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Finding aid for the
Sidney Grossman archive, 1934-1955

AG 56

Sidney Grossman archive, 1934-1955

AG 56

Creator

Grossman, Sidney, 1913-1955

Abstract

Papers and photographic materials, 1934 – 1955, of Sidney “Sid” Grossman (1913 – 1955), photographer. Includes correspondence, lecture notes, publications, tear sheets, clippings, negatives, and original and copy contact prints.

Quantity/ Extent

23.25 linear feet

Language of Materials

English

Biographical/ Historical Note

Sidney “Sid” Grossman was born in New York City on June 25, 1913. He attended City College of New York from 1932 to 1934. He was a self-taught photographer. Around 1934 or 1935, Grossman joined the Film and Photo League. In 1936, at the age of 23, he was a founding member of the Photo League, an organization of professional and amateur photographers that existed in New York City between 1936 and 1951. He taught documentary photography courses at the Photo League School until 1949. Grossman separated with the Photo League in 1949 when accusations of anti-communists brought dissention and blacklisting to the League’s members.

In 1938, Grossman began work with the Works Progress Administration, photographing *Negro Life in America*. The same year, he began a documentary project with Sol Libsohn, the *Chelsea Document*, which continued through 1940. During the 1940s, Grossman exhibited his work with the Photo League as well as New York City galleries. He married his first wife, Emma Marion Hille in 1941, although later divorced. Between 1943 and 1946, he served in the United States Army in the Public Relations Section of the 6th Army Air Corps in Panama. His work from 1946-1948 accounts for a full third of his lifetime production, which included his photographs at Coney Island. The Coney Island work was shown in the 1949 exhibition, *This is the Photo League*, curated by Nancy Newhall.

In 1949, Grossman married his second wife, Miriam Echelman and together they had a son, Adam. Grossman and his wife, Miriam, moved to Provincetown, Massachusetts,

and he enrolled in Hans Hoffman's School of Painting. While living in Cape Cod, he also experimented with color photography of the beaches and town, and opened his own Provincetown School of Photography. Many of the images he captured in Cape Cod were published posthumously in the book, *Journey to the Cape*.

Sidney Grossman passed away due to heart disease on December 31, 1955 at the age of 42. Much of his work has been rarely exhibited or published.

Scope and Content Note

The bulk of the collection is photographic material (negatives and contact prints) documenting Grossman's work between 1934 and 1955. The collection includes over 5,900 negatives, ranging in format from 35 mm. to 4x5 in., which represent most of Grossman's photographic career and provide a comprehensive view of his work. Personal and commercial projects represented include: Gruesomes (ca. 1935 – 1945); The Chelsea Document (1938 – 1939); Harlem (1939); Folksingers (1940 – 1955); Midwest (1940); Black Christ Festival, Panama (1945); Central America (1945 – 1946); New York (1946 – 1948); Coney Island (1947 – 1948); American Legion (1947 – 1948); Mulberry Street (1948); Provincetown (1949 – 1955); Ballet (1951 – 1955). See *Creative Camera* 223 (July 1983), pp. 1040-41 for descriptions of these projects.

Activity files include a typescript of notes for a class, probably in New York, taught by Grossman around 1953. Publications include a few tear sheets of his work for Lord and Taylor, a department store, and various periodicals, 194? – 195?; complete issues of *Air News* (Apr. 1944), *U.S. Camera* (Nov. 1944) and *Collier's* (11 Dec. 1948); several copies of his only book project, *Journey to the Cape* (1959); and one copy of a book, *County Fair* (1938), with text by Phil Strong and images by Josephine von Miklos and others. Reference files include an article on corporate law (194?); a woodblock print; and clippings of published photographs, 1934 – 1949, by other photographers.

There is no information in the collection which documents Grossman's work for the Works Progress Administration in 1938, or his membership and leadership in the Film and Photo League in New York, 1935 to 1949. There is little evidence of his teaching or exhibition activities.

Arrangement

The collection is divided into Papers and Photographic materials. All materials in the Papers series are arranged chronologically.

Series 1: Papers, 1934-1959

Correspondence, ca. 1950

Activity files, ca. 1953

Reference files, 1934 – 1950s

Publications, 1940s – 1959

Series 2: Photographic materials, circa 1934-1955

Negatives, 6x6 cm., 4x5 in., circa 1934 – 1955

Negatives, 35 mm., 1948 – 1955

Transparencies, 1945 – 1955

Contact prints, circa 1934 – 1955

Contact print catalog, circa 1934 – 1955

Names and Subject Terms

Grossman, Sid [ULAN]

Photo League [LCNAF]

Restrictions

Conditions Governing Access

Access to this collection requires an appointment with the Volkerding Study Center.

