



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

ACA Galleries

**A Finding Aid to the ACA Galleries Records,
1917-1963, in the Archives of American Art**

by Jayna M. Hanson

Funding for the digitization of this collection was
provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution
Creator:	ACA Galleries
Title:	The ACA Galleries records
Dates:	1917-1963
Quantity:	1.0 linear feet
Abstract:	The scattered records of the ACA (American Contemporary Art) Galleries date from 1917 through 1963 and include writings by founder Herman Baron, artists Philip Evergood and Anton Refregier, and art critic Elizabeth McCausland; printed materials; and photographs of Baron, ACA artists, art collectors, works of art, and exhibitions. Correspondence is with David Burliuk, Philip Evergood, William Gropper, Lewis Mumford, Moses Sawyer, Max Weber, and others. Also found is a small group of Herman Baron's personal papers.

Administrative Information

Provenance

Ella Baron, widow of the ACA Galleries' founder Herman Baron, donated the records to the Archives of American Art in 1965 and 1966.

Related Material

The Archives of American Art holds the Herman Baron papers, dating from 1937-1967 which were donated by Syracuse University, George Arents Research Library in 1984. Some exhibition catalogs may be found here.

Alternative Forms Available

The collection collection was digitized in 2010 and is available via the Archives of American Art's website.

Processing Information

The papers were microfilmed upon receipt on reel D304. The records were re-processed by Jayna Hanson in August 2008 and digitized in their entirety in 2010 with funding provided by the Terra Foundation for American Art.

Preferred Citation

ACA Galleries records, 1917-1963. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions on Access

Use of original papers requires an appointment.

Ownership and Literary Rights

The ACA Galleries records are owned by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Literary rights as possessed by the donor have been dedicated to public use for research, study, and scholarship. The collection is subject to all copyright laws.

Historical Note

Herman Baron, Stuart Davis, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, and Adolf Dehn founded the American Contemporary Art (ACA) Galleries on August 16, 1932. Located at 1269 Madison Avenue in New York City, the galleries' first show featured watercolorist Hy Cohen. Baron encouraged freedom of expression and did not censor the artworks displayed in his gallery. As a result, the gallery became an outlet for generally unknown and socially conscious artists, including the Social Realists.

Born in Lithuania in 1892, Herman Baron immigrated to the United States as a child. He served in World War I and later attended New York University. Baron founded and edited *Glazier's Journal* (later *Glass Digest*) in 1924 as the first journal for the professional glazing trade. Additionally, he wrote short stories and plays for *American Hebrew* and *Young Israel*.

In response to economic issues facing the art market during the depression of 1930s, ACA Galleries organized relief efforts to financially support their artists. During this period, the gallery became closely allied with militant artists' organizations and some of the more politically radical artists. In 1935, the ACA Galleries and Herman Baron hosted the first meeting of the American Artists' Congress in the gallery space.

The ACA Galleries featured exhibitions of works by artists David Burliuk, Stuart Davis, Philip Evergood, William Gropper, Robert Gwathmey, Joe Jones, Rockwell Kent, Lee Krasner, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Lewis Mumford, Louise Nevelson, Alton Pickens, Moses Soyer, Raphael Soyer, Max Weber, Art Young, and others. Baron also organized exhibitions of many artists employed by or associated with the Works Progress Administration of the federal arts program. Due to the progressive nature of the works of art found in the ACA Galleries, Herman Baron came under considerable criticism during the McCarthy Era. Baron was condemned by Representative George A. Dondero for supporting "un-American" sympathies and was forced often to defend his gallery and artists.

For years the gallery focused on artists rights and supporting the work of artists, rather than a profit. In the 1950s, a shift occurred when Baron's nephew Sidney Bergen initiated professional business practices and transformed the gallery into a profitable venture. Now located at 529 West 20th Street in New York City, ACA Galleries continues to promote and support various social causes.

Scope and Content Note

The scattered records of the ACA (American Contemporary Art) Galleries date from 1917 through 1963 and include writings by founder Herman Baron, artists Philip Evergood and Anton Refregier, and art critic Elizabeth McCausland; printed materials; and photographs of Baron, ACA artists, art collectors, works of art, and exhibitions. Correspondence is with David Burliuk, Philip Evergood, William Gropper, Lewis Mumford, Moses Sawyer, Max Weber, and others. Also found is a small group of Herman Baron's personal papers.

The records are a rich resource for documenting the Social Realist artists and the militant socialist artists during the great depression and the post-World War II era of "McCarthyism".

