



# Smithsonian

*Archives of American Art*

## Oral history interview with George S. Abrams

Funding for this interview was provided by Barbara Fleischman.

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Oral history interview with George S. Abrams
<b>Date:</b>	2018 Jan. 25- Oct. 25
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.abrams18
<b>Creator:</b>	Abrams, George (Interviewee) Ruby, Louisa Wood, 1959- (Interviewer)
<b>Extent:</b>	6 Items (Sound recording: 6 sound files (5 hr., 5 min.); digital, wav) 133 Pages (Transcript)
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Digital Content:</b>	<a href="#">Digital Content: Oral history interview with George S. Abrams, 2018 Jan. 25- Oct. 25, Transcript</a> <a href="#">Audio: Oral history interview with George S. Abrams, 2018 Jan. 25- Oct. 25, Digital Sound Recording (Excerpt)</a>

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

This interview is part of the Archives of American Art Oral History Program, started in 1958 to document the history of the visual arts in the United States, primarily through interviews with artists, historians, dealers, critics and administrators.

### Available Formats

Transcript is available on the Archives of American Art's website.

### Restrictions

This transcript is open for research. Access to the entire recording is restricted. Contact Reference Services for more information.

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## Biographical / Historical

George S. Abrams (1932- ) is a lawyer and art collector in Boston, Massachusetts. Louisa Wood Ruby (1959- ) is an Art Historian at the Frick Art Reference Library, New York, New York.

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## Scope and Contents

An interview with George S. Abrams conducted 2018 January 25-26, and October 25 by Louisa Wood Ruby, for the Archives of American Art and the Center for the History of Collecting in America at the Frick Art Reference Library of The Frick Collection, at the Archives of American Art in New York, New York.

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## Scope and Contents

Mr. Abrams discusses growing up in Boston, his exposure to art at a young age and the stamp and silver collecting pursuits of his two uncles; his early collecting of American historical documents; his wife Maida's interest in art and her collecting of prints as a young teenager; his pursuit of a law degree at Harvard Law School and his work as a managing editor on the Harvard Crimson; his relationship with Paul Sachs and two of his grandsons at Harvard; his work with a Dutch student group after graduation and his first visits to the Netherlands and his visits to art museums there; the beginnings of his deep appreciation for 16th- and 17th-century Dutch drawings; Maida Abrams' work with the Very Special Arts programs for the United States and Massachusetts; their early collecting visits to dealers and auctions in Europe in the early '60s; and their work with Franklin W. Robinson creating a travelling exhibition of their drawings in 1969.

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## Scope and Contents

Mr. Abrams also describes his work for Sonesta International Hotels in the early '70s helping to build a hotel in Amsterdam, and the time he was able to spend travelling to Europe and visit art dealers and auctions there; his feelings about the development of the collecting of Old Master Dutch drawings in America compared with the field's history in Europe; the differences between collecting Old Master drawings and paintings; the Chatsworth Collection auction at Christie's in 1985 and his purchase there of a Rembrandt; the extent of his involvement with the Center for Netherlandish Art at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston; the gift of 330 Dutch and Flemish drawings to the Harvard Art Museums in 2017; and the future of the Maida and George Abrams Collection and his plans for its legacy.

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## Scope and Contents

Mr. Abrams also recalls Hyman Swetsoff; Alfred Brod; Noel Annesley; John Gere; C. F. Louis de Wild; Peter Schatborn; Winslow Ames; Robert Light; Hans Calmann; Senator Ted Kennedy; Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann; Evert Douwes; Herman Shickman; Eugene Thaw; John Steiner; Lodewijk Houthakker; Emile Wolf; Horst Gerson; Adolphe Stein; Dr. C. R. Rudolf as well as Susan Anderson; Konrad Oberhuber; Jakob Rosenberg; Edouard Kopp; Yvonne Tan Bunzl; Kate de Rothschild; Hans Mielke; William Robinson; Eijk and Rose-Marie Van Otterloo; Susan and Matthew Weatherbie; Austeja Mackelaite, among others.

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## System Details

Recorded on Tascam DR-100MKII 0221768.

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## General

Timecode in the second session of this interview transcript is approximate. The auditor was asked to move the timecode to the end of the paragraph and update the timecode accordingly. The timecode was moved, but the time was not updated. Timecodes should be within 30 seconds of where they originally appeared in the transcript.

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## Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Art -- Collectors and collecting -- Massachusetts -- Boston -- Interviews

Types of Materials:

Interviews  
Sound recordings

Names:

Art Collectors: A Project in Partnership with the Center for the History of Collecting in America  
at The Frick Collection