



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the David Novros Papers,
1963-2008, in the Archives of American Art

Catherine S. Gaines

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Archives of American Art
750 9th Street, NW
Victor Building, Suite 2200
Washington, D.C. 20001
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions>
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/>

Table of Contents

Collection Overview	1
Administrative Information	1
Biographical Note.....	2
Scope and Content Note.....	2
Arrangement.....	3
Names and Subjects	3
Container Listing	5
Series 1: Correspondence, 1963-2008.....	5
Series 2: Liaunig Boat House, 1998-2004.....	7
Series 3: Interview Transcripts, 2008.....	8
Series 4: Printed Material, 1966-2008.....	9
Series 5: Photographs, 1976-1999.....	10

Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	David Novros papers
Identifier:	AAA.novrdavi
Date:	1963-2008
Extent:	1 Linear foot
Creator:	Novros, David, 1941-
Language:	English .
Summary:	The papers of abstract painter David Novros are dated 1963 to 2008, and measure 1.0 linear foot. Correspondence, records relating to the Liaunig Boat House commission (Middleburgh, NY), interview transcripts, printed material, and photographs document the painter's professional career.

Administrative Information

Provenance

Gift of David Novros, 2009

Related Material

An oral history interview with David Novros was conducted by Michael Brennan for the Archives of American Art in 2008.

Processing Information

The collection was processed by Catherine S. Gaines in 2010.

Preferred Citation

David Novros papers, 1963-2008. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions on Access

Use of original papers requires an appointment.

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Biographical Note

David Novros (1941-) is an abstract painter in New York, NY.

Abstract painter David Novros was born in Los Angeles in 1941 and lived with his family in Van Nuys, California. His father, Lester Novros, was an artist whose interest in movement eventually led him to the Walt Disney Company, where he worked on animation projects. In 1941 he established his own production company, Graphic Films, and began teaching in the Cinema Department of the University of Southern California. Both David and his brother Paul were enamored with film; David turned to painting, but Paul followed in their father's line of work and became an award-winning film producer.

David entered the University of Southern California and studied painting with James Jervaisee. He made a few student films and sometimes worked with his father, but before long he turned to painting. During the summer of 1961, Novros attended courses at Yale and met Chuck Close, Brice Marden, and Vija Celmins.

After earning a B.F.A. in 1963, Novros completed his Army Reserve obligations and travelled in Europe. He moved to New York City in 1964 and met many Minimalist artists. Over the next several years, Novros's rectangular paintings gave way to multi-panel paintings and then to shaped panels. From the late 1960s through the 1970s, Novros developed a reputation as a geometric abstractionist. He showed at Park Place Gallery and had a solo exhibition at Virginia Dwan Gallery (Los Angeles) in 1966; the next year, his work was again presented at Park Place Gallery and at the Virginia Dwan Gallery (New York). Several solo exhibitions followed at Klaus Kertess's influential Bykert Gallery, as well as at other venues.

Novros participated in important exhibitions of abstraction, among them "Systemic Painting" (Guggenheim Museum, 1966), "Color and Structure" (Whitney Museum of American Art, 1971), and "Abstract-Geometry-Painting: Selected Geometric Abstract Painting in America since 1945" (Albright-Knox Gallery, 1989). In 1970, he was awarded a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship.

In the 1970s, Novros turned to fresco painting, and his eventual decision to focus on murals effectively removed him from the commercial gallery scene. One of his earliest commissions was a fresco painted in 1970 for the second floor of Donald Judd's studio/home. Other commissions include: Solar Triptych, a radial triptych that opens and closes throughout the day, for the lobby of Union Station, Newark, NJ (1984); a fresco in the Old Court House, Miami (1984); a painted-glass and copper fresco in the Gross Building, Winslow, Arizona (1994-1996); and the Liaunig Boat House with fresco paintings, Middleburgh, NY (1996-2003). A number of museums in the United States and Europe include Novros's work in their permanent collections, among them: Menil Collection, Museum of Modern Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, Museum Liaunig (Austria), and Daimler contemporary (Berlin).

Mr. Novros lives and works in New York City.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of abstract painter David Novros are dated 1963 to 2008, and measure 1.0 linear foot. Correspondence, records relating to the Liaunig Boat House commission (Middleburgh, NY), interview transcripts, printed material, and photographs document the painter's professional career.

