



The New York Public Library
Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Guide to the

Sally Gross papers

1959-2015

(S) *MGZMD 468

Compiled by Heather Halliday, 2017.

Summary

Creator: Gross, Sally

Title: Sally Gross papers

Date: 1959-2015

Size: 12.58 linear feet (29 boxes, 3 tubes, 2 other items); 12.93 gb (4,128 computer files)

Source: Donated by Sally Gross in 2013 and by Rachel and Sidonia Gross in 2016.

Abstract: Sally Gross (1933-2015) was an American dancer, choreographer and teacher based in New York City. The Sally Gross papers document her career through films, videos, sound recordings, photographs, date books, notes, correspondence, clippings, grant applications, promotional material, and travel records.

Access: Some collections held by the Dance, Music, Recorded Sound, and Theatre Divisions at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts are held off-site and must be requested in advance. Please check the collection records in **the NYPL's online catalog** for detailed location information. For general guidance about requesting offsite materials, please consult:
<https://www.nypl.org/about/locations/lpa/requesting-archival-materials>

Preferred citation: Sally Gross papers, (S) *MGZMD 468. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

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Creator History

Sally Gross was an American dancer, choreographer, and teacher based in New York City. Born Sarah Freiberg in 1933, the youngest child of Jewish Polish immigrant parents, Gross grew up speaking Yiddish at home on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. In 1948, she began her study of dance at the Henry Street Settlement. She graduated from Washington Irving High School in 1950 and Brooklyn College in 1954. She married Teddy Gross in 1954, with whom she had two daughters, Rachel and Sidonia Gross. By 1962, the couple had separated.

In the mid-1950s, Gross continued her dance studies under Alwin Nikolais, James Waring, and Anna Halprin. In 1959, she acted in the Beat Generation film, *Pull My Daisy*. In 1960, she studied choreography influenced by John Cage under Robert Dunn at the Merce Cunningham Studio. A short time later, she followed Dunn to the Judson Dance Theater, which became highly influential in the postmodern dance movement. There she met and collaborated with Yvonne Rainer, Meredith Monk, Robert Wilson and others. For many decades she resided in the Westbeth Artists' Community, frequently staging intimate public performances there. She also performed regularly at other downtown theatrical venues including the Joyce Soho, DIA Center for the Arts, and The Construction Company.

Her performances and choreography were experimental, minimalist, and autobiographical. In her teaching, Gross was egalitarian and democratic, opening her classes to all types of people, especially those not trained as dancers. She taught dance, movement, and meditation in workshops, college courses, and private classes. Both her performances and her classes combined improvisation, collaboration, multi-media, and a variety of non-dance movement forms, such as yoga and Tai Chi. She frequently collaborated with lighting designer Blu; dancer Jamie Di Mare; composers Philip Corner, Peter Griggs, Eleanor Hovda, and Yoshi Wada; and visual artists Joan Vennum Kurahara, Richard Nonas, Patsy Norvell, and Mary Frank. Her daughter, Sidonia Gross, danced in many of her performances in the late 1970s and 1980s.

In 1991 and 1992, Meredith Monk cast Sally Gross in her Paris, Berlin, Houston, and Brooklyn Academy of Music productions of *Atlas*. In 2007, filmmaker Albert Maysles made a documentary about Gross's work called *The Pleasure of Stillness*. She continued to perform and teach until her death in 2015.

Scope and Content Note

The Sally Gross papers date from 1959 to 2015 and document Gross's professional life as a dancer, choreographer, and teacher. The collection contains files on performance events, journals, notes, clippings, files on associates, photographs, promotional material, grant applications, correspondence, teaching files, reference material, and travel records.

The largest portion of the collection relates directly to Gross's performances. The Performances files span Gross's career and are arranged chronologically, with titles or venue names occasionally noted. Photographs document performances almost exclusively, with some rehearsals also included. Clippings primarily consist of reviews of dance performances. Evidence of Gross's creative process, including choreographic drawings and diagrams, can be seen throughout the Journals. Promotional material, including posters and press releases, focuses primarily upon performances. A few artifacts created during performances are also present.

