



By Martha L. Berg, Archivist, Rauh Jewish Archives

## Sibyl Barsky Grucci Papers

When Sibyl Barsky showed her sculpture in the mid-1930s, the *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph* headlined the 30-year-old as a “girl artist.” Born in 1905, Barsky came to Pittsburgh from Russia as a child of eight; when her parents died, she and her older sister took care of their four younger brothers. She studied painting at Carnegie Tech (now Carnegie Mellon University) but was self-taught as a sculptor, using kitchen knives, fingernail files, and needles until she could afford professional tools.

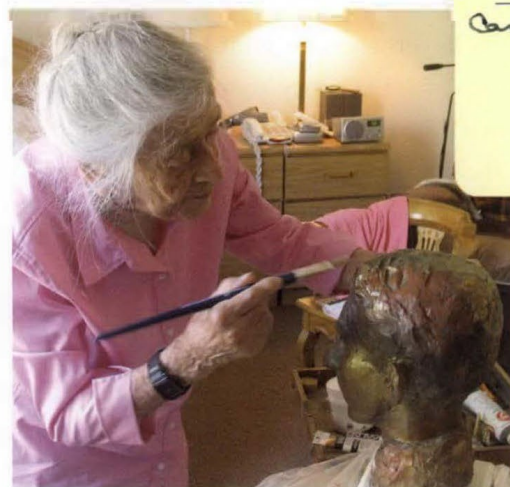
Beginning in 1933, Barsky exhibited her work with the Associated Artists of Pittsburgh. In 1934, she won the first sculpture award given in that show for a realistic portrait bust of Morris Rom, a local businessman. She also worked for the Pittsburgh group of the Federal Art Project, a program of the Works Progress Administration (WPA). For \$95 a month, each of the group’s six painters and sculptors was

provided with materials with which they created works of art for schools, museums, and other civic institutions.

In 1940, Barsky married Joseph Grucci, a poet and professor of English at the University of Pittsburgh and Penn State University. Sibyl

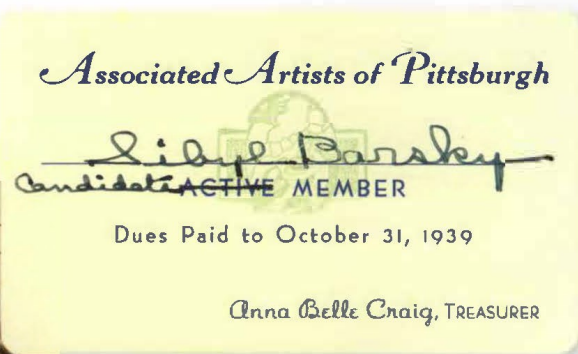
Barsky Grucci worked in clay, plaster, wood, stone, and bronze, and her sculptures are in public and private collections throughout the country. One notable work is her bust of Fred Lewis Pattee, prominently displayed in the foyer of the Pattee Library in State College. “The Young Dancer,” a limestone piece first exhibited at the Associated Artists of Pittsburgh show in 1935, is in the Grucci Poetry Center, also at Penn State.

Another of Grucci’s sculptures, a bronze portraithead of Hyman Blum, can be seen on



Sibyl Barsky Grucci repairing a bust this past summer.

Mark M. Rubenstein



Note the temporary status on this 1939 Associated Artists of Pittsburgh membership card.

History Center Archives, Sibyl Barsky Grucci Collection

the sixth floor of the Heinz History Center, part of a display of materials from the Blumcraft Company, a local architectural metalworking company with an international



Sibyl working on bust of Pearl Breskin Weinberger.

History Center Archives, Sibyl Barsky Grucci Collection

scope. Founder Hyman Blum helped Grucci in the 1940s by providing studio space and materials, and she sculpted him in return. The artist was not indicated when the Blum family donated their collection; it was Sibyl who identified herself on a recent visit. She subsequently donated her papers to the Rauh Jewish Archives at the History Center.

Two oral histories form part of the collection, and in them Grucci remembers her childhood spent in the Hill District and the East End. Later, while she was taking night classes at Carnegie Tech, she became friends with well-known Pittsburgh artist Samuel Rosenberg. An undated drawing of Grucci by Rosenberg is in the collection, along with some of Grucci’s own drawings and many photographs of her sculptures.

Sibyl Barsky Grucci recently moved to California. At the age of 101, she still spends time on sculpture, lately repairing some of her pieces damaged in transit.

The Library & Archives collects materials related to the history and culture of Western Pennsylvania. The L&A is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, or visit the Historic Pittsburgh website at <http://digital.library.pitt.edu/pittsburgh> for the online catalog and other useful tools.

## Sibyl Barsky Grucci 1905-2007

Boogersburg School held its final school year in 1952 and in 1953, Joseph and Sibyl Barsky Grucci purchased the school at public auction. Mrs. Grucci used the schoolhouse as sculpting studio until 2001. Photos of the Schoolhouse from 1998:



## Sibyl Barsky and Louis Pattee Bust at the Pattee Library, Penn State

Photo credit: Senator John Heinz History Center

