



Art Gallery of Ontario
Musée des beaux-arts de l'Ontario

E.P. Taylor Research Library & Archives

Description & Finding Aid:
Jack Bush Fonds
CA OTAG SC037

Amy Marshall Furness

Revised by Gary Fitzgibbon, 2009 and 2013

Jack Bush fonds

Date(s) of creation:

1930–1981

Extent:

1,898 photographs

76 cm of textual records

18 ring binders

2 folders of graphic material

Biographical sketch:

John Hamilton Bush (1909–1977), primarily known as Jack Bush, was a Canadian painter best known for his Abstract Expressionist style. Born in Toronto, he lived in London, Ont. and Montreal during his early years. Jack Bush began his career in advertising, working in his father's firm, Rapid Electro Type Company in Montreal. During this time, he studied at the Art Association of Montreal with Edmund Dyonnet and Adam Sherriff Scott. In 1928, he transferred to the company's office in Toronto, where he took evening classes under Frederick Challener, John Alfsen and Charles Comfort at the Ontario College of Art. Bush's early work as a painter was influenced by Comfort and the Group of Seven, and throughout the 1930s and '40s he produced largely landscape and figurative paintings. His first exhibition was with the Ontario Society of Artists in Toronto in 1936.

In 1934, Jack Bush married Mabel Mills Teakle, a family friend from Montreal, and together they had three sons, Jack Jr (b. 1936), Robert (b. 1938) and Terry (b. 1942). In 1953, dissatisfied with Canada's place in the international contemporary art scene, Bush and several other Toronto abstract artists founded the group Painters Eleven. William Ronald, another member of Painters Eleven, and an artist who had worked in New York, introduced U.S. art critic Clement Greenberg to the group, which led to a lasting friendship between Bush and Greenberg. The contact with Greenberg in 1957 led to Bush's international breakthrough in the early 1960s, beginning with his 1962 exhibition at the Robert Elkon Gallery in New York. Between the late 1950s and mid '60s, Bush painted in loose brushstrokes with diluted oils, staining paint onto unprimed canvas. In 1966, concerned by the health hazards associated with oil-based paints, he switched to water-based acrylics, less textured than oils but more brightly coloured.

In 1964, Jack Bush's work was included in Greenberg's Post-Painterly Abstraction at the Los Angeles County Museum, an exhibition that travelled to Minneapolis and Toronto. Along with Jacques Hurtubise, Bush represented Canada at the Bienal de São Paulo (Brazil) in 1967. In the year preceding his death in 1977 (from a heart attack), he received the Order of Canada. That same year, the Art Gallery of Ontario mounted a retrospective exhibition of his abstract works that travelled to several Canadian galleries. Jack Bush's work is in the collections of the Art Gallery of Ontario, the National Gallery of Canada, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Boston's Museum of Fine Arts, London's Tate Gallery and others.

Scope and content:

Fonds consists of personal and professional records of Canadian painter Jack Bush, created chiefly in Toronto during the 1930s to 1970s: his personal diaries; record books containing notes on his paintings; photographs (slides, transparencies, negatives and prints) largely of his paintings but also of his studio, exhibit installations and other subjects; with scrapbooks of newspaper and magazine clippings about the artist, exhibition notices, examples of his commercial art, and further records of his paintings.

Contains series:

1. Diaries
2. Record books
3. Photographs
4. Scrapbooks
5. Commercial art

Custodial history:

The materials now constituting the Jack Bush fonds were retained by the Jack Bush family following the artist's death in 1977 until it was transferred to the Art Gallery of Ontario in 1987.

Notes:

Variations in title:

Formerly known as the Jack Bush Papers.

Physical description:

Includes 119 photographic prints, 28 negatives, 1,636 slides, and 115 transparencies.

Physical condition:

Some photocopies of newspaper articles have faded.

Immediate source of acquisition:

Donated by the family of Jack Bush, 1987.

Restrictions on access:

Access to Series 1: Diaries is restricted (see below). Researchers are asked to use the photocopied facsimile of Series 2: Record Books, in lieu of the original volumes. Access to Special Collections is by appointment only. Please contact the reference desk for more information.

Terms governing use and reproduction / publication:

Copyright is held by the Estate of Jack Bush. Copyright belonging to other parties, such as that of photographs, may still rest with the creator of these items. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain permission to publish any part of the fonds.

Accruals:

No further accruals are expected.