Correspondence with ACA artists consists of letters from Philip Evergood, David Burliuk, William Gropper, Robert Gwathmey, Joseph Hirsch, Lewis Mumford, Elizabeth Olds, Alton Pickens, Moses Soyer, Max Weber, and Art Young. Some of the letters concern the socialist and communist views of some of the artists, including responses to Congressional Representative George A. Dondero's public statements and attacks on modern art as a conspiracy to spread communism in the United States. There is a letter written by Holger Cahill to the editor of *Time* magazine concerning WPA artists. Also found is a letter from Raphael Soyer written to the ACA Galleries concerning the American Artists' Congress.

Writings include Herman Baron's written history of the ACA Galleries and scattered pages of Baron's book on Joe Jones and William Gropper. There are essays and writings by art critic Elizabeth McCausland, and artists Anton Refregier and Philip Evergood. Printed materials consist of ACA publications, newspaper clippings, published articles, printed illustrations by Philip Evergood, and printed materials about Congressman Dondero.

Photographs are of David Burliuk, Bruce Calder, Nicolai Cikovsky, Hy Cohen, Robert Cronbach, Alexander Dobkin, Philip Evergood, Mike Gold, Chaim Gross, William Gropper, Joe Jones, Mervin Jules, Irene Rice Pereira, Geri Pine, Philip Reisman, Vic Shifreen, Harry Sternberg, Moses Soyer, Raphael Soyer, James Baare

Turnbull, Nicky Walker, Abraham Walkowitz, Nat Werner, and Art Young. Photographers include Berenice Abbott, Arnold Newman, and Alfredo Valente. Additional photographs are of unidentified installations or exhibitions.

Herman Baron's personal papers include letters written to his wife and friends during World War I, writings by Baron for various magazines including *Glazier's Journal*. Personal photographs are of Herman Baron in his army uniform. There is also an obituary for Herman Baron written by art critic Elizabeth McCausland.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 5 series:

Series 1: Correspondence, circa 1930s-1960s (Box 1; 0.25 linear feet)

Series 2: Writings and Notes, 1938-circa 1960s (Box 1; 8 folders)

Series 3: Printed Material, 1939-1960 (Box 2; 4 folders)

Series 4: Photographs, circa 1930s-circa 1960s (Box 2; 0.25 linear feet)

Series 5: Herman Baron Personal Papers, circa 1910s, 1940s-1960s (Box 2-3; 0.3 linear feet)

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Archives of American Art under the following terms:

Subjects:

Dondero, George Anthony, 1886-1968

Subjects-Topical:

Art, American
Art dealers--New York (State)--New York
Art galleries, Commercial--New York (State)--New York
Gallery directors--New York (State)--New York
Politics in art
World War, 1914-1918

Types of Materials:

Photographs
Writings

Names:

Abbott, Berenice, 1898-1991
American Artist's Congress
American Contemporary Art Gallery
Baron, Herman, 1892-1961
Burliuk, David, 1882-1967
Cahill, Holger, 1887-1960
Evergood, Philip, 1901-1973
Gropper, William, 1897-
Gwathmey, Robert, 1903-1988
Hirsch, Joseph, 1910-
McCausland, Elizabeth, 1899-1965
Mumford, Lewis, 1895-
Newman, Arnold, 1918-photographer
Olds, Elizabeth, 1896-
Pickens, Alton
Refregier, Anton, 1905-

Soyer, Moses, 1899-1974
Soyer, Raphael, 1899-1987
Valente, Alfredo
Weber, Max, 1881-1961
Young, Art, 1866-1943

Series Descriptions/Container Listing

Series 1: Correspondence, circa 1930s-1960s (Box 1; 0.25 linear feet)

This series contains Herman Baron's ACA Galleries' correspondence with artists, collectors, and museums. Some of the letters concern Works Progress Administration projects and the American Artists' Congress.

Correspondence is arranged by artist and subsequently by date with undated materials filed at the end. General correspondence is arranged chronologically. This series has been scanned in its entirety.

Box	Folder	
1	1	General Correspondence, circa 1930s-1960

Box	Folder	
1	2	Burliuk, David, 1943-1963

Box	Folder	
1	3-4	Evergood, Philip, circa 1940s-1960s (2 folders)
	5	Gropper, William, 1939-1943, 1952-1960
	6	Gwathmey, Robert, 1946-1960

Box	Folder	
1	7	Hirsch, Joseph, 1958-circa 1960
	8	Mumford, Lewis, 1937-1940
	9	Olds, Elizabeth, 1955-1961
	10	Pickens, Alton, 1957-1960
	11	Soyer, Moses, 1958

Box	Folder	
1	12	Weber, Max, 1939-1940
	13	Young, Art, 1938-1944, circa 1940s

Series 2: Writings and Notes, 1938-circa 1960s (Box 1; 8 folders)

This series contains writings by Herman Baron concerning the founding and the history of the ACA Galleries, ACA artists, and the clash of McCarthyism and American art. Also found are writings by ACA artists Philip Evergood and Anton Refregier, and art critic Elizabeth McCausland.