Conditions Governing Use

It is the responsibility of the user to obtain permission from the copyright owner (which could be the institution, the creator of the record, the author or his/her transferees, heirs, legates or literary executors) prior to any copyright-protected uses of the collection.

The user agrees to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless the Arizona Board of Regents, the University of Arizona, Center of Creative Photography, including its officers, employees, and agents, from and against all claims made relating to copyright or other intellectual property infringement.

Provenance

This collection was received between 1982 and 1984 from Anne Tucker of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas. The collection had been organized by Tucker before shipping, with additional processing required by the Center for Creative Photography.

Preferred Citation

Sidney Grossman archive, 1934-1955. AG 56. Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ.

Processing Information

Initial processing completed in July, 1985, by David Peters. Final processing completed in the fall of 1990 by Heather McAsh. Finding aid updated by Alexis Peregoy in December, 2016.

Container List**Series 1: Papers, 1934-1959**

Subseries 1: Correspondence, circa 1950

Quantity: 1 card.

Box Folder

1 1 Correspondence, circa 1950

Subseries 2: Activity Files, circa 1953

Quantity: 2 folders. Arrangement: chronological.

Box Folder

1 2 Transcription of class notes taught by Grossman, circa 1953
2A Original annotated negative sleeves from "Oklahoma" category
Notes regarding 35 mm. rolls #1-52 on 3x5 index cards

Subseries 3: Reference Files, 1934-1950s

Quantity: Fraction of a linear foot. Arrangement: chronological.

Box Folder

1 3 Tear sheets and clippings of others photographers' work, 1934-1949
4 Article on corporate law, circa 1940s
5 Woodblock print of a fish, circa 1940s-1950s

Subseries 4: Publications, 1940s-1959

Quantity: 1 linear foot. Arrangement: chronological.

Box Folder

1 6 Tear sheets of Grossman's work, 1940s-1950s
7 Periodicals: *Air News*, 6:3 (Apr. 1944); *Collier's*, 122:23 (11 Dec. 1948);
U.S. Camera, 7:8 (Nov. 1944)
8 Book: *County Fair*, 1938

Series 2: Photographic Materials, circa 1934-1955

Photographic materials are divided into media type (such as contact print, negative, etc.), arranged alphabetically by Grossman's descriptive categories and numbered by a system established by the Museum of Fine Arts (Houston, Texas). The number before the decimal point was assigned to the original negative sleeve; the number following the decimal point was assigned to a single negative frame in that sleeve. (Grossman stored up to twenty negatives per sleeve.) Thus, Chelsea 49.3 is the third negative in the 49th sleeve of the Chelsea category. This numbering system reflects the original order of Grossman's negatives.

Most negatives have contact prints. Two sets of contact prints were made by the Museum of Fine Arts during their cataloging of the Grossman collection. The first set consists of 8x10 in. sheets.

The second set is the series Contact Print Catalog and consists of contact prints or copy prints of individual images stored with index cards. These are annotated with the following information about that photograph: series or print title, negative number, quantity and condition of original contact prints, and original print information. Some original print information may be found only on the negative sleeve. Based on information obtained through the research of the Museum of Fine Arts, a list of cross-referencing between subject groups has been placed in the Contact Print Catalog at the beginning of each subject category.

The copy prints are Polaroid images of Grossman's photographs for which there are no negatives.

Grossman chose the best negatives from his categories to create three new categories titled Portfolio, Major Negatives and Best Negatives (a 35 mm. designation only). These negatives are cross-indexed to their original category.

The negatives from the Harlem series are housed at the Museum of the City of New York. The numbers preceded by the initials "MCNY" refer to the cataloging by that museum of those negatives. Contact prints and the Contact print catalog are arranged in the same manner as the negatives.

The 35 mm. negatives were handled differently. There was no use of the category system; Grossman numbered the negatives by roll and by image on that roll. His numbering system has been preserved. Thus, roll 33#20 is the 20th exposure on the 33rd roll. Grossman sometimes labeled more than one roll with the same number, in which case the negatives are then distinguished by letters. A less extensive contact print catalog, organized both by roll number and by subject, has been prepared. The collection contains original contacts of most 35 mm. negatives; these contacts often contain annotations by the photographer on the verso. Where no original contact existed, a copy contact was made by the Museum of Fine Arts.

The 35 mm. original and duplicate color slides in the collection represent mainly the Provincetown project.