Related material:

Records of Jack Bush's visits to his psychiatrist Allan Walters may be found in the Allan Walters-Jack Bush collection (SC072). The Karen Wilkin-Jack Bush collection (SC045) consists of records relating to the publication *Jack Bush* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1984), Karen Wilkin, contributing editor.

General note:

Titles of series, files and items are supplied and based on contents, except where otherwise noted.

Description control:

Description and finding aid prepared by Gary Fitzgibbon, 2009 and 2013. — Description based on *Rules for Archival Description* (Ottawa: Bureau of Canadian Archivists, 2008), with vocabulary authority from the Art & Architecture Thesaurus of the Getty Institute (Los Angeles, Calif.).

Provenance access point:

Bush, Jack, 1909–1977

SERIES 1: DIARIES

Date(s) of creation:

1952–1976

Extent:

60 cm of textual records

18 ring binders

Scope and content:

Series comprises personal diaries written by Jack Bush in Toronto between 1952 and 1976 with the binders that contained them. The 24 volumes of diaries, a form of therapy suggested by Bush's psychiatrist Allan Waters, describe events from his family life and career.

Notes:

Access to this series requires the written permission of the donors or their respective estates until the later of 31 December 2021 or the death of all the donors. — The final diary entry for a year is often continued on the first page for the following year. Some diary years are divided between two folders; some diaries cover 2 years. — The 24 volumes of diaries were removed from the original ring binders and placed in 29 archival folders in 2009. The ring binders are fragile; access is restricted for conservation reasons.

Location: boxes 1–5, 14

FILE OR ITEM TITLE	DATE(S)	DESCRIPTION	BOX- FOLDER
Diary for 1952	1952	1 folder of textual records Item is Jack Bush's diary for 1952.	1–1
Diary for 1953	1953	1 folder of textual records Item is Jack Bush's diary for 1953.	1–2
Diary for 1954	1954	1 folder of textual records Item is Jack Bush's diary for 1954.	1–3
Diary for 1955	1955	2 folders of textual records Item is Jack Bush's diary for 1955.	1–4 1–5
Diary for 1956	1956	2 folders of textual records Item is Jack Bush's diary for 1956.	1–6 2–1
Diary for 1957	1957	2 folders of textual records Item is Jack Bush's diary for 1957.	2–2 2–3
Diary for 1958	1958	2 folders of textual records Item is Jack Bush's diary for 1958, with 2 letters.	2–4 2–5
Diary for 1959	1959	1 folder of textual records Item is Jack Bush's diary for 1959, with 2 small sketches.	2–6 3–1
Diary for 1960	1960	1 folder of textual records Item is Jack Bush's diary for 1960.	3–2
Diary for 1961	1961	1 folder of textual records Item is Jack Bush's diary for 1961.	3–3
Diary for 1962	1962	1 folder of textual records Item is Jack Bush's diary for 19--.	3–4
Diary for 1963	1963	1 folder of textual records	3–5

FILE OR ITEM TITLE	DATE(S)	DESCRIPTION	BOX- FOLDER
1963–1964	1964	Item is Jack Bush's diary for 1963–1964, with additional notes.	
Diary for 1965	1965	1 folder of textual records Item is Jack Bush's diary for 1965.	4–1
Diary for 1966	1966	1 folder of textual records Item is Jack Bush's diary for 1966.	4–2
Diary for 1967	1967	1 folder of textual records Item is Jack Bush's diary for 1967.	4–3
Diary for 1968	1968	1 folder of textual records Item is Jack Bush's diary for 1968.	4–4
Diary for 1969	1969	1 folder of textual records Item is Jack Bush's diary for 1969.	4–5
Diary for 1970	1970	1 folder of textual records Item is Jack Bush's diary for 1970.	5–1
Diary for 1971	1971	1 folder of textual records Item is Jack Bush's diary for 1971.	5–2
Diary for 1972	1972	1 folder of textual records Item is Jack Bush's diary for 1972.	5–3
Diary for 1973	1973	1 folder of textual records Item is Jack Bush's diary for 1973.	5–4
Diary for 1974	1974	1 folder of textual records Item is Jack Bush's diary for 1974.	5–5
Diary for 1975	1975	1 folder of textual records Item is Jack Bush's diary for 1975.	5–6
Diary for 1976	1976	1 folder of textual records Item is Jack Bush's diary for 1976, including entries to 22 Jan. 1977.	5–7
Binders	[1952?] [197-]	18 ring binders ; 26 x 18 cm or smaller File consists of ring binders that contained the Jack Bush diaries.	box 14

SERIES 2: RECORD BOOKS

Date(s) of creation:

1930–1976

Extent:

6 cm of textual records (3 v.)

