



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Sheldon Ross Gallery Records, 1970-2007, bulk 1976-1995, in the Archives of American Art

Harriet E. Shapiro and Christopher DeMairo

Support for the processing of this collection was provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art. A small portion of the collection was processed with funding provided by the Smithsonian Collections Care and Preservation Fund.

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Sheldon Ross Gallery records
Date:	circa 1970-2007 (bulk 1976-1995)
Identifier:	AAA.shelrosg
Creator:	Sheldon Ross Gallery
Extent:	2.2 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	The records of the Sheldon Ross Gallery, Birmingham, Michigan, measure 2.2 linear feet and are dated 1970-2007, with the bulk of materials dating from 1976-1995. The majority of the collection consists of artists' files. About half of the materials relate to Romare Bearden's work and his relationship with Sheldon Ross, the gallery owner. Also included are artists' files regarding George Grosz and Michigan artists. The contents of artists' files vary but generally include biographical information, printed materials and photographic images. The collection also contains correspondence, exhibition files, and photographs documenting the gallery's activities.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The records were donated to the Archives of American Art in 2010 and 2022 by Phyllis Ross, widow of Sheldon Ross.

Processing Information

The collection was processed by Harriet E. Shapiro in 2011. The 2022 addition to the collection was processed and added to the finding aid by Christopher DeMairo in 2022.

Preferred Citation

Sheldon Ross Gallery records, circa 1970-2007, bulk 1976-1995. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

This collection is open for research. Access to original papers requires an appointment and is limited to the Archives' Washington, D.C. Research Center.

Researchers interested in accessing audiovisual recordings in this collection must use access copies. Contact References Services for more information.

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Biographical Note

The Sheldon Ross Gallery (1975-1993), Birmingham, Michigan, and later Sheldon Ross Fine Arts and Sheldon Ross Fine Arts LLC (1993-2000) were operated by Sheldon Ross until his death in 2000. The Sheldon Ross Gallery was the only gallery in the Detroit area to consistently show German Expressionist art, emphasizing graphics. However, the gallery and Ross are best known for their early and continued support of Romare Bearden's work. The exhibition history shows a balance between an interest in local artists and an effort to offer diverse artwork from broad based sources.

Scope and Contents

The records of the Sheldon Ross Gallery, Birmingham, Michigan, measure 2.2 linear feet and are dated 1970-2007, with the bulk of materials dating from 1976-1995. The majority of the collection consists of artists' files. About half of the materials relate to Romare Bearden's work and his relationship with Sheldon Ross, the gallery owner. Also included are artists' files regarding George Grosz and Michigan artists. The contents of artists' files vary but generally include biographical information, printed materials and photographic images. The collection also contains correspondence, exhibition files, and photographs documenting the gallery's activities.

The gallery records document its exhibition history, exhibition reviews, sales of artwork, and Ross' significant projects. Also included are photographs and slides documenting much of the artwork exhibited. Materials relating to Romare Bearden include exhibition files, writings by and about Bearden and his artwork, and correspondence between Bearden and Ross during the years 1976-1989. There are many catalogs of Bearden's solo exhibitions at galleries, museums, and institutions, as well as exhibition reviews from newspapers and magazines, and images of Bearden's works.

The gallery exhibited other well-known artists including 20th century American artists and German Expressionists, notably George Grosz, who instructed Bearden at the Art Students League in New York. Found in the records are exhibition catalogues, price lists, inventory cards and artists' background materials. Also found is correspondence with museums, artists and clients, and slides and other photographic material of artwork offered by the gallery. Of note is correspondence between Sheldon Ross and the FBI concerning Ross' participation as an expert witness in a prosecution of individuals who were involved in Romare Bearden forgeries.

There are drawings of Sheldon Ross and The Sheldon Ross Galley by his son, Robert Ross. Photographs are of Sheldon Ross and Romare Bearden, Sheldon Ross with family and friends, and the predecessor gallery, Middle Earth Gallery.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged in 7 Series. Materials are generally arranged by record type and chronologically thereafter.