Gross was a keen observer of her peers. The Associates files represent the professional output of performers, visual artists, writers, musicians, and academics she knew personally. Many of Gross's influences and collaborators can be found here, including Blu, John Cage, Carla Blank, Robert Frank, Robert Dunn, Phyllis Lamhut, Meredith Monk, Spencer Holst, Patsy Norvell, and Yvonne Rainer. Other notable associates include Christian Jankowski, Steve Paxton, and Pat Cremins. These files typically include exhibition catalogs, invitations, and flyers. A few of these files contain correspondence.

Substantial documentation of Gross's pursuit of grants, fellowships and artists' residencies is also present. These files hold background materials, such as artists' statements; copies of completed application forms; and related correspondence for grants from the National Endowment for the Arts; the New York Foundation for the Arts; the Tanne Foundation; Guggenheim Fellowships; and the Lower

Manhattan Cultural Council.

Files on Gross's teaching career are plentiful as demonstrated through notebooks, and loose pages containing student lists, class agendas, research material, and choreographical diagrams. This material relates to classes and workshops Gross taught in her Westbeth studio, at Fordham University, CUNY Kingsborough, and at residencies around the country and the world. Files on Gross's teaching fellowship in Japan are found here.

Gross kept Reference files on various areas of interest and study. Spiritual practices, the human body, and literature are frequent themes, with files on Buddhism, yoga, Tai Chi, anatomy, Samuel Beckett, and poetry.

Gross's trips to Bali, Vietnam, Israel, Europe, and various cities around the United States are documented in the Travel section. Files on her artist residencies at Yaddo and Djerassi are included.

A significant portion of the collection consists of sound and motion picture recordings documenting performances, rehearsals, and workshops, which are unavailable pending digitization.

Almost no records relating to Gross's childhood or family are included in the collection.

Arrangement: The collection is arranged alphabetically by file title, subject, or format.

Key Terms

Occupations

Choreographers
Teachers
Women dancers

Genre/Physical Characteristic

Clippings
Flyers
Photographs
Posters
Programs
Sound recordings
Video recordings

Subjects

Judson Dance Theater
Postmodern dance

Names

Westbeth Artists' Housing (New York, N.Y.)

Container List

- b. 1 f. 1 American Dance Guild Conference 1996
Associates
- b. 1 f. 2 Alexander, Elena 2014-2015
- b. 1 f. 3 Allen, Seth 1984
- b. 1 f. 4-5 Announcements 1964-2015
- b. 1 f. 6 Blank, Carla 1994-2014
- b. 1 f. 7 Blu 1987
- b. 1 f. 8 Brown, Trisha 1977-1990
- b. 1 f. 9 Cage, John 1992
- b. 1 f. 10 Chaikin, Joe 1996-2013
- b. 1 f. 11 Chaikin, Miriam 1980-2015
- b. 1 f. 12 Christensen, Don 2007
Cohn, Susanne
1981-2012
2012
er.12 (20.81 Megabytes (70 computer files))
- b. 1 f. 14 Cole, Henri circa 2009
- b. 1 f. 15 Collins, Linda 1977-2000
- b. 1 f. 16 Corner, Philip 1981-1982
- b. 1 f. 17 Cremins, Pat 1989-2001
- b. 1 f. 18 Cunningham, Merce circa 1980-2009
- b. 1 f. 19 Denby, Edwin 1983
- b. 1 f. 20 Dunn, Robert Ellis 1997
- b. 1 f. 21 Finnerty, Warren 1975
- b. 1 f. 22 Forst, Barbara 1965-circa 2000
- b. 2 f. 1 Robert Frank and Family 1973-2000
Includes Mary Frank.
- b. 2 f. 2 Friedman, Gene circa 1970-circa 1990
- b. 2 f. 3 Gamso, Marjorie 1976
- b. 2 f. 4 Gilman, Esther 1977-2001
- b. 2 f. 5 Gilman, Nicholas 1990-2001
- b. 2 f. 6 Gilman, Richard circa 2001-2002
Includes Yasuko Shiojiri
- b. 2 f. 7 Hay, Deborah 1990-1997
- b. 2 f. 8 Holst, Spencer 1974-2001
- b. 2 f. 9 Israel, Lawrence 1977-2015
- b. 2 f. 10 Jankowski, Christian 1990-2001
- b. 2 f. 11 Johnston, Jill 2001-2011
- b. 2 f. 12 Judd, Donald circa 1989-circa 2004

Associates (cont.)