Scope and content:

Series comprises bound blankbooks in which Jack Bush recorded notes on his paintings between 1930 and 1976, including titles, dimensions, dates, some purchasers and other details. Beginning in 1957, some descriptions include thumbnail drawings.

Notes:

Blankbooks measure 21 x 14 cm or smaller.

A photocopied facsimile of the record books is available; researchers are asked to use it in lieu of the original volumes.

Location: box 5

FILE OR ITEM TITLE	DATE(S)	DESCRIPTION	BOX- FOLDER
Record book 1930–1961	1930 1961	1 v. of textual records Item is a blankbook in which Jack Bush recorded notes on paintings: large oils (1930–1947), large watercolours (1937–1947), sketches (1943–1951) and experimental work suggested by Dr J. Allan Walters (1947–1957 and 1957–1962).	13–4
Record book 1962–1973	1962 1973	1 v. of textual records Item is a blankbook in which Bush recorded notes on works painted between 1962 and 1973.	13–5
Record book 1974–1976	1974 1976	1 v. of textual records Item is a blankbook in which Bush recorded notes on works painted between 1974 and 1976.	13–6

SERIES 3: PHOTOGRAPHS**Date(s) of creation:**

[195-?]-1981

Extent:

1,898 photographs

Scope and content:

Series comprises photographs taken in Toronto between the 1940s or '50s and 1981 of paintings by Jack Bush, installation shots, views of his Toronto studio and other subjects. Some slides and transparencies of paintings are labelled with the titles, dimensions, dates, purchasers and other details. Most photos are annotated verso.

Notes:

Includes 1,636 photographic slides, 115 transparencies, 28 negatives and 119 prints. — Some of the black and white photographs of Bush's paintings were taken for the Jack Bush Estate by Canadian art photographer Jeff Nolte; of these, some were used in *Jack Bush*, ed. Karen Wilkin (1984). No other photographer is identified for photos in the series.

Location: boxes 6–11

FILE OR ITEM TITLE	DATE(S)	DESCRIPTION	BOX-FOLDER
Jack Bush slides I	[196-?] 1981	166 photographs : col. slides ; 35 mm File contains slides of Jack Bush's paintings from the 1950s to the 1970s, with installation shots of "Jack Bush Paintings, 1973–1976," which took place 2–25 February 1981 at the Andre Emmerich Gallery in New York. Slides contained in 1 ring binder.	box 6
Jack Bush slides II	[196-?] 1976	156 photographs : col. slides ; 35 mm File contains slides of Jack Bush's paintings from the 1930s to the 1970s. Slides contained in 1 ring binder.	box 7
Jack Bush slides III	[196-?] 1980	152 photographs : col. slides ; 35 mm File contains slides of Jack Bush's paintings from the 1920s to the 1970s. Slides contained in 1 ring binder.	box 8
Indexed slides	1976 1980	91 photographs : col. slides ; 35 mm File contains slides of Jack Bush's paintings from the 1950s to the 1970s; installation shots, studio scenes and other subjects, with an index sheet.	9–1
Duplicate slides	[197-] 1975	490 photographs : col. slides ; 35 mm File contains slides of Jack Bush's paintings from the 1930s to the 1970s.	9–2 9–3
Miscellaneous slides	[196-?] 1980	396 photographs : col. slides ; 35 mm File contains slides of Jack Bush's paintings from the 1920s to the 1970s.	9–4 9–5
55-mm film slides	1961 1967	152 photographs : col. slides ; 55 mm File contains slides of Jack Bush's paintings dated 1961–1967, with undated slides probably from the same period.	10–1 to 10–5
Glass slides	[195-?]	74 photographs : col. glass slides framed in metal ; 55 mm	10–6 10–7