Subseries 1: Negatives, 6x6 cm. and 4x5 in., circa 1934 – 1955

Quantity: 10.5 linear feet. Arrangement: alphabetical by category. 6x6 cm. and 4x5 in. negatives.

Box Folder

2	ACA 1.1 – 1.4, ca. 1940s; Aquadulce 1.1 – 7.15, 1945 – 1946; Arkansas 1.1 – 24.1, 1940
	Army 1.1 – 16.5, 1945 – 1946
	Army 17.1 – 26.8, 1945 – 1946
	Art 1.1 – 12.2, 1934 – 1955
	Ballet 1.1 – 18.1, 1951 – 1955
	Ballet 18.2 – 32.4, 1951 – 1955; NYC Ballet 1.1 – 7.3, 1951 – 1955
	Chelsea 1.1 – 50.1, 1938 – 1939
	Chelsea 51.1 – 100.1, 1938 – 1939
	Chelsea 101.1 – 150.1, 1938 – 1939
	Chelsea 151.1 – 200.1, 1938 – 1939

Chelsea 201.1 – 240.1, 1938 – 1939

3

Commercial 1.1 – 5.10, 1934 – 1955
Commercial 6.1 – 18.3, 1934 – 1955
Commercial 19.1 – 24.33, 1934 – 1955
Commercial: Early jobs 1.1 – 1.18, 1934 – 1955
Commercial: Fashion 1.1 – 4.3, 1934 – 1955
Commercial: Fashion 4.4 – 12.2, 1934 – 1955
Commercial: Fashion 12.3 – 18.2, 1934 – 1955
Commercial: Fashion 18.3 – 21.7, 1934 – 1955
Commercial: Portraits 1.1 – 9.5, 1934 – 1955
Commercial: Portraits 10.1 – 32.1, 1934 – 1955
Commercial: Portraits 33.1 – 39.12, 1934 – 1955
Commercial: Portraits 40.1 – 49.18, 1934 – 1955
Commercial: Portraits 50.1 – 59.1, 1934 – 1955

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Commercial: Weddings 1.1 – 5.12, 1934 – 1955
Commercial: Weddings 6.1 – 13.5, 1934 – 1955
Commercial: Weddings 14.1 – 19.6, 1934 – 1955
Coney Island 1.1 – 9.5, 1947 – 1948
Coney Island 10.1 – 29.15, 1947 – 1948
Coney Island 30.1 – 37.32, 1947 – 1948
Coney Island 38.1 – 47.7, 1947 – 1948
Coney Island 48.1 – 51.3, 1947 – 1948
Country 1.1 – 6.11, ca. 1940
Country 6.12 – 11.18, ca. 1940
Fair 1.1 – 26.1, 1938; First Camera, 1.1 – 10.1, 1930s

5

Folksingers 1.1 – 11.3, 1940 – 1955
Folksingers 11.4 – 16.21, 1940 – 1955
Folksingers 17.1 – 31.13, 1940 – 1955
Folksingers 32.1 – 61.1, 1940 – 1955
Folksingers 62.1 – 71.2, 1940 – 1955
Folksingers 72.1 – 81.6, 1940 – 1955
Folksingers 82.1 – 99.2, 1940 – 1955
Folksingers 100.1 – 120.9, 1940 – 1955
Folksingers 121.1 – 134.1, 1940 – 1955
Galapagos 1.1 – 9.1, 1945 – 1946; Greenwich House 1.1 – 13.1, 1934 – 1955;
Gruesomes 1.1 – 5.4, ca. 1935 – 1945
Gruesomes 6.1 – 32.1, 193? – 1943

Gruesomes 33.1 – 99.1, 193? – 1943

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Gruesomes 100.1 – 160.1, 193? – 1943

Gruesomes 161.1 – 230.1, 193? – 1943

Gruesomes 231.1 – 269.1, 193? – 1943

Gruesomes 270.1 – 296.1, 193? – 1943

Guatemala 1.1 – 31.1, 1945 – 1946

Hotel Front 1.1 – 1.3, n.d.; Labor 1.1 – 12.5, 1934 – 1955

Labor 13.1 – 34.1, 1934 – 1955

Legion 1.1 – 1.7, n.d.; Lost Colony 1.1 – 22.1, 1940s; Major Negatives 1.1
– 10.1, ca. 1934 – 1935

Major Negatives 12.1 – 40.1, ca. 1934 – 1935

MEBA 1.1 – 4.1, 1934 – 1955; Mulberry St. 1.1 – 7.1, 1948

NY: Early 1.1 – 8.1, 1930s; NY: Misc. 1.1 – 24.1, 1946 – 1948

NY: Misc. 25.1 – 47.1, 1946 – 1948

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NY: Misc. 48.1 – 99.1, 1946 – 1948