Missing Title:

- Series 1: Gallery History, 1976-2000 (Box 1, OV 4; 0.2 linear feet)
- Series 2: Correspondence, 1982-1999 (Box 1; 0.1 linear feet)
- Series 3: Exhibition Files, 1976-1988 (Box 1; 0.1 linear feet)

- Series 4: Artists' Files, 1968-2007 (Boxes 1-2, 6; 1.3 linear feet)
- Series 5: Printed Material, 1976-2000 (Box 2; 2 folders; OV 4; 0.2 linear feet)
- Series 6: Drawings by Robert Ross, after 1975, (OV 5; 0.1 linear feet)
- Series 7: Photographic Materials, circa 1970-2000 (Boxes 2-3, OV 5; 0.2 linear feet)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Arts -- Forgeries
Expressionism (Art)

Types of Materials:

Drawings

Names:

Art Students League (New York, N.Y.) -- Faculty
Bearden, Romare, 1911-1988
Grosz, George, 1893-1959
Middle Earth Gallery
Ross, Sheldon, 1925-2000
United States. Federal Bureau of Investigation

Functions:

Art galleries, Commercial -- Michigan

Container Listing

Series 1: Gallery History, 1976-2000

0.2 Linear feet (Box 1, OV 4)

Scope and Contents: Material concerning the Sheldon Ross Gallery history consists of newspaper clippings, press releases and mailings to clients. There also is a 1996 videotaped panel discussion at the Snug Harbor Cultural Center in Staten Island, New York in which Sheldon Ross discusses his role as an art dealer and collector. The Middle Earth Gallery folder consists of press releases and photographs of Sheldon Ross in the Gallery with local artists.

Box 1, Folder 1 Sheldon Ross Gallery, 1976-2000

Box 1, Folder 2 Middle Earth Gallery, (Predecessor of Sheldon Ross Gallery), 1970-1972

Oversize 4 Middle Earth Gallery, Photograph, after 1970
Notes: From Box 1, folder 2

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Series 2: Correspondence, 1982-1999

0.1 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Sheldon Ross Gallery correspondence includes letters between Sheldon Ross and the Whitney Museum concerning Ross' loan to the Museum of a work by Milton Avery and correspondence with galleries and collectors concerning sales of artwork. Special Agent Catherine Begley of the FBI corresponded with Ross regarding his participation as an expert witness in a prosecution for alleged forgery of Bearden's work. Also found are cards from friends and associates sent on the occasion of Sheldon Ross' 60th birthday.

Box 1, Folder 3 Sheldon Ross Gallery Correspondence, 1982-1999

Box 1, Folder 4 Sheldon Ross 60th Birthday Cards, 1985

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Series 3: Exhibition Files, 1976-1988

0.1 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: This series includes various exhibition lists with prices and write-ups concerning artists such as Kaethe Kollwitz, Max Beckmann, Karl Staber, John Sloan and Oscar Bluemner.

The "Die Shaffenden" exhibition, held at the University of Manitoba, in Winnipeg, Canada, is documented by inventory cards and price lists, loan correspondence, and an exhibition announcement.

Box 1, Folder 5	Exhibition Lists, 1976-1988
Box 1, Folder 6	"Die Shaffenden Exhibition"(1976), 1976

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Series 4: Artists' Files, 1967-2007

1.3 Linear feet (Boxes 1-2, 6)

Scope and Contents: The artists' files comprise about half of the Sheldon Ross Gallery records and most of these materials concern Romare Bearden. Also featured are records relating to George Grosz and Michigan artists Sue Lindburg [Browse], Susan Hauptman, Ron Morosan, Leo Mardirosian, Caroline Court, Israel Kaplanski, Gordon Orears and Allie McGhee. The types and quantities of materials vary from one artist to another.

The Romare Bearden materials include correspondence between Romare Bearden and Sheldon Ross spanning almost twenty years as well as correspondence with publishing houses, other galleries, and museums. Biographical material includes a recording of a 1988 National Public Radio program entitled "Collage: From the Life and Art of Romare Bearden," a list of solo exhibitions from 1940-1980, and a selected bibliography concerning the artist and his work. Exhibition files include price lists, drafts of writings, correspondence, and some printed material. There also is a writing by Bearden, "Rectangular Structures in My Montage Paintings" as well as copies of essays about Bearden and his work.

Materials concerning George Grosz include newspaper clippings, price lists and exhibition catalogs in addition to many photographs of works. The Michigan artists file contains some biographical material, newspaper clippings, photographs of artworks, and sketches of "art awards" by an unidentified person.

Additional material concerning Michigan artists is found in a folder titled "Exhibition Lists" folder in Series 3, Exhibition Files.

