



# Smithsonian

*Archives of American Art*

Oral history interview with Charles Alan

Archives of American Art  
750 9th Street, NW  
Victor Building, Suite 2200  
Washington, D.C. 20001  
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions>  
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/>

# Table of Contents

Collection Overview .....	1
Administrative Information .....	1
General.....	2
Scope and Contents.....	1
Scope and Contents.....	2
Biographical / Historical.....	1
Names and Subjects .....	2
Container Listing .....	

## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Oral history interview with Charles Alan
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.alan70
<b>Date:</b>	1970 August 20-25
<b>Creator:</b>	Alan, Charles, 1908?-1975 (Interviewee) Cummings, Paul (Interviewer)
<b>Extent:</b>	37 Pages (Transcript)
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Digital Content:</b>	<a href="#">Digital Content: Oral history interview with Charles Alan, 1970 August 20-25, Transcript</a> <a href="#">Audio: Oral history interview with Charles Alan, 1970 August 20-25, Digital Sound Recording (Excerpt)</a>

---

## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

These interviews are part of the Archives' 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 others.

### Restrictions

Transcript available on the Archives of American Art website.

---

## Biographical / Historical

Charles Alan (1908?-1975) was an art dealer from New York, New York. Alan attended Horace Mann School, graduating in 1924. Attended Yale School of Drama in 1925, then worked as a set designer for MGM and Warner Brothers. In 1930, Alan became a theatrical set designer and director. After serving in the Army in World War II, he worked for Edith Halpert at the Downtown Gallery. In 1952, he opened the Charles Alan Gallery, specializing in contemporary art. Alan closed the gallery in 1970 to become a private dealer.

---

## Scope and Contents

An interview of Charles Alan conducted 1970 August 20-25, by Paul Cummings, for the Archives of American Art.

---

## Scope and Contents

Alan speaks of studying scene and stage design; attending Yale School of Drama; doing illustrations for various publications; traveling and studying in Europe; working as a set designer for MGM and Warner Brothers; his experiences working at the Downtown Gallery; his thoughts and recollections about Edith Halpert; leaving Downtown Gallery and starting his own gallery; his opinions on the future of small galleries in New York; museum purchases; Edith Halpert's art collection; selling his gallery to Felix Landau; and various thoughts concerning the art world. He recalls Norman Bell Geddes, Edith Halpert, Stuart Davis, Julien Levy, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Kirk Askew, Raymond Breinin, Ben Shahn, George Washburn, Edward Root, Joe Hirshhorn, John Marin, John Marin Jr., Lawrence Allen, Georgia O'Keeffe, William Harnett, Julian Levi, Jack Levine, Karl Zerbe, Bruce Conner, Richard Baker, Paul Sachs, and many others.

---

## General

Originally recorded on 2 sound tape reels. Reformatted in 2010 as 6 digital wav files. Duration is 2 hrs., 58 min.

---

## Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Set Designers -- United States -- Interviews

Types of Materials:

Interviews  
Sound recordings

Names:

Allen, Lawrence  
Askew, R. Kirk (Ralph Kirk), 1903-1974  
Baker, Richard Brown  
Breinin, Raymond, 1910-  
Conner, Bruce, 1933-2008  
Davis, Stuart, 1892-1964  
Downtown Gallery (New York, N.Y.)  
Geddes, Norman Bel, 1893-1958  
Halpert, Edith Gregor, 1900-1970  
Harnett, William Michael, 1848-1892  
Hirshhorn, Joseph H.  
Kuniyoshi, Yasuo, 1889-1953  
Landau, Felix, 1924-2003  
Levi, Julian E. (Julian Edwin), 1900-1982  
Levine, Jack, 1915-2010  
Levy, Julien  
Marin, John, 1870-1953  
Marin, John, Jr., 1915?-1988  
O'Keeffe, Georgia, 1887-1986  
Root, Edward Wales, d. 1956

Sachs, Paul J. (Paul Joseph), 1878-1965  
Shahn, Ben, 1898-1969  
Washburn, George  
Yale School of Drama -- Students  
Zerbe, Karl, 1903-1972

Occupations:

Art dealers -- New York (State) -- New York