The vast majority of correspondence consists of incoming letters. The only reciprocal exchanges preserved are with art historian Charles Hope and the Menil Collection. Letters are from artists Rory McEwen, Paul Mogensen, and Ken Price; writers Frances Colpitt and Claudine Humblet; and from other colleagues and friends. The letters David Novros wrote to his family between 1963 and 1979 recount his travels and describe in some detail - many with accompanying illustrations and diagrams - work in progress, exhibitions, and commissions. Also preserved are copies of his letters to the Trustees of the Donald Judd Estate and Ranier Judd concerning the Marfa, Texas properties and projects, his Spring Street studio in New York City, and the Judd Foundation. Novros's letters to editors concern art-related articles that appeared in *The New York Review of Books*, *The New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, and other publications.

Peter Liaunig's commission for a boat house with three fresco paintings in Middleburgh, New York, is documented by correspondence, plans, and designs. The "Boat House Diary, Middleburgh, NY," kept by Novros August 10-15, 2003, describes the process of painting the frescoes with the assistance of Jason, and notes materials and techniques used.

Interview transcripts are of Phong Bui's conversation with David Novros, published June 2008 in *The Brooklyn Rail*, and an unpublished interview Novros conducted with sculptor Robert Graham in 2008.

Printed material about or mentioning David Novros consists of articles and reviews, exhibition announcements and posters. Items written by Novros are a review of Jackson Pollock and two poems.

Photographs are of David Novros with his family and friends. There are also views of the Novros family's home in Van Nuys, California, and Indian-painted rocks at Sears Point, Arizona that influenced Novros' art.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 5 series:

- Series 1: Correspondence, 1963-2008 (Boxes 1-2; 0.4 linear ft.)
- Series 2: Liaunig Boat House, 1998-2004 (Box 2, OV3; 0.2 linear ft.)
- Series 3: Interview Transcripts, 2008 (Box 2; 0.1 linear ft.)
- Series 4: Printed Material, 1966-2008 (Box 2, OV 4; 0.2 linear ft.)
- Series 5: Photographs, 1976-1999 (Box 2; 0.1 linear ft.)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Painters -- New York (State) -- New York
Painting -- Technique

Types of Materials:

Diaries
Illustrated letters
Interviews
Poems
Transcripts

Names:

Bui, Phong, 1964-
Colpitt, Frances
Graham, Robert, 1938-
Hope, Charles
Humblet, Claudine, 1946-
Judd, Donald, 1928-
McEwen, Rory, 1932-
Pollock, Jackson, 1912-1956
Price, Kenneth, 1935-2012

Container Listing

Series 1: Correspondence, 1963-2008

(Boxes 1-2; 0.4 linear ft.)

Correspondence with art historian Charles Hope regards a letter to the editor of *The New York Review of Books* written by Novros in response to Hope's exhibition review of "Venice and the North." Novros's correspondence with the Menil Collection and Menil Foundation concerns the acquisition and exhibition of his work, with notes and background information.

The vast majority of correspondence consists of incoming letters. Found here are letters from artists Rory McEwen, Paul Mogensen, and Ken Price. Rory McEwen, who wrote over an extended period, sent a small, undated watercolor portrait of himself working in the kitchen with his wife. Enclosed with Frances Colpitt's letters are manuscripts of her review of *Minimalism* by James Meyer, a catalogue entry about David Novros for the Blanton Museum of Art's exhibition "Reimagining Space: the Park Place Gallery Group in 1960s New York," and a copy of a letter she sent to Donald Judd's daughter about his estate. Letters from Claudine Humblet concern her book, *La Nouvelle Abstraction Américaine de 1950 à 1970*, and include a copy of "David Novros: ou la quête d'un art classique."

Letters that David Novros wrote to his family between 1963 and 1979 recount his travels and describe in some detail work in progress, exhibitions, and commissions; they often include diagrams and illustrations. His letters to the Trustees of the Donald Judd Estate and Ranier Judd are about Judd's Marfa, Texas properties and projects, his New York City studio on Spring Street, and the Judd Foundation. Novros's letters to editors concern art-related articles that appeared in *The New York Review of Books*, *The New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, and other publications.