- b. 2 f. 13 Kohn, Steve 2009
 - b. 2 f. 14 Lamhut, Phyllis 1975
 - b. 2 f. 15 Mihori, Margaret 2007
 - b. 3 f. 1 Monk, Meredith 1985-2012
 - b. 3 f. 2 Musicians 1991-1993
 - b. 3 f. 3 Nash, Harriet A 1971-1989
 - b. 3 f. 4 Nikolais, Alwin 1958-2011
Includes Murray Louis.
 - b. 3 f. 5 Edelheit, Martha 1977-2003
 - b. 3 f. 6 Nobel, Ruth 1972-2015
 - b. 3 f. 7 Norvell, Patsy 1977-1990
 - b. 3 f. 8 Obituaries and Memorials 1977-2011
 - b. 3 f. 9 O'Brien, Michael 1984-2015
Includes Joan Farber.
 - b. 3 f. 10 Paxton, Steve 1981
 - b. 3 f. 11 Perron, Wendy 1978
 - b. 3 f. 12 Perces, Marjorie and Paul 1984-2004
 - b. 4 f. 1 Poss, Robert 2004
 - b. 4 f. 2 Rainer, Yvonne 1986-2002
 - b. 4 f. 3 Ritter, Carol 1986
 - b. 4 f. 4 Rosenfeld, Larry 1973-1986
 - b. 4 f. 5 Satin, Leslie 1996-2016
 - b. 4 f. 6 Schwartz, Michael 1994
 - b. 4 f. 7 Seator, Glen 1995-2003
 - b. 4 f. 8 Shapiro Family 1978-1990
Teddy, Marcia, and Taylor
 - b. 4 f. 9 Solomons, Gus Jr circa 1986
 - b. 4 f. 10 Stout, Myron 1980-2007
 - b. 4 f. 11 Susan at Westbeth circa 1980s
 - b. 4 f. 12 Tabachnick, Anne 1973-2015
 - b. 4 f. 13 Thompson, Bob 1998-2006
 - b. 5 f. 1 Van Fleet, Ellen 1974-2004
 - b. 5 f. 2 Vennum, Joan Kurahara 1982, 1998-2009
 - b. 5 f. 3 Williams, Vera 1998-2002
 - b. 5 f. 4 Young, Peter 2007
- Awards
- b. 5 f. 5 Brooklyn College Alumni Award 2009-2010
 - b. 5 f. 6 Guggenheim Fellow 2001
 - b. 5 f. 7-8 Biographies and Resumes 1960s-2009
 - b. 5 f. 9 Business Contacts circa 1980s-2000s

- b. 5 f. 10-15 Clippings 1950s-2014
Correspondence
 - b. 6 f. 1-4 1970s-2015
 - b. 6 f. 5-16 A-C 1965-2015
Includes Naomi Blossom and notes of congratulations.
 - b. 7 f. 1-21 D-Pa 1971-2014
Includes Jamie Di Mare Brian Hayes, and letters of recommendation written by Gross for others.
 - b. 8 f. 1-11 Post Cards - Y 1967-2015
Includes letters from students, Susan Tunick, and Susan Unterberg.

- b. 8 f. 12-16 Date Books 1971-2012
Include routine daily lists and appointment notes.

Films and Video

Documents pertaining to documentary films made about Gross, as well as arrangements made for video documentation of performances and rehearsals.

- b. 9 f. 1-2 1978-2015
 - b. 9 f. 3 *Black and White* 1986-1988
 - b. 9 f. 4 *Mamaluschen Proposal* 1983-1984
 - b. 9 f. 5-7 *The Pleasure of Stillness* 2007-2009
Feature documentary directed by Albert Maysles.