NY: Misc. 100 – 127.1, 1946 – 1948

NY: More 1.1 – 15.1, 1946 – 1948; NY: Recent 1.1 – 5.11, 1946 – 1948

NY: Recent 6.1 – 12.5, 1946 – 1948

NY: Recent 13.1 – 21.5, 1946 - 1948

Oklahoma 1.1 – 50.1, 1940

Oklahoma 51.1 – 106.1, 1940

Oklahoma 107.1 – 168.1, 1940

Oklahoma 169.1 – 183.1; Orson Welles 1.1 – 3.9, ca. 1934 – 1955

Orson Welles 4.1 – 6.16, ca. 1934 – 1955

Orson Welles 7.1 – 9.23, ca. 1934 – 1955

Orson Welles 10.1 – 13.1, ca. 1934 – 1955

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Panama 1.1 – 40.1, 1945

Personal Misc. 1.1 – 18.4, ca. 1934 – 1955

Personal Misc. 19. – 54.1, ca. 1934 – 1955

Picnic 1.1 – 1.13, ca. 1934 – 1944; Portfolio 1.1 – 26.1, ca. 1934 – 1955

Provincetown 1.1 – 15.12, 1949 – 1955

Sid, ca. 1934 – 1955; Snowstorm 1.1 – 1.7, ca. 1934 – 1955; Social Service
1.1 – 2.2, 1942?

Threshing 1.1 – 1.21, ca. 1934 – 1955

Tugs 1.1 – 50.1, ca. 1934 – 1955

Tugs 51.1 – 107.1, ca. 1934 – 1955

Subseries 2: Negatives, 35mm., 1948 – 1955

Quantity: 1 linear foot. Arrangement: by negative number. 35 mm. negatives.

Box	Folder
9	Unnumbered rolls 1-16, 1948-1955 Miriam's rolls 57, 120, 1948-1955 Best negatives 1-6, 1948-1955 1955 rolls 1-19, 1948-1955 Rolls 1-47, 1948-1955
10	Rolls 48-132, 1948-1955
11	Rolls 133-211, 1948-1955

Subseries 3: Transparencies, 1949 – 1955

Quantity: 0.5 linear feet.

Box	Folder
12	Duplicate of b&w prints from Black Christ, Mulberry Street, and Provincetown, 1945 – 1955 Provincetown, master set, 1949 – 1955 Provincetown, master set, 1949 – 1955
12A	Provincetown, duplicates, 1949 – 1955 Provincetown, duplicates, 1949 – 1955

Subseries 4: Contact Prints, 1934-1955

Quantity: 1.5 linear feet. Arrangement: alphabetical by category.

Box	Folder
13	ACA, 1940s Aguadulce I and II, 1945 – 1946 Arkansas, 1940 Army, 1934 – 1955 Ballet, 1951 – 1955 Chelsea 1.1 – 71.1, 1938 – 1939 Chelsea 72.1 – 150.1, 1938 – 1939 Chelsea 151.1 – 218.1, 1938 – 1939 Chelsea 219.1 – 282.1, 1938 – 1939 Commercial 1.1 – 8.1, 1934 – 1955
14	Commercial 9.1 – 18.13, 1934 – 1955 Commercial 19.1 – 24.33, 1934 – 1955 Commercial, early jobs, 1934 – 1955