Box 1, Folder 1	Bober, Michael (cousin), 1976-2009, undated
Box 1, Folder 2	Colpitt, Frances, circa 1999-2008
Box 1, Folder 3	Cooper, Paula - Cuomo, Mario, 1990-1992 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooper, Paula • Cuomo, Mario
Box 1, Folder 4	Editors, Letters to, 1988-2008,
Box 1, Folder 5	Goldmark, Steve, 1987
Box 1, Folder 6	Hope, Charles, 1999
Box 1, Folder 7	Humblet, Claudine, 1999-2007
Box 1, Folder 8	Irish Museum of Modern Art, 1992
Box 1, Folder 9	Judd, Donald (Estate of), 1997-1999
Box 1, Folder 10-11	McEwen, Rory, 1973-1982, undated

(2 folders)

Box 1, Folder 12	Meanders, Nabuko Yoshizawa, 2007
Box 1, Folder 13	Menil Collection, 1987-2008, undated
Box 1, Folder 14	Mogensen, Paul, 2003-2009
Box 1, Folder 15	Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 2003
Box 1, Folder	Novros Family (see <i>a/so</i> : Bober, Michael)
Box 1, Folder 16	Father to David, 1991
Box 1, Folder 17	Paul (brother) to David, 2007, undated
Box 1, Folder 18	David to Family, 1963-1968 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 19	David to Family, 1971-1974
Box 1, Folder 20	David to Family, 1975-1979
Box 1, Folder 21	David to Family, undated
Box 1, Folder 22	David to Family, undated
Box 1, Folder 23	Price, Ken - Whitney Museum of American Art, 1999-2001 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Price, Ken• Whitney Museum of American Art
Box 1, Folder 24	Unidentified, 1992-2006, undated <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bonnie• Dee[lun?]• Josef• Phil

Return to Table of Contents

Series 2: Liaunig Boat House, 1998-2004

(Box 2, OV3; 0.2 linear ft.)

Among the designs for painted fresco walls are many small drawings in ink and color pencil. Description and narrative consists of a printed sheet with building specifications, and "Boat House Diary, Middleburgh, NY" kept by Novros. Diary entries dated Aug. 10-15, 2003 describe the process of painting the frescoes with the assistance of Jason, and note materials and techniques used.

Box 2, Folder 1	Correspondence, 1998-2004, undated
Box 2, Folder 2	Description and Narrative, 2002-2003
Box 2, Folder 3	Designs for Painted Fresco Walls (original drawings), 2001, undated
Box 2, Folder	Plans
Box 2, Folder 4	Original Drawings, undated
Box 2, Folder 5	Photocopies, 2001-2002, undated
Box 2, Folder 6	Photographs, 2003
Box OV 3, Folder	Liaunig Boat House - Oversized Plans (original drawings), 2001, undated <i>(oversized material from box 2, folder 5)</i>

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 3: Interview Transcripts, 2008

(Box 2; 0.1 linear ft.)

Phong Bui's interview with David Novros was published in *The Brooklyn Rail*, June 2008. The interview Novros conducted with sculptor Robert Graham is unpublished.

Box 2, Folder 8 "David Novros in Conversation with Phong Bui [editor of *The Brooklyn Rail*] (third edit; final edit), 2008

Box 2, Folder 9 "Robert Graham in conversation with David Novros,", 2008

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 4: Printed Material, 1966-2008

(Box 2, OV 4; 0.2 linear ft.)

Printed material about or mentioning David Novros consists of articles and reviews, exhibition announcements and posters. Items written by Novros are a review of a Jackson Pollock exhibition and two poems.

Box 2, Folder	About/Mentioning David Novros
Box 2, Folder 10-11	Articles, 1966-2008, undated <i>(2 folders)</i>
Box 2, Folder 12	Exhibition Announcements, 1968-1979
Box 2, Folder 13	Exhibition Posters, 1966-1979 <i>(oversized material housed in OV4)</i>
Box 2, Folder 14	By David Novros (exhibition review; poems), 1967, 2008
Box OV 4, Folder	About/Mentioning David Novros - Exhibition Posters, 1966-1979 <i>(oversized material from box 2, folder 13)</i>

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Series 5: Photographs, 1976-1999

(Box 2; 0.1 linear ft.)

Photographs of Novros with family and include: brother Paul, Robert Graham, Rory and Romana (Ruby) McEwen, and unidentified individuals. Among the pictures of places are the Novros family's home in Van Nuys, California, and rocks at Sears Point, Arizona, painted with Indian images that influenced his art.

Box 2, Folder 15	David Novros, 1976-1995, undated
Box 2, Folder 16	David Novros with Others, 1976-1999, undated
Box 2, Folder 17	Unidentified Individual, 1976
Box 2, Folder 18	Arizona (Sears Point painted rocks), undated
Box 2, Folder 19	California (childhood home, Van Nuys; unidentified landscapes), undated
Box 2, Folder 20	Nevada, undated
Box 2, Folder 21	Unidentified Landscapes and Buildings, 1976, undated

[Return to Table of Contents](#)