Grant, Fellowship and Residency Applications

- b. 9 f. 8-9 1961-1980s
- b. 10 f. 1 1990-2004
- b. 10 f. 2 Artist Statement Notes 1980s-1990s
- b. 10 f. 3 Collaborations 1981-1996, 2006
- b. 10 f. 4 Cultural Council Foundation 1971-1984
- b. 10 f. 5-6 Guggenheim Foundation 1983-2011
- b. 10 f. 7 Harkness Foundation 1991-2002
Japan Fellowship Proposal 1999
er.13 (46 Kilobytes (2 computer files))
- b. 10 f. 8 Lower Manhattan Cultural Council 2006-2008
- b. 11 f. 1 Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust 1990-2001
- b. 11 f. 2 National Endowment for the Arts 1979-1996
- b. 11 f. 3 National Performance Network 1986-1988
- b. 11 f. 4 New York Foundation for the Arts 1984-2001
- b. 11 f. 5 New York State Council on the Arts 1986-1995
- b. 11 f. 6 Pentacle 1988
- b. 11 f. 7-8 Rejected 1965, 1989-1998
- b. 11 f. 9 Tanne Foundation 2000-2001
- b. 12 f. 1 Henry Street Settlement 1993
- b. 12 f. 2-4 Interviews with Sally Gross 1991, 2001-2014

Journals

Personal diaries that also include choreographic notes, drawings and diagrams.

- b. 12 f. 5-11 circa 1960s-1989
- b. 13 f. 1-8 1990-2007
- b. 14 f. 1-3 2007-2013
- b. 14 f. 4-5 Judson Dance Theater 1964-2010
- b. 14 f. 6 Mailing Lists circa 1980s-2000s
- b. 14 f. 7 New York Public Library 1983-1990

Notes

Loose pages.

- b. 14 f. 8 circa 1960s-2000s
- b. 15 f. 1 Choreography circa 1960s-2011
- b. 15 f. 2 Clothing and Costumes 1970s-1980s

Performances

- b. 15 f. 3-7 1960s
Includes Henry Street Settlement Playhouse and Judson Dance Theatre.
- b. 15 f. 8 The Triangle Theatre 1971
- b. 15 f. 9 *New Wilderness Event #13* 1974
With Spencer Holst.
- b. 15 f. 10-11 *Cubiculo* 1975-1976
- b. 15 f. 12 Michelson-Bagley Gallery 1977
With Spencer Holst.
- b. 15 f. 13 1978
At Gross's Westbeth studio and Hunter College.
- b. 15 f. 14 Hampshire College 1979
- b. 15 f. 15 *Split* 1980
- b. 15 f. 16 1981
Includes Westbeth Theatre and Oil and Steel Gallery.
- b. 15 f. 17 1982
- b. 15 f. 18 *Solos and Duets* 1983
- b. 15 f. 19 Whitney Museum at Philip Morris 1984
- b. 15 f. 20-22 1985
Includes *In the Beginning* and the Nikolais-Louis Alumni Association.
- b. 15 f. 23 Central Park Summer Stage 1986
- b. 15 f. 24 *Crossings and Domain* 1987
- b. 16 f. 1 Whitney Museum at Equitable 1988
- b. 16 f. 2-4 1989
Includes *Companion Pieces* at DIA Center for the Arts.

Performances (cont.)

- b. 16 f. 5-8 1990
Includes *Inside/Out* and a performance with the Phyllus Lamhut Dance Company.
- b. 16 f. 9-10 1991
Includes Meredith's Monk's *Atlas* Opera staged in Berlin and Paris.
- b. 16 f. 11 *A Night at the Ohio* 1992
- b. 16 f. 12 *Meredith Monk's Atlas Opera* 1992
Staged at Brooklyn Academy of Music.
- b. 16 f. 13 1993
- b. 17 f. 1-11 1994-1997
Includes performances at Lincoln Center, a memorial performance for Michael Schwartz. *One and Another*.
- b. 17 f. 12 *Suddenly Then She...* 1998
- b. 23 f. 6 Artifact circa 1998
Painted sheet metal that may have been used as a prop or created in the course of a performance.
- b. 17 f. 13-14 1999-2000
Includes a performance at the Joyce Soho Theater.
- t. 2 *Where's Jake?* 2000
Artifacts made during performance.
- b. 17 f. 15-17 2001-2003
- b. 18 f. 1-5 2004-2008
- b. 18 f. 6 *Kool* 2008-2009
With Suzushi Hanayagi, Carla Blank and others.
- b. 18 f. 7-11 2009-2013
- b. 19 f. 1-3 2014-2015
Includes *A Sonnet In Movement*.

