



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Bertha Schaefer Papers
and Gallery Records, 1909-1975, bulk
1940-1965, in the Archives of American Art

Anna Rimel

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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/>

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Bertha Schaefer papers and gallery records
Identifier:	AAA.schabert
Date:	1909-1975 (bulk 1940-1965)
Extent:	4.6 Linear feet
Creator:	Schaefer, Bertha, 1895-1971
Language:	Collection is in English.
Summary:	The Bertha Schaefer papers and gallery records measure 4.6 linear feet and date from 1909-1975, with the bulk of the material dating from 1940-1965. The collection documents the Bertha Schaefer Gallery as well as Bertha Schaefer, the interior designer, through correspondence with artists and galleries, artist files, client files, exhibition material, printed material, financial material, biographical material, photographs, and six scrapbooks.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The Bertha Schaefer papers and gallery records were donated in several installments from 1969 to 1974 by Bertha Schaefer and Bertha Schaefer Gallery Inc. She also loaned material for microfilming in 1970. Paul Creamer donated three scrapbooks from the Bertha Schaefer Gallery and the New Bertha Schaefer Gallery in 1979. Additional material was donated in 1984 by Syracuse University.

Separated Materials

The Archives of American Art also holds material lent for microfilming. Reel N69-115 is comprised of papers concerning Alfred H. Maurer, including a scrapbook about Maurer from 1946 to 1969. Reel N70-60 contains material concerning Hale Woodruff, including correspondence, sketches and drawings, articles, photographs, catalogs, announcements, clipping, notes kept while a student of Diego Rivera, and a scrapbook. Lent material was returned to the lender and is not described in the collection container inventory.

Related Materials

Also found in the Archives of American Art is an oral history interview with Bertha Schaefer conducted by Paul Cummings, April 20-22, 1970.

Available Formats

Portions of the collection and materials lent for microfilming are available on 35mm microfilm reels N69-115, N69-126, N70-60, 42, 271, and 2129 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

The collection was processed to a minimal level and a finding aid prepared by Anna Rimel in 2014. The Archives of American Art has implemented minimal processing tactics when possible in order to increase information about and access to more of our collections. Minimal processing included arrangement to the series, subseries, and folder levels. Generally, items within folders were simply verified with folder titles, but not arranged further. Folders with boxes may not be numbered. The collection was rehoused in archival containers and folders, but not all staples and clips were removed.

Preferred Citation

Bertha Schaefer papers and gallery records, 1909-1975, bulk 1940-1965. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

Use of original papers requires an appointment.

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Biographical / Historical

Bertha Schaefer (1895-1971) was an interior designer and director of the Bertha Schaefer Gallery in New York, New York. Schaefer was born in Yazoo City, Mississippi to Emil and Julia (Marx) Schaefer. She received her B.A. on June 1, 1914 from Mississippi State College for Women, and received a diploma for interior decorating from the Parsons School of Design in New York City. In 1924, after living in Paris for 5 months, she opened Bertha Schaefer Interiors in New York. In 1944, she opened the Bertha Schaefer Gallery of Contemporary Art, which featured American and European paintings and sculpture. "The Modern House Comes Alive" (1947-1948) is one of the key exhibitions she created. Schaefer designed furniture for Joe Singer of M. Singer and Sons Furniture Company in New York, 1950-1961.

Schaefer won design awards from the Museum of Modern Art (1952) and the Decorators Club of New York (1959). In 1958, she was given an award of recognition from the U.S. Department of State for her gallery's assistance in the American program for the Brussels Universal and International Exhibition, and an outstanding achievement in interior design award from the American Institute of Interior Designers.

She was a member of several design organizations, including: the American Institute of Decorators, the Home Lighting Forum, the Illuminating Engineers Society, the American Federation of the Arts, and the Art Dealers Association of America. She was the president of the Decorators Club of New York from 1947-1948 and 1955-1957.

Schaefer was one of the first people to use fluorescent lighting in domestic spaces, with Percy Block as her first client, in 1939. In honor of Edison's birthday in 1953, she designed a bathroom for General Electric, applying new developments in lighting. She died on May 24, 1971, after which the gallery was renamed the New Bertha Schaefer Gallery.