FILE OR ITEM TITLE	DATE(S)	DESCRIPTION	BOX- FOLDER
		File contains glass slides of installation shots (undated), some including the artist. One slide is cracked.	10-8
Transparencies	1937 1976	115 photographs : col. transparencies ; 10 x 13 cm and 25 x 20 cm	11-1 11-2 11-3 11-4
		File contains transparencies of Jack Bush's paintings dated 1937-1976 with undated transparencies.	
Negatives	[197-]	28 photographs : col. negatives ; 35 mm	11-5
		File contains negatives of colour photos in this series.	
Colour photos	[1976?] [1977?]	39 photographs : col. prints ; 26 x 20 cm or smaller	11-6
		File contains photos of Jack Bush's paintings, Bush's studio, group shots of the Spring 1977 meeting of trustees, and Polaroid snapshots of Mabel Bush, Clement Greenberg and others.	
NFB portraits	1979	3 photographs : col. prints mounted on board; 9 x 15 cm	11-7
		File contains photo portraits of the artist made for the 1979 National Film Board of Canada production <i>Jack Bush</i> .	
Estate photos	[198-?]	18 photographs : b&w prints ; 21 x 26 cm	11-8
		File contains photos of paintings by Bush identified as "Estate," chiefly credited to Jeff Nolte.	
Illustration photos	[198-?]	34 photographs : b&w prints ; 20 x 29 cm or smaller	11-9
		File contains photos of paintings by Bush and others marked for use in illustrating the 1984 publication <i>Jack Bush</i> . Estate photos are credited to Jeff Nolte.	
Collection photos	[198-?]	26 photographs : b&w prints ; 21 x 26 cm or smaller	11-10
		File contains photos of paintings by Bush and others from public and private collections, with a photo portrait of Jack Bush and an installation shot. Some photos are duplicates.	

SERIES 4: SCRAPBOOKS**Date(s) of creation:**

1941–1979

Extent:

10 cm of textual records

Scope and content:

Series comprises scrapbooks of newspaper and magazine clippings on Jack Bush and his art assembled by the artist throughout his career and supplemented by his family following his death in 1977. Included are handwritten blankbook pages of lists of Jack Bush's paintings, some with thumbnail drawings.

Notes:

The clippings, originally contained in five ring binders, were transferred to folders and archival boxes in 2009.

Location: boxes 12, 13

FILE OR ITEM TITLE	DATE(S)	DESCRIPTION	BOX-FOLDER
Jack Bush newspaper articles 1941–1961	1941 1961	1 folder of textual records File contains newspaper and magazine articles and notices for Jack Bush's exhibitions, 1941–1961. File title taken from first binder.	12–1 12–2
Jack Bush newspaper articles 1961–1971	1961 1971	1 folder of textual records File contains newspaper and magazine articles chiefly concerning Jack Bush exhibitions, 1961–1971 File title taken from second binder.	12–3 12–4
Jack Bush newspaper articles 1972–1979	1972 1979	1 folder of textual records File contains newspaper and magazine articles chiefly concerning Jack Bush exhibitions, 1972–1979 as well as his death in 1977 and retrospective essays. File title taken from third binder.	12–5 12–6
Jack Bush magazine articles 1946–1977	1946 1977	4 cm of textual records File contains magazine articles and other material concerning Jack Bush's work and exhibitions, 1946–1977 (fourth binder).	13–1 13–2
Estate paintings from 1 Eastview Cres. To warehouse	[195-?] [196-?]	36 p. of textual records File contains lists of paintings, including titles, dimensions, media and dates entitled "128 oil sketches ... 1927–1950", "Early watercolours" and an untitled list of paintings with thumbnail drawings. File title taken from fifth binder.	13–3

SERIES 5: COMMERCIAL ART**Dates of creation:**

1954–1959

Extent:

2 folders of graphic material

Scope and content:

Series comprises newspaper and magazine clippings of commercial art created by Jack Bush between 1954 and 1959, probably in Toronto. Series includes graphic designs for advertisements, illustrations for published stories, several colour proofs and other material.

Location: map cabinet

FILE OR ITEM TITLE	DATE(S)	DESCRIPTION	BOX- FOLDER
Advertisements	1955 1958	1 folder of graphic material File contains newspaper and magazine clippings of advertisements by Jack Bush for clients including London Life Insurance, Molson Brewery, Massey-Harris-Ferguson, Harvey Woods, Philips Industries, Goodyear Tires, and others. File also includes <i>A Break in the Weather</i> / by Donald A. Byers ; design and drawings by Jack Bush (New Toronto, Ont. : Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co. of Canada, 1956), and other material.	oversize folder 1
Illustrations	1954 1959	1 folder of graphic material File contains clippings of illustrations by Jack Bush for short stories published in <i>Canadian Home Journal</i> , <i>Chatelaine</i> and <i>The Star Weekly Magazine</i> between 1954 and 1959. File also includes a preparatory drawing for an illustration, and several colour proofs of an illustration for an unidentified story.	oversize folder 2