Box 1	Romare Bearden
Box 1, Folder 7	Biographical Material, 1980-1996
Box 1, Folder 8	Letters to Sheldon Ross, 1974-1989
Box 1, Folder 9	Letters from Sheldon Ross, 1976-1988
Box 6, Folder 1	Correspondence, Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1976-1990
Box 6, Folder 2	Correspondence, June Kelly and Jerald Melberg Gallery Inc., 1987
Box 6, Folder 3	General Correspondence, 1971-2000
Box 6, Folder 4	Dealers and Customers, 1982-1992
Box 6, Folder 5	Estate Papers, 1980-1988
Box 1, Folder 10	Writings by and about Romare Bearden, 1969-1983
Box 6, Folder 6	Exhibitions Held at Sheldon Ross Gallery, 1971-1992
Box 1, Folder 11	The Mint Museum, 1970-1981

Box 6, Folder 7	Exhibition, Romare Bearden, 1970-1980 (1980-1981), Mint Museum of Art, Brooklyn Museum, 1980-1982
Box 6, Folder 8	Exhibition, The Art of Romare Bearden (1984), Grand Rapids Art Museum, 1983-1984
Box 6, Folder 9	Exhibition, The Portrayal of the Black Musician in American Art (1986-1987), California Afro-American Museum, 1986-1987
Box 1, Folder 12	The Studio Museum in Harlem, 1991-1993
Box 6, Folder 10	Exhibition, Memory and Metaphor: The Art of Romare Bearden, 1940-1987 (1991), The Studio Museum in Harlem, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, 1989-1991
Box 1, Folder 13	Exhibitions at Sheldon Ross Gallery, 1971-1992
Box 1, Folder 14	Group Exhibitions, circa 1970-1996
Box 1, Folder 15	Solo Exhibitions, New York, 1968-1986
Box 1, Folder 16	Solo Exhibitions, Other, 1986-2007
Box 6, Folder 11	Exhibitions Held Elsewhere, 1992, 1996
Box 6, Folder 12	Folder, "The Painted Sounds of Romare Bearden", undated
Box 6, Folder 13	Invoices, The J. L. Hudson Gallery, 1967-1971
Box 1, Folder 18	Clippings, 1971-2001
Box 1, Folder 19	Clippings, 1971-2001
Box 1, Folder 20	Clippings, 1971-2001
Box 1, Folder 21	Photographs, Artwork "Sold" and "Unsold," after 1970
Box 1, Folder 22	Transparencies, after 1970
Box 1, Folder 23	Reproductions, after 1970
Box 6, Folder 14-15	Reproductions of Bearden's Work, 1991-1998
Box 2, Folder 1	George Grosz, 1979-1988
Box 2, Folder 2	George Grosz Photographic Material, 1976-1986

Box 2, Folder 3

Michigan Artists, 1978-1999

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Series 5: Printed Material, 1976-2000

0.2

Scope and Contents: Found are gallery exhibition reviews which appeared mostly in Detroit area newspapers. The exhibition announcements are both postcards and more elaborate materials, including some posters.

Box 2, Folder 4	Clippings, 1976-2000
Box 2, Folder 5	Announcements, 1976-1988
Oversize 4	Announcements, 1976-1988 Notes: From Box 2, folder 5

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Series 6: Drawings by Robert Ross, after 1975

0.1 Linear feet (OV 5)

Scope and Contents: This file contains two drawings by Sheldon Ross' son, Robert Ross; one is of the gallery and the other of Sheldon Ross in his gallery.

Oversize 5

Oversized Drawings by Robert Ross, after 1975

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Series 7: Photographic Materials, circa 1970-2000

0.2 Linear feet (Boxes 2-3, OV 5)

Scope and Contents: The core photographic material includes a collection of 35-mm color slides of artwork by Romare Bearden and George Grosz. There also are photographs of artwork, Sheldon Ross, and others involved in the gallery.

Box 2, Folder 6	Photographs of Sheldon Ross, Friends and Family, after 1970 Notes: Oversized materials housed in OV 5
Box 2, Folder 7	Artwork, after 1970
Box 2, Folder 8	Transparencies and Negatives of Artwork, after 1970
Box 3, Folder 1-3	Slides of Artwork, 1975-2000 Notes: 3 slide boxes
Oversize 5	Photographs, after 1970 Notes: From Box 2, folder 6

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