1977-1978 <i>(2 folders)</i>
Box 1, Folder 18	Stationery (blank), after 1969

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Series 4: Artists Files, 1944-1984, circa late 1960s-1970s

(Box 1-3; 2 linear feet)

This series which comprises the bulk of the collection consists primarily of inventory cards arranged by name of artist that provide information on individual works of art shown at the Nicholas Wilder Gallery. There are also transparencies of the works of art. Both types of documents are arranged by artist.

The Artist Files series is arranged into 2 subseries:

- Subseries 1: Inventory Cards, 1965-1984, circa 1970s
- Subseries 2: Transparencies, 1944-1978, circa late 1960s-1970s

4.1: Inventory Cards, 1965-1984

This subseries is composed of inventory cards originating from the Nicholas Wilder Gallery. Each work of art received a card with an inventory date and accession number. These cards are arranged according to artist with unidentified artists at the end. Within each file, cards are arranged according to the year in which a work of art was brought into the gallery. Many of the cards are not complete but may include: title and date of the work, sales information, potential collectors, date of accession, and dimensions.

Box 1, Folder 19	Acton, Ario, 1974
Box 1, Folder 20	Alexander, Peter, 1974
Box 1, Folder 21	Almeida, Raymond, 1974, 1977
Box 1, Folder 22	Altoon, John, 1965, 1972-1978
Box 1, Folder 23	Arnoldi, Charles, 1973-1977
Box 1, Folder 24	Avedisian, Edward, 1974-1975
Box 1, Folder 25	Bachardy, Don, 1974-1977
Box 1, Folder 26	Baer, Jo, 1973-1974
Box 1, Folder 27	Baldwin, Gordon, 1977
Box 1, Folder 28	Bannard, Darby, 1974, circa 1970s
Box 1, Folder 29	Bell, Larry, 1977
Box 1, Folder 30	Bengston, Billy Al, 1974
Box 1, Folder 31	Berman, Wallace, 1974
Box 1, Folder 32	Bradley, Peter, 1978

Box 1, Folder 33	Bush, Jack, 1975, 1978
Box 1, Folder 34	Christensen, Dan, 1974
Box 1, Folder 35	Davis, Ron, 1973-1979
Box 1, Folder 36	Davis, Stuart, 1974
Box 1, Folder 37	De Maria, Walter, 1974
Box 1, Folder 38	DeFrance, James, 1976
Box 1, Folder 39	Delap, Tony, 1974-1978, circa 1970s Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 40	Diebenkorn, Richard, 1974
Box 1, Folder 41	Eatherton, (Thomas), 1974
Box 1, Folder 42-3	Francis, Sam, 1973-1978 (2 folders)
Box 1, Folder 44	Frankenthaler, Helen, 1974-1976
Box 1, Folder 45	Goddard, (?), 1974
Box 1, Folder 46	Goode, Joe, 1974-1979
Box 1, Folder 47	Goodnough, Robert, 1974, 1978, probably after 1974
Box 1, Folder 48	Gorky, Arshile, 1975 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 49	Graham, Robert, 1973-1977
Box 1, Folder 50	Graves, Morris, 1975-1976
Box 1, Folder 51	Hall, Nigel, 1974
Box 1, Folder 52	Helm, Robert, 1976-1978
Box 1, Folder 53	Herms, George, 1973-1975, 1977-1978

Box 1, Folder 54	Hockney, David, 1974, 1976-1977
Box 1, Folder 55	Hofmann, Hans, 1973, 1975
Box 2, Folder 1	Holland, Tom, 1973-1979
Box 2, Folder 2	Hoyland, John, 1973, 1975, circa 1970s
Box 2, Folder 3	Krushenick, Nicholas, 1974
Box 2, Folder 4	Lachaise, Gaston, 1976
Box 2, Folder 5	Lichtenstein, Roy, 1976
Box 2, Folder 6	Lieberman, Alexander, 1977
Box 2, Folder 7	Louis, Morris, 1977
Box 2, Folder 8	Martin, Agnes, 1973-1975, circa 1970s
Box 2, Folder 9	McCollum, Allan, 1973-1976 Image(s)
Box 2, Folder 10	McCracken, John, 1974-1977
Box 2, Folder 11	McDermott, Mo, 1977
Box 2, Folder 12	Moses, Ed, 1973-1974, 1978, circa 1970s
Box 2, Folder 13	Murray, Clark, 1974
Box 2, Folder 14	Murrill, Gwynn, 1977-1978
Box 2, Folder 15	Nauman, Bruce, 1973-1978
Box 2, Folder 16	Noland, Kenneth, 1975
Box 2, Folder 17	Okamura, (Arthur), 1974
Box 2, Folder 18	Olitski, Jules, 1973-1975, 1977
Box 2, Folder 19	Pettit, William, 1974-1975