Photographs

- b. 19 f. 4-6 1959-2012
1970s-1995, 2002
er.1 (26.2 Megabytes (34 computer files))
- b. 19 f. 7 Hunter College 1970s
- b. 19 f. 8 *Stopped In Her Tracks* 1970s
- b. 19 f. 9 *Transitivity* 1970s
- b. 19 f. 10-13 1970-1975
- b. 19 f. 14 *Cubiculo* 1975-1976
- b. 19 f. 15 *Small Visions* circa 1976
- b. 19 f. 16 *The Double Chamber* circa 1976-1979
- b. 19 f. 17-19 circa 1977
Includes performances with Spencer Holst and *Other Times*.

Photographs (cont.)

- b. 19 f. 20 circa 1978
- b. 19 f. 21 Collaborations with Joan Vennum Kurahara 1978-1985
Including *Black and White*, *Color*, *Parallels*, *Landscape*, *Stopped In Her Tracks*.
- b. 19 f. 22 1976-1979
- b. 19 f. 23 1980
- b. 19 f. 24 1981
- b. 20 f. 1 circa 1983
- b. 20 f. 2 Oil and Steel Gallery 1983
- b. 20 f. 3 *Stopped In Her Tracks* 1983
- b. 20 f. 4 Whitney Museum at Philip Morris 1984
- b. 20 f. 5-6 1985
Includes *Three Rolled Into One*.
- b. 20 f. 7-9 1986-1988
- b. 23 f. 1 1987
- b. 20 f. 10-12 1989
Includes photographs taken by Peter Bellamy and Lona Foote.
- b. 20 f. 13-15 1990-1992
- b. 20 f. 16 DIA Center for the Arts 1993
- b. 20 f. 17 Studio 1993
- b. 20 f. 18 The Construction Company 1994
- b. 20 f. 19 Lincoln Center Out of Doors 1994
- b. 20 f. 20-21 1995-1996
- b. 21 f. 1 1998
- b. 21 f. 2 *Suddenly Then She...* 1998
- b. 21 f. 3-7 2000-2004
- 2002
er.2 (361.2 Megabytes (191 computer files))
- 2004
er.3 (688.4 Megabytes (22 computer files))
- b. 21 f. 9-10 2005
Includes photographs taken by Erin Bianco and Laine Whitcomb.
- 2005
er.4 (151.1 Megabytes (67 computer files))
- b. 21 f. 8 Travel circa 2005
- b. 21 f. 11-13 2006-2012
- 2006
er.5 (2392 Megabytes (779 computer files))
Includes a performance at the Joyce Soho and *Seeing Winter Out*.
- 2007
er.6 (3481 Megabytes (886 computer files))