Scope and Contents

The Bertha Schaefer papers and gallery records measure 4.6 linear feet and date from 1909-1975, with the bulk of the material dating from 1940-1965. The collection documents the Bertha Schaefer Gallery as well as Bertha Schaefer, the interior designer, through correspondence with artists and galleries, artist files, client files, exhibition material, printed material, financial material, biographical material, photographs, and six scrapbooks. Also found here are oversized blue prints and sketched plans of interior design projects, as well as a number of oversized photographic prints and stereo slides. Correspondence contains handwritten notes by many notable artists, including Marcel Duchamp, Pablo Picasso, Jackson Pollock, Ad Reinhardt, and Fernando Zobel, with a bulk of the letters from Balcomb Greene.

Separated into three series, the Bertha Schaefer Gallery records document the artists represented by and function of the Bertha Schaefer Gallery. The Bertha Schaefer papers pertain to Bertha Schaefer as an interior designer through a large number of photographic materials and client files. Six scrapbooks document artists Will Barnet, Ben-Zion, Balcomb Greene, and Nicolai Vasilieff, as well as the Bertha Schaefer gallery and the New Bertha Schaefer Gallery.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged as 3 series. Records are generally arranged by material type and chronologically thereafter.

- Series 1: Bertha Schaefer Gallery Records, 1909-1971 (0.8 linear feet; Box 1)
- Series 2: Bertha Schaefer Papers, 1914-1971 (2.6 linear feet; Boxes 1-3, 6-7, OV 8-9)
- Series 3: Scrapbooks, 1944-1975 (1.2 linear feet; Boxes 3-5)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Art galleries, Commercial -- New York (State) -- New York
Art, Modern -- 20th century -- New York (State) -- New York
Gallery directors
Gallery owners
Interior decoration
Interior decorators

Sculptors

Types of Materials:

Scrapbooks
Sketches

Names:

Barnet, Will, 1911-2012
Ben-Zion
Bertha Schaefer Gallery (New York, N.Y.)
Duchamp, Marcel, 1887-1968
Greene, Balcomb, 1904-1990
New Bertha Schaefer Gallery (New York, N.Y.)
Picasso, Pablo, 1881-1973
Pollock, Jackson, 1912-1956
Reinhardt, Ad, 1913-1967
Vasilieff, Nicholas
Zóbel, Fernando

Occupations:

Painters

Container Listing

Series 1: Bertha Schaefer Gallery Records, 1909-1971 (bulk 1950-1970)

0.8 Linear feet (Box 1)

English.

Correspondence includes handwritten and typed letters to and from Bertha Schaefer and Bertha Schaefer Gallery, from artists, publishers, universities, galleries, etc. There are letters, cards, and postcards, mostly addressed to Bertha Schaefer and concerning the gallery. Some correspondence may concern personal matters, but also concern gallery sales, artist representation by the Bertha Schaefer Gallery, artworks shipped, received, and exhibited. A bulk of the correspondence is from Balcomb Greene, and one folder is dedicated to correspondence from Dorothy Farr. Additionally, there are letters from many notable artists. Of note: an undated, handwritten letter from Marcel Duchamp; a letter dated August 26, 1963 written from Madrid and signed "Pablo" (presumed to be Pablo Picasso) and addresses his art dealer, Aime Maeght, and Bertha Schaefer's previously stated unwillingness "to deal with him"; a letter dated June 6, 1966 from Ad Reinhardt; and a letter dated October 14, 1948 from Jackson Pollock.

Also included are artist files on a small number of the artists who exhibited their work at the gallery; exhibition materials, including catalogs, announcements, posters, and some specific exhibitions; printed material and clippings; and four photographs -- of Bertha Schaefer in a souvenir photo at Mackinac Island, Schaefer in a group photo at the Brooklyn Museum's "14 Painter-Printmakers" exhibition, a color photo of a house in South Carolina, and one photo of Hale Woodruff's "Figure" painting. Note that the printed material may contain clippings referencing Bertha Schaefer as an interior designer. See Box 3 for more printed material and clippings pertaining to interior design.

This series consists of 5 subseries, and is arranged alphabetically where possible, and chronologically thereafter.

- 1.1 Correspondence, 1932-1971
- 1.2 Artist Files, 1909-1970
- 1.3 Exhibition Files, 1945-1966
- 1.4 Printed Material, 1923-1968
- 1.5 Photographs, circa 1950-1958

1.1: Correspondence, 1932-1971 (bulk 1950-1970)

Included here are handwritten and typewritten letters both to and from Bertha Schaefer concerning the Bertha Schaefer Gallery, artists represented, artists inquiring about shows, artwork sold, etc. The bulk of the correspondence is from abstract painter Balcomb Greene.