- Commercial, fashion 1.1 – 15.4, 1934 – 1955
- Commercial, fashion 16.1 – 21.7, 1934 – 1955
- Commercial, portraits 1.1 – 23.2, 1934 – 1955
- Commercial, portraits 27.1 – 45.2, 1934 – 1955
- Commercial, portraits 46.1 – 59.1, 1934 – 1955
- Commercial, weddings 1.1 – 4.11, 1934 – 1955
- Commercial, weddings 4.12 – 11.1, 1934 – 1955
- Commercial, weddings 11.2 – 19.6, 1934 – 1955
- 15 Coney Island 1.1 – 24.5, 1947 – 1948
- Coney Island 25.2 – 36.5, 1947 – 1948
- Coney Island 37.1 – 51.3, 1947 – 1948
- Country 2.1 – 6.10, circa 1940
- Country 6.11 – 11.8, circa 1940
- Fair, 1938
- First camera, 1930s
- Folksingers 1.1 – 16.21, 1940 – 1955
- Folksingers 17.1 – 31.13, 1940 – 1955
- Folksingers 32.1 – 71.2, 1940 – 1955
- Folksingers 72.1 – 99.2, 1940 – 1955
- 16 Folksingers 100.1 – 134.1, 1940 – 1955
- Galapagos, 1945 – 1946
- Greenwich House, ca. 1934 – 1955
- Gruesomes 1.1 – 21.1, 193? – 1943
- Gruesomes 22.1 – 134.1, 193? – 1943
- Gruesomes 135.1 – 241.1, 193? – 1943
- Gruesomes 242.1 – 296.1, 193? – 1943
- Guatemala, 1945 – 1946
- Hotel Front, n.d.
- Labor, ca. 1934 – 1955
- Legion, n.d.
- Lost Colony, 1940
- 17 Major negatives, ca. 1934 – 1955
- MEBA, ca. 1934 – 1955
- Mulberry Street, 1948
- New York Early, 1930s
- New York Harlem WPA, 1939
- New York: Misc. 1 – 48, 1946 – 1948
- New York: Misc. 49.1 – 127, 1946 – 1948
- New York: More, 1946 – 1948
- New York: Recent 1.1 – 10.15, 1946 – 1948
- New York: Recent 11.1 – 24.1, 1946 – 1948

18 Oklahoma 1.1 – 80.1, 1940
Oklahoma 81 – 183, 1940
Orson Welles 1.1 – 9.2, ca. 1934 – 1955
Orson Welles 9.3 – 13.1, ca. 1934 – 1955
Panama, 1945
Personal Misc., ca. 1934 – 1955
Picnic, ca. 1934 – 1955
Portfolio, ca. 1934 – 1955
Provincetown, 1949 – 1955
Sid, ca. 1934 – 1955
Snowstorm, ca. 1934 – 1955
Social Service, 1942?
Threshing, ca. 1934 – 1944
Tugs, ca. 1934 – 1944

Subseries 5: Contact Prints, 35 mm., 1948-1955

Quantity: 0.5 linear feet. Arrangement: by negative number.

Box Folder

19 Unnumbered rolls 1-16, 1948-1955
Miriam's rolls 57, 120, 1948 – 1955
Best negatives, 1 – 6, 1948 – 1955
1955 rolls 1 – 14, 1948 – 1955
Rolls 1 – 14, 1948 – 1955
Rolls 15 – 24, 1948 – 1955
Rolls 25 – 33, 1948 – 1955
Rolls 34 – 47, 1948 – 1955
Rolls 48 – 60, 1948 – 1955
Rolls 61 – 74, 1948 – 1955
Rolls 75 – 85, 1948 – 1955
20 Rolls 86 – 98, 1948 – 1955
Rolls 99 – 109, 1948 – 1955
Rolls 110 – 121, 1948 – 1955
Rolls 122 – 132, 1948 – 1955
Rolls 133 – 140, 1948 – 1955
Rolls 141 – 147, 1948 – 1955
Rolls 148 – 158, 1948 – 1955
Rolls 159 – 174, 1948 – 1955
Rolls 175 – 185, 1948 – 1955
Rolls 186 – 199, 1948 – 1955

Rolls 200 – 211, 1948 – 1955

Subseries 6: Contact Print Catalog, circa 1934-1955

Quantity: 1.75 linear feet. Arrangement: Grossman's original order.

Box	Folder
21	ACA, Anonymous, Aquadulce, Arkansas, Army, Ballet, NYC Ballet, Chelsea
22	Chelsea, Commercial
23	Commercial, Commercial: Fashion, Commercial: Early Jobs, Commercial: Portraits
24	Commercial: Weddings, Coney Island
25	Coney Island, Country, Fair, First camera
26	Folksingers
27	Folksingers, Galapagos, Greenwich House, Gruesomes
28	Gruesomes, Guatemala, Hotel Front, Labor, Legion
29	Lantern Slides, Lost Colony, Major negatives, MEBA, Mulberry St., NY: Early, NY: Harlem, NY: Misc.
30	NY: Misc., NY: More, NY: Recent
31	NY: Recent, Oklahoma
32	Orson Welles, Other People's Prints, Panama, Personal misc., Picnic, Portfolio
33	Provincetown, Sid, Social Service, Tintype, Threshing, Tugs, Color
34	35 mm. Rolls 1 – 212, Summer '55 rolls 1 – 19, Unnumbered rolls, Miriam's rolls, Best negatives, Ballet, Boxing, Commercial, Commercial: Fashion, Commercial: Portraits, Commercial: Weddings, Mulberry St., Provincetown, Sid