



Smithsonian  
*Archives of American Art*

Oral history interview with Peter Agostini

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Oral history interview with Peter Agostini
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.agosti68
<b>Date:</b>	1968
<b>Extent:</b>	99 Pages (Transcript)
<b>Creator:</b>	Agostini, Peter Roberts, Colette, 1910-
<b>Language:</b>	English .

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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.

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## Biographical / Historical

Peter Agostini (1913-1993) was a sculptor from New York, New York.

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## Scope and Contents

An interview of Peter Agostini conducted in 1968, by Colette Roberts, for the Archives of American Art at 151 Avenue B, New York, New York.

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## Scope and Contents

Mr. Agostini speaks of his childhood spent living throughout the five boroughs of New York; his interactions with clients of his father's acting employment agency; his early education in Catholic school and the creative freedom allotted by the nuns; his first feelings of isolation as an artist at the age of seven; the development of a sense of communication as the result of the loss of his mother at the age of three and time spent at a school for orphans; his early realization and vision of artistic destiny; his religious interests which lead to mysticism in his earlier work; his time spent working freely in the DaVinci Studio with Spaventa; the discovery by Hess of his works in Gallerie Grimaud; his attainment of the Longview Grant; his working experience throughout the Depression as part of the WPA casting plaster mannequins while working indirectly with Pollack as well as Marca Relli; his subsequent move to designing department

store windows (use of Mondrian-like forms and lines); his feelings of his position as an observer; the importance of communication through art (communication without words); his rejection of the Abstract Expressionist group and choice of independence; the influence of the sculpture of Kolbe and Bache in the thirties; Clement Greenberg's distaste for his work; his feelings about the relative failure to sell his work due its unusual edginess and mystery; his role in the introduction of the work of contemporary European artists (Chausserian, Gauthier, Modrian) to the American group; his description of his own work as "traditionless"; his feelings of self-importance as one of the most original sculptors in the art world; his influence on the younger generation, particularly Marisol; the enslavement to originality that the younger generation faces; his attitudes towards American Art forms and their lack of rebellious spirit; the virtues of the American writers, such as Poe, Whitman, and Melville as American "knapsack" writers; his personal technique which places an emphasis on the "skin" or volume of something; his attempt to create quiet art, or art that merely indicates features; his frustration with teaching and the problems of regurgitated knowledge; the role of Meyer Shapiro in his teaching career at Columbia; the formation of the Club and its similarity to the Cubist's café scene; his opinions on the relationship of sex and sensuality in American art; his personal struggles, including the loss of his second wife and two of his brothers, in addition to the estrangement of his only daughter by his first wife; his feelings on the role of psycho analysis and personal history in a work of art; his present works which feature the "swell." For the majority of the second half of the interview Ms. Roberts asks Mr. Agostini to express his opinions on the work of: Kline; DeKooning; Duchamp; Oldenburg; La Tour; DeChirico; Maillol; Pompon; Rothko; Chardin; Cezanne; Giacometti; Reinhardt; Chryssa; Tony Smith; Segal; Lachaise; Zorach; Manship; Flannagan; Kelly; Lassaw; David Smith; Hare; Lipton; Ferber; Lippold; Roszak; Nakian; Noguchi; Hague; Kohn; di Suvero; Chamberlain; Kaprow; Sugarman; Stankiewicz; Bontecou; Scarpitta; Cornell; Keinholz; Rivera; Judd; Robert Morris; O'Keeffe; Samaras; Mark Tobey; Marin; Pollock; Hartley; Dove; Macdonald-Wright; Demuth; Sheeler; Hopper; Mirot; Matisse; DuBuffet.

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## General

Originally recorded on 3 sound tape reels. Reformatted in 2010 as 28 digital wav files. Duration is 10 hrs., 37 min.

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## General

Transferred from 4 3" reels.

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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:

Abstract expressionism  
Sculptors -- New York (State) -- New York -- Interviews  
Sculptors -- New York (State) -- New York -- Interviews

Types of Materials:

Interviews  
Sound recordings

Names:

Bontecou, Lee, 1931-  
Chamberlain, John, 1927-2011  
Chryssa, 1933-2013  
Columbia University -- Faculty  
Cornell, Joseph  
Cézanne, Paul, 1839-1906  
De Chirico, Giorgio, 1888-  
De Kooning, Willem, 1904-1997  
Demuth, Charles, 1883-1935  
Di Suvero, Mark, 1933-  
Dove, Arthur Garfield, 1880-1946  
Dubuffet, Jean, 1901-1985  
Duchamp, Marcel, 1887-1968  
Ferber, Herbert, 1906-1991  
Flannagan, John Bernard, 1895?-1942  
Giacometti, Alberto, 1901-1966  
Greenberg, Clement, 1909-1994  
Hague, Raoul, 1905-1993  
Hare, David, 1917-1992  
Hartley, Marsden, 1877-1943  
Hopper, Edward, 1882-1967  
Judd, Donald, 1928-1994  
Kaprow, Allan  
Kienholz, Edward, 1927-  
Kline, Franz, 1910-1962  
Kohn, Gabriel, 1910-1975  
Kolbe, Georg, 1877-1947  
La Tour, Onya, 1896-1976  
Lachaise, Gaston, 1882-1935  
Lassaw, Ibram, 1913-2003  
Lippold, Richard, 1915-2002  
Lipton, Seymour, 1903-1986  
Macdonald-Wright, Stanton, 1890-1973  
Maillol, Aristide, 1861-1944  
Manship, Paul, 1885-1966  
Marca-Relli, Conrad, 1913-2000  
Marin, John, 1870-1953  
Marisol, 1930-2016  
Matisse, Henri, 1869-1954  
Melville, Herman, 1819-1891  
Mondrian, Piet, 1872-1944  
Morris, Robert, 1931-2018  
Nakian, Reuben, 1897-1986  
Noguchi, Isamu, 1904-1988  
O'Keeffe, Georgia, 1887-1986  
Oldenburg, Claes, 1929-  
Poe, Edgar Allan, 1809-1849  
Pollock, Jackson, 1912-1956  
Pompon, François, 1855-1933  
Reinhardt, Ad, 1913-1967  
Rivera, Diego, 1886-1957  
Roszak, Theodore, 1907-1981

Rothko, Mark, 1903-1970  
Samaras, Lucas, 1936-  
Scarpitta, Salvatore, 1919-2007  
Segal, George, 1924-2000  
Sheeler, Charles, 1883-1965  
Smith, David, 1906-1965  
Smith, Tony, 1912-1980  
Spaventa, George, 1918-  
Stankiewicz, Richard, 1922-1983  
Sugarman, George, 1912-1999  
Tobey, Mark  
United States. Works Progress Administration  
Whitman, Walt, 1819-1892  
Zorach, William, 1887-1966