Box 1, Folder 1	Correspondence, 1932-1935
Box 1, Folder 2	Correspondence, circa 1940s (Includes a letter from Marcel Duchamp)
Box 1, Folder 3	Correspondence, 1940-1957
Box 1, Folder 4	Correspondence, circa 1946-circa 1966 (Bulk of letters from Balcomb Greene)

- Box 1, Folder 5-9 Correspondence, 1948-1959
(Includes a letter from Jackson Pollock)
- Box 1, Folder 10 Correspondence, circa 1958-1967
(Includes a letter from Fernando Zobel)
- Box 1, Folder 11-19 Correspondence, 1960-1967
(Includes a letter from Pablo Picasso and a letter from Ad Reinhardt)
- Box 1, Folder 20-23 Correspondence, 1967-1969
- Box 1, Folder 24-26 Correspondence, 1970-1971
- Box 1, Folder 27 Correspondence - From Dorothy Farr, 1953-1961

1.2: Artist Files, 1909-1970 (bulk 1950-1965)

Included here are price lists and inventories, artist bios, photographs of artists and artwork, exhibition announcements and catalogs, clippings, and printed material.

- Box 1, Folder 28-29 Ben-Zion, 1942-1964
- Box 1, Folder 30 Alfred Jensen, 1957-1958
- Box 1, Folder 31 Roger Jorgensen, circa 1965-1970
- Box 1, Folder 32 Alfred Maurer, 1909-1935
- Box 1, Folder 33 Aline Rhonie, circa 1960
- Box 1, Folder 34 Henry Toledano, 1953-1954

1.3: Exhibition Files, 1945-1966

Found here are files concerning two exhibitions: "The Modern House Comes to Life" and "Self-Portrait Sculptures by the Blind Exhibition," which include photographs of artwork, press releases, exhibition announcements, correspondence, and clippings.

- Box 1, Folder 35 "The Modern House Comes to Life" (1947-1949), 1947-1949
English.
- Box 1, Folder 36-37 "Self-Portrait Sculptures by the Blind" (1950), 1950-1951
English.

1.4: Printed Material, 1923-1968 (bulk 1954-1965)

Included here are clippings, press releases, exhibition announcements and catalogs, and a magazine article typescript.

Box 1, Folder 38-44 News Clippings, 1923-1968
English.

Box 1, Folder 45-47 Exhibition Announcements and Catalogs, 1945-1966
English.

Box 1, Folder 48 Press Releases and Magazine Article Typescript, 1954-1964
English.

1.5: Photographs, circa 1950-1958

Found here are four photographs -- of Bertha Schaefer in a souvenir photo at Mackinac Island, Schaefer in a group photo at the Brooklyn Museum's "14 Painter-Printmakers" exhibition, a color photo of a house in South Carolina, and one photo of Hale Woodruff's "Figure" painting.

Box 1, Folder 49 Photographs, circa 1950-1958
English.

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Series 2: Bertha Schaefer Papers, 1914-1971 (bulk 1947-1960)

2.6 Linear feet (Boxes 1-3, 6-7, OV 8-9)

English.

Included here are materials pertaining to Bertha Schaefer as an interior designer, furniture designer, and designer of innovative lighting.

Client files contain individuals and companies for whom Schaefer worked as an interior designer, and includes sketches, blueprints, fabric, tile, carpet, wallpaper, and color samples; financial material contains invoices and supplies purchased for interior designing projects. An extensive number of photographs of interior design spaces include oversized prints, stereo slides, and color transparencies. Biographical material contains certificates of graduation, awards, recognitions, invitations, resumes, and death condolences. Writings contain annotated typescripts and drafts of lectures and speeches given by Bertha Schaefer and David Porter; printed material concerns interior design shows, furniture designs, lighting designs, biographical sketches, all in newspaper or magazine clippings. Note that some of the printed material may also contain Bertha Schaefer Gallery references.

This series consists of 6 subseries and is arranged alphabetically when possible, and chronologically thereafter.

