



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Raymond Saroff papers,
1953-2009, in the Archives of American Art

Margot Chandler and Rachel Salzmann

2011 July 6 and 2015 April 22

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/>

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Raymond Saroff papers
Identifier:	AAA.saroraym
Date:	1953-2009
Extent:	1.2 Linear feet
Creator:	Saroff, Raymond
Language:	The collection is in English.
Summary:	The Raymond Saroff papers are dated 1953-2009 and comprise 1.2 linear feet. Letters, printed material and photographs compiled by Saroff document his interest in Claes Oldenburg and "Happenings." Also included are a videotape of Saroff's film <i>Claes Oldenburg's "Ray Gun Theater – 1962"</i> and receipts for artwork purchased for his modern art collection. The 2014 addition includes a catalog essay by curator and collector Howard Rose, Saroff's partner, for an exhibition of their folk art collection at Bard College (1991). Also found are financial records regarding his collections, related printed material, and photographs of artwork.

Administrative Information

Provenance

Gift of Raymond Saroff, 2011 and 2014.

Processing Information

The collection was processed to a minimal level and a finding aid prepared by Margot Chandler in 2011. The 2014 addition was processed to a minimal level and the finding aid updated by Rachel Salzmann in 2015.

Preferred Citation

Raymond Saroff papers, 1953-2009. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

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Biographical Note

Raymond Saroff (b. 1922), a resident of New York City, is a filmmaker and collector of both modern and folk art. Saroff pursued his interest in American folk art with his partner, Howard Rose, a scholar and art collector. In 1960, Saroff purchased *Leg*, a paper maché sculpture by Claes Oldenburg. Around the same time, he became interested in "Happenings." Using borrowed equipment, Saroff filmed a series of 1962 "Happenings" known as "Ray Gun Theater" that Oldenburg presented to small audiences in a storefront on East Second Street, New York City.

Scope and Content Note

The Raymond Saroff papers are dated 1953-2009 and comprise 1.2 linear feet. Letters, printed material and photographs compiled by Saroff document his interest in Claes Oldenburg and "Happenings." Also included are a videotape of Saroff's film *Claes Oldenburg's "Ray Gun Theater – 1962"* and receipts for artwork purchased for his modern art collection. The 2014 addition includes a catalog essay by curator and collector Howard Rose, Saroff's partner, for an exhibition of their folk art collection at Bard College (1991). Also found are financial records regarding his collections, related printed material, and photographs of artwork.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged in 2 series:

- Series 1: Raymond Saroff papers concerning Claes Oldenburg, 1953-2009 (Box 1; 0.5 linear feet)
 - Series 2: Addition to the Raymond Saroff papers, 1960-2009 (Boxes 1-2; 0.7 linear feet)
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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:

Collectors and collecting -- New York (State) -- New York

Types of Materials:

Photographs
Video recordings

Names:

Oldenburg, Claes, 1929-

Container Listing

Series 1: Raymond Saroff papers concerning Claes Oldenburg, 1953-2009

0.5 Linear feet (Box 1)

This series documents Saroff's interest in Claes Oldenburg. Of note is Saroff's film *Claes Oldenburg's Ray Gun Theater - 1962*. In 1962, ten "Happenings" conceived by Oldenburg known as "Ray Gun Theater" were presented in New York City at a store on East Second Street. Each evening-long event was filmed by Saroff, who then edited the film to approximately two hours before releasing it commercially. Correspondence concerns gifts and loans from Saroff's art collection. Financial records consist of sales receipts including one for his purchase of *Leg*. Printed material includes exhibition catalogs, clippings, and miscellaneous items. Photographs and a transparency are of Oldenburg's work in several media.

Box 1, Folder 1	Letters, 1969-2009
Box 1, Folder 2	Financial Records - Sales Receipts (A-Z by Gallery), 1953-1985
Box 1, Folder 3	<i>Claes Oldenburg's "Ray Gun Theater - 1962"</i> by Raymond Saroff (1962), 1995 <i>1 Videocassettes (VHS)</i>
Box 1	Printed Material
Box 1, Folder 4-7	Exhibition Catalogs, circa 1960-1995
Box 1, Folder 8	Clippings, 1960-1995
Box 1, Folder 9	Press Kit, 1995
Box 1, Folder 10	Miscellaneous Items, 1964-1995
Box 1, Folder 11	Photographs of Artwork by Oldenburg, 1960s-1970s <i>includes 1 color transparency</i>

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Series 2: Addition to the Raymond Saroff papers, 1960-2009

0.7 Linear feet (Boxes 1-2)

Correspondence pertains to sales and loans from Saroff's Oldenburg art collection as well as from the folk art collection developed and owned by Saroff and Howard Rose. Among the writings are Rose's published and unpublished manuscripts on American folk art. Financial records include a collection inventory with provenance, attribution, and price information. Also found are receipts from galleries and auction houses documenting loans and sales. Printed material includes clippings, exhibition announcements and catalogs. Photographs are of artwork.

Box 1, Folder 12	Correspondence about Claes Oldenburg Collection, 1983-1985, 1962
Box 1, Folder 13	Correspondence about Sales and Loans, 1989-1995, 1962
Box 1, Folder 14	Writings by Howard Rose on American Folk Art, 1982-1990
Box 1, Folder 15	Inventories of the Saroff and Rose Folk Art Collection, 1983-1995
Box 1, Folder 16	Financial Records - Receipts for Sales, Deliveries, Consignments, 1984-1995
Box 1	Printed Material
Box 1, Folder 17	Clippings, 1988-1992
Box 1, Folder 18	Announcements, Invitations and Press Releases, 1963-1999
Box 1, Folder 19	Exhibition Catalogs, 1965-1995
Box 1, Folder 20	Film Catalogs, 1963-1988
Box 2, Folder 1	Film Catalogs, 1963-1988
Box 2, Folder 2	Periodical, 1967, 1967
Box 2, Folder 3	Photographs of Artwork, circa 1960-2000 <i>includes slides and color transparencies</i>

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