- Photographs (cont.)
- 2008
er.7 (5369 Megabytes (1,315 computer files))
 - 2010
er.8 (60.17 Megabytes (119 computer files))
 - 2011
er.9 (464 Megabytes (500 computer files))
 - 2012
er.10 (130.5 Megabytes (207 computer files))
- b. 21 f. 14 Poetry 1991-2007
- Programs
- b. 21 f. 15 1972-2014
 - b. 23 f. 2 Creative Time 1987
- Promotional Materials
- b. 21 f. 16 1985-2015
 - b. 21 f. 17 *Atlas Opera with Meredith Monk* 1991-1992
 - b. 21 f. 18 Articles 1981, 2000
 - b. 22 f. 1 Film and Video 1980s, 2007
- Invitations 1989-2000
- er.11 (11.98 Megabytes (8 computer files))
- Includes cards for the *Companion Pieces* performance at DIA Center for the Arts in 1989, and performances in 1991 and 2000.
- b. 22 f. 2 Layouts 1980s-1990s
 - b. 22 f. 3 North Carolina 1996
- Posters
- b. 23 f. 3 1989-2012 (7 posters)
Includes *Suddenly Then She...*, *TWEED New Works Festival*, *Austin Arts Center*, and *Hampshire College*.
 - b. 23 f. 4 Westbeth Studio 1980s (2 posters)
Performances with Spencer Holst.
- t. 1 Artists As Filmmakers Series at A.I.R. Gallery 1982
- t. 1 Austin Arts Center 2005
- t. 2 *Working In the Studio* 2010
Handmade poster for performance at Westbeth Studio with dancers Jamie Di Mare, Heather Lee, Tanja Meding and music by Brian Eno and David Byrne.
- b. 22 f. 4 Press Releases 1975-2012
 - b. 22 f. 5 Radio
- Reference
- b. 22 f. 6 1980s-2000s
 - b. 22 f. 7 Anatomy 1959-1972
 - b. 22 f. 8 Articles 1977-2000s
 - b. 22 f. 9 Beckett, Samuel circa 1987
 - b. 22 f. 10 Bharata Natyam circa 1990
 - b. 22 f. 11 Buddhism 1980s

Reference (cont.)

- b. 22 f. 12 Duras, Maguerite circa 1980s
The Lover
- b. 22 f. 13 Feng Shui 1990s
- b. 22 f. 14 Hooper, Oswald circa 1990s
- b. 22 f. 15 Keleman, Stanley circa 1980
- b. 22 f. 16 Lester Horton Technique 1988
- b. 22 f. 17 Meditation circa 1990
- b. 22 f. 18 Poetry 1990s-2000s
- b. 22 f. 19 Qi Gong circa 1980
- b. 24 f. 1 Retreat Notebooks 1995-2008
- b. 24 f. 2 Scripts 1988
- b. 24 f. 3-4 Tai Chi 1970s-2000s
- b. 24 f. 5 Trigger Point Therapy 1990s-2000s
- b. 24 f. 6-7 Workshops 1980s-2010s
- b. 24 f. 8 Yoga 1990s-2000s

Teaching

- b. 24 f. 9-11 1970s-2011
- b. 25 f. 1-2 2012-2015
City College
- b. 25 f. 3-10 1984-2014
 - b. 26 f. 1 Corlears School 1999-2011
 - b. 26 f. 2 Fordham Univerity 1996
 - b. 26 f. 3 Hotchkiss School, Connecticut 2005
 - Japan Fellowship
 - b. 26 f. 4 1997-2002
 - b. 26 f. 5 Correspondence 1996-2000
 - b. 26 f. 6 Photograph Album 1999
 - b. 26 f. 7-8 Job Search 1967-2001
 - b. 27 f. 1 Kingsborough Community College 1965, 1994
 - b. 27 f. 2 Letters Recommending Sally Gross 1984-2014
 - b. 27 f. 3 New York City Public Schools 1961
 - b. 27 f. 4 New York University 1990-1999
 - Private Classes
 - b. 27 f. 5-6 circa 1965-1970s
 - b. 23 f. 5 Sign circa 1970s
 - b. 27 f. 7-9 1980-1997
 - b. 28 f. 1 circa 2000-2009
 - b. 28 f. 2 Teachers' College 1965
 - b. 28 f. 3-5 University of Wisconsin, Madison 2012

Teaching (cont.)

t. 3 Workshop

Artifacts from a workshop that incorporated walking and text into dance. Consists of rolled large brown paper bags with words and drawings on them.

Travel

- b. 28 f. 6 Bali 1988
- b. 28 f. 7 Houston 1991
With Meredith Monk's *Atlas* Opera.
- b. 28 f. 8 Minnesota 1991
- b. 28 f. 9 North Carolina 1996
- b. 28 f. 10 Djerassi Artists' Residency 1992-1994, 2001-2004
- b. 29 f. 1 Yaddo Artists' Residency 2006-2010
- b. 29 f. 2 Israel 2007
- b. 29 f. 3 Notes 2007-2010
- b. 29 f. 4 Amsterdam 2008
- b. 29 f. 5 Europe 2008
- b. 29 f. 6 Vietnam 2011-2012