- 2.1: Client Files, circa 1947-1965
- 2.2: Financial Material, 1930-1968
- 2.3: Photographs, circa 1947-1959
- 2.4: Biographical Material, 1914-1971
- 2.5: Writings, 1947-1965
- 2.6: Printed Material, 1922-1971

2.1: Client Files, circa 1947-1965

Included here are files pertaining to individuals and companies for whom Bertha Schaefer conducted interior design projects. Materials include fabric, tile, wallpaper, wooden shade, and carpet samples, as well as sketches, plans, and blue prints. Folders are arranged alphabetically.

Box 1, Folder 50-51	Mrs. Appleget, circa 1950s
Box 1, Folder 52	Mrs. Jacob A. Begner, circa 1955
Box 1, Folder 53-54	Bing and Bing, circa 1958 (Oversized material housed in OV 8-9)
Box 1, Folder 55	Frances T. Cahn, 1960
Box 1, Folder 56	Mrs. Howard Cullman, circa 1950s
Box 1, Folder 57	Mrs. Louis S. Davidson, circa 1950s
Box 1, Folder 58	Mr. and Mrs. Charles Diamond, circa 1950s
Box 2, Folder 1	Mrs. Saul F. Dribben, circa 1950s

Box 2, Folder 2-3	Mrs. Angelika W. Frink , circa 1962
Box 2, Folder 4	General Electric Bathroom (BBDO), 1953 (Oversized material housed in OV 9)
Box 2, Folder 5-6	Col. and Mrs. William W. Goodman, circa 1950
Box 2, Folder 7-9	Mrs. Monroe Gutman, circa 1950s
Box 2, Folder 10	Haffenreffer, circa 1950
Box 2, Folder 11	Mrs. Herbert Haldenstein, circa 1955 (Oversized material housed in OV 8)
Box 2, Folder 12-13	Mr. and Mrs. C. W. Harrison, 1957-1964 (Oversized material housed in OV 8-9)
Box 2, Folder 14	Sidney Hechinger, 1937-1940
Box 2, Folder 15	Sidney Hechinger, circa 1947
Box 2, Folder 16	Mrs. Eric D. Hirsch, 1958 (Oversized material housed in OV 8)
Box 2, Folder 17	Mrs. Harris Jones, circa 1950s
Box 2, Folder 18	Mrs. J. M. Kaplan, circa 1957
Box 2, Folder 19-20	Mr. and Mrs. Alex Kerman, circa 1950s
Box 2, Folder 21	Mr. Milton W. King - Office, circa 1950
Box 2, Folder 22	Mr. Milton W. King - Photographs, circa 1950
Box 2, Folder 23-24	Mr. and Mrs. Thomas B. Leman, 1954-1963
Box 2, Folder 25	Mr. and Mrs. Thomas B. Leman - Plans and Sketches, 1954-1963 (Oversized material housed in OV 8-9)
Box 2, Folder 26	Mrs. John Nettleton, 1950
Box 2, Folder 27	The New York Times - Rooms, circa 1950s
Box 2, Folder 28	Paris Apartment, 1961-1965

Box 2, Folder 29-30	Mrs. Samuel J. Rosensohn, circa 1938
Box 2, Folder 31	Marx Schaefer, circa 1950s
Box 2, Folder 32	Mrs. Carl Stern, circa 1959 (Oversized material housed in OV 9)
Box 2, Folder 33	Mrs. E. P. Townsend, circa 1950s
Box 2, Folder 34	Mrs. Alan Warshow, 1957-1959
Box 2, Folder 35	Mr. and Mrs. Milton Weinberg, circa 1950s
Oversize 8	Oversized: Bing and Bing, Removed from Box 1, Folder 54
Oversize 9	Oversized: Bing and Bing, Removed from Box 1, Folder 54
Oversize 9	Oversized: General Electric Bathroom (BBDO), Removed from Box 2, Folder 4
Oversize 8	Oversized: Mrs. Herbert Haldenstein, Removed from Box 2, Folder 11
Oversize 8	Oversized: Mr. and Mrs. C. W. Harrison, Removed from Box 2, Folder 12
Oversize 9	Oversized: Mr. and Mrs. C. W. Harrison, Removed from Box 2, Folder 12
Oversize 8	Oversized: Mrs. Eric D. Hirsch, Removed from Box 2, Folder 16
Oversize 8	Oversized: Mr. and Mrs. Thomas B. Lemann, Removed from Box 2, Folder 25
Oversize 9	Oversized: Mr. and Mrs. Thomas B. Lemann, Removed from Box 2, Folder 25
Oversize 9	Oversized: Mrs. Carl Stern, Removed from Box 2, Folder 32

2.2: Financial Material, 1930-1968

Found here are materials relating to some of Bertha Schaefer's interior design projects, including invoices, receipts, and supplies lists.