Writings and Notes are arranged alphabetically by author. This series has been scanned in its entirety.

Box	Folder	
1	14	"ACA Uptown," by Herman Baron, circa 1950s

Box	Folder	
1	15	McCarthyism and American Art articles, by Herman Baron, circa early-1950s

- 16 Drafts, by Herman Baron, circa 1950s
- 17 "The Humanist Approach in Art," by Philip Evergood, circa 1950s
- 18 Writings and Notes, by Philip Evergood, circa 1950s

Box	Folder	
1	19	"Photomontages by a Social Satirist," by Elizabeth McCausland, 1938 October 16
	20	"The American Artists Gift Exhibition," by Anton Refregier, circa 1940s

Box	Folder	
1	21	"On the Humanity of Abstract Painting," by Meyer Schapiro, circa 1960

Series 3: Printed Material, 1939-1960 (Box 2; 4 folders)

This series contains ACA Galleries publications including exhibition catalogs and a calendar illustrated by Philip Evergood to promote diplomatic relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. Also found are newspaper clippings concerning ACA artists and Representative George A. Dondero attack on ACA Galleries for "un-American" activities.

This series has been scanned in its entirety with the exception of duplicates.

Box	Folder	
2	1	ACA Publications, 1939-1960 (partially scanned)
	2	Calendar and Publication Written and Illustrated by Philip Evergood, 1945, 1950
	3	Clippings, 1939-1960
	4	Clippings concerning Representative George A. Dondero, circa 1949

Series 4: Photographs, circa 1930s-circa 1960s (Box 2; 0.25 linear feet)

This series contains photographs of Herman Baron, ACA artists, collectors and critics. Those artists depicted are David Burliuk, Bruce Calder, Nicolai Cikovsky, Hy Cohen, Robert Cronbach, Alexander Dobkin, Philip Evergood, Mike Gold, William Gropper, Chaim Gross, Joe Jones, Mervin Jules, Irene Rice Pereira, Geri Pine, Philip Reisman, Vic Shifreen, Moses Soyer, Raphael Soyer, Harry Sternberg, James Baare Turnbull, Nicky Walker, Abraham Walkowitz, Nat Werner, and Art Young. Some photographs are attributed to photographers Berenice Abbott, Arnold Newman, and Alfredo Valente. Also found are photos of works of art and full exhibition installations, many of which are not labeled.

This series has been partially scanned. Photographs of works of art, duplicates, and negatives have not been scanned.

Box	Folder	
2	5	ACA Photographs of Herman Baron, circa 1940s-1960s
	6	Baron and Others, circa 1930s-1960s
	7	Portraits of ACA artists, circa 1930s-1960s
	8	Unidentified photographs, probably ACA artists, circa 1930s-1950s

Box	Folder	
2	9	Installations, 1956, circa 1950s-1960s

Series 5: Herman Baron Personal Papers, circa 1910s-1963 (Box 2-3; 0.3 linear feet)

This series consists of Herman Baron's personal papers, many of which predate the ACA Galleries. Included are letters written by Baron during his service in World War I to his wife and friends as well as later personal correspondence. Also found are writings by Baron for the *Glazier's Journal*, a short play, notes and published short stories. Additionally, this series includes a photograph of Herman Baron in his WWI uniform.

This series has been partially scanned. Only the front covers and those pages concerning Herman Baron have been scanned of the *Glazier's Journal* and other publications. Additionally, a binder which held Baron's notes has not been scanned.

Box	Folder	
2	11	Correspondence, circa 1910s-1930
	12	Short Stories by Baron, 1925-1930 (partially scanned)
Box	Folder	
2	13	<i>Glazier's Journal/ Glass Digest</i> , 1924, 1963 (partially scanned)
	14	"Fist of Wickedness," probably by Herman Baron, circa 1957
	15	Obituaries, 1961-1962
Box	Folder	
3	1	Notes, 1940s-1960s
	2	Notes, Binder, 1940s-1960s (not scanned)
Box	Folder	
3	3	Photographs, circa 1917, circa 1940s-1960s