Box 2, Folder 20	Poons, Larry, 1974
Box 2, Folder 21	Price, Kenneth, 1973-1975, circa 1970s
Box 2, Folder 22	Prockter, Patrick, 1974
Box 2, Folder 23	Raciti, Cheri(e), 1975, 1977
Box 2, Folder 24	Rauschenberg, Robert, 1975, after 1974
Box 2, Folder 25	Smith, Alexis, 1977-1978
Box 2, Folder 26	Smith, Richard, 1976, 1978
Box 2, Folder 27	Snyder, Joan, 1978
Box 2, Folder 28	Sorensen, Don, 1975-1979
Box 2, Folder 29	Spence, Andrew, 1974, 1976-1977
Box 2, Folder 30	Stanzack, Julian, 1974
Box 2, Folder 31	Stein, Louis, 1974
Box 2, Folder 32	Todd, Michael, 1976
Box 2, Folder 33	Torres, Horacio, 1975
Box 2, Folder 34	Tuttle, Richard, 1975
Box 2, Folder 35	Twombly, Cy, 1974, 1976
Box 2, Folder 36	Westerman, H.C., 1974
Box 2, Folder 37	Williams, Guy, 1974
Box 2, Folder 38	Williams, William Thomas, around 1970
Box 2, Folder 39	Wright, Stanton McDonald, 1976
Box 2, Folder 40	Yokomi, Richard, 1973-1976, 1978, circa 1970s
Box 2, Folder 41	Zecher, Peter, 1974-1975, 1977-1978

Box 2, Folder 42 Unknown Artist(s), 1974, 1984

4.2: Transparencies, 1944-1978, circa late 1960s-1970s

This subseries consists of photographic transparencies of works of art. Presumably, the Nicholas Wilder Gallery showed these works. Transparencies are arranged by name of artist. Dates are determined by the date written on the card which is probably the year during which the work of art was created.

Box 2, Folder 43 Alexander, Peter, 1968, circa late 1960s

Box 2, Folder 44 Altoon, John, 1966, 1968, circa late 1960s

Box 2, Folder 45 Arnoldi, Charles, 1974, 1977-1978, circa 1970s

Box 2, Folder 46 Avedisian, Edward, circa 1970s

Box 2, Folder 47 Bachardy, Don, 1974, circa 1970s

Box 2, Folder 48 Baer, Jo, 1961-1962, 1971-1972, circa 1970s

Box 2, Folder 49 Bengston, Billy Al, 1971-1972, 1974

Box 2, Folder 50 Brice, William, 1976, circa 1970s

Box 2, Folder 51 Bush, Jack, 1969, circa late 1960s

Box 2, Folder 52 Christensen, Dan, 1972, 1974, circa 1970s

Box 2, Folder 53 Davis, (?), 1968-1969

Box 2, Folder 54 DeFrance, James, 1973, circa 1970s

Box 2, Folder 55 Delap, Tony, 1978
[Image\(s\)](#)

Box 2, Folder 56 Denman, (?), circa 1960s-1970s

Box 2, Folder 57 Francis, Sam, 1973-1974, circa 1970s

Box 2, Folder 58 Goodnough, Robert, 1970, circa 1970s

Box 2, Folder 59 Graham, Robert, 1971-1973, circa 1970s

Box 2, Folder 60	Graves, Morris, circa 1970s
Box 2, Folder 61	Gustin, Phillip, circa 1970s
Box 2, Folder 62	Herms, George, 1973
Box 2, Folder 63	Hockney, David, 1976, circa 1970s
Box 2, Folder 64	Hofmann, Hans, 1944
Box 2, Folder 65	Holland, Tom, 1973-1977, circa 1970s
Box 2, Folder 66	McCollum, Allan, 1972, 1974, circa 1970s Image(s)
Box 3, Folder 1	McCracken, John, 1974, 1976, circa 1970s
Box 3, Folder 2	McLaughlin, John, 1946, 1956-1959, 1962-1963, 1971, 1973-1974
Box 3, Folder 3	Murrill, Gwynn, 1975-1977
Box 3, Folder 4	Nauman, Bruce, 1966, 1973-1974, circa 1960s-1970s
Box 3, Folder 5	Olitski, Jules, 1968, circa late 1960s or 1970s
Box 3, Folder 6	Olsen, R., 1968
Box 3, Folder 7	Pettit, William, 1968, circa late 1960s
Box 3, Folder 8	Raciti, Cherie, 1972-1975
Box 3, Folder 9	Smith, Alexis, 1977
Box 3, Folder 10	Snyder, Joan, 1972, 1974, circa 1970s
Box 3, Folder 11	Torres, Horatio, 1974
Box 3, Folder 12	Yokomi, Richard, 1969, 1972-1973, 1975-1976
Box 3, Folder 13	Zecher, Peter, 1973-1974
Box 3, Folder 14	Unidentified Artist(s), circa 1960s-1970s

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