Box 3, Folder 1	Interior Design Financial Material, 1930-1968
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2.3: Photographs, circa 1947-1959

Found here are color transparencies, snapshots, stereo slides, and large and oversized black and white photographic prints of Bertha Schaefer's interior design projects. Folders are primarily arranged chronologically.

Box 3, Folder 2-3	Interior Design Photographs, circa 1947-1948
Box 3, Folder 4	Stereo Slides - Gutman Apartment, circa 1950s
Box 3, Folder 5	Stereo Slides - Schwarz Apartment, circa 1950s
Box 3, Folder 6	Stereo Slides - Perrin Apartment, circa 1950s
Box 3, Folder 7	Color Transparencies of Interiors Photographs, circa 1950s
Oversize 10	Color Transparencies of Interiors Photographs
Box 3, Folder 8-9	Stereo Slides - National Home Furnishings Show, 1951
Box 3, Folder 10	Stereo Slides - Saks Fifth Avenue Window, 1952
Box 3, Folder 11	Stereo Slides - Home Furnishing Shows, 1952-1953
Box 3, Folder 12-13	Interior Design Photographs, 1952-1959
Box 3, Folder 14	Stereo Slides - Home Furnishings Show, 1954
Box 3, Folder 15	Stereo Slides - "Paris in New York", 1954
Box 3, Folder 16-17	Interior Design Photographs, 1954-1958
Box 6, Folder 1	Oversized Photograph of Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner, 1949
Box 6, Folder 2-8	Oversized Photographs of Interior Designs, 1931-1960
Box 7, Folder 1-7	Oversized Photographs of Interior Designs, 1937-1950

2.4: Biographical Material, 1914-1971

Included here are materials concerning Bertha Schaefer, the individual, such as certificates of awards, diplomas, invitations, resumes, miscellaneous notes, and condolences upon her death in 1971.

Box 3, Folder 18	Biographical Material, 1914-1971 (Oversized material housed in OV 8)
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Oversize 8 Oversized: Biographical Material, Removed from Box 3, Folder 18

2.5: Writings, 1947-1965

Found here are typescripts of speeches and talks given by Schaefer and by David Porter, including annotations and drafts, and some magazine article typescripts.

Box 3, Folder 19 Writings by Bertha Schaefer, 1947-1963

Box 3, Folder 20 Writings by David Porter, 1964-1965

2.6: Printed Material, 1922-1971

Found here are magazine and newspaper article clippings pertaining to Bertha Schaefer's interior design, furniture design, and lighting design projects. Folders are arranged chronologically.

Box 3, Folder 21 Clippings - Miscellaneous and Articles, 1922-1964

Box 3, Folder 22-24 Clippings - Magazine Articles, circa 1948-1957

Box 3, Folder 25 Clippings - Magazine Articles and Catalog, 1958

Box 3, Folder 26 Clippings, 1965-1971

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Series 3: Scrapbooks, 1944-1975

1.2 Linear feet (Boxes 3-5)

English.

Found here are scrapbooks for Will Barnet, Ben-Zion, Balcomb Greene, and Nicolai Vaselieff, as well as for the Bertha Schaefer Gallery and the New Bertha Schaefer Gallery. Scrapbooks include a variety of materials such as newspaper and magazine clippings, exhibition materials, and some exhibition and artist catalogs.

Scrapbooks are arranged alphabetically by artist, followed by the Bertha Schaefer Gallery and the New Bertha Schaefer Gallery.

Box 3, Folder 27-33	Scrapbook, Will Barnet, 1946-1963
Box 3, Folder 34-36	Scrapbook, Ben-Zion, 1946-1959
Box 3, Folder 37-41	Scrapbook, Balcomb Greene, 1945-1961
Box 4, Folder 1-2	Scrapbook, Balcomb Greene, 1945-1961
Box 4, Folder 3	Scrapbook, Nicolai Vasilieff, 1947-1951
Box 4, Folder 4-13	Scrapbook, Bertha Schaefer Gallery, 1944-1963
Box 5, Folder 1-9	Scrapbook, Bertha Schaefer Gallery, 1956-1971
Box 5, Folder 10-11	Scrapbook, New Bertha Schaefer Gallery, 1972-1975

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