



# Smithsonian

*Archives of American Art*

Oral history interview with Charles Henry Alston

Archives of American Art  
750 9th Street, NW  
Victor Building, Suite 2200  
Washington, D.C. 20001  
Business Number: Phone: 202-633-7950  
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions>  
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/>

## Table of Contents

Collection Overview .....	
Administrative Information .....	1
Biographical / Historical .....	1
Scope and Contents .....	1
Names and Subjects .....	

## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Art
<b>Title:</b>	Oral history interview with Charles Henry Alston
<b>Date:</b>	1965 September 28
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAA.alston65
<b>Creator:</b>	Alston, Charles Henry, 1907-1977 (Interviewee) Phillips, Harlan B. (Harlan Buddington), 1920-1979 (Interviewer) New Deal and the Arts Oral History Project
<b>Extent:</b>	39 Pages (Transcript)
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Digital Content:</b>	<a href="#">Digital Content: Oral history interview with Charles Henry Alston, 1965 September 28, Transcript</a>

---

## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

This interview conducted as part of the Archives of American Art's New Deal and the Arts project, which includes over 400 interviews of artists, administrators, historians, and others involved with the federal government's art programs and the activities of the Farm Security Administration in the 1930s and early 1940s.

### Restrictions

Transcript available on the Archives of American Art website.

---

## Biographical / Historical

Charles Henry Alston (1907-1977) was an African American painter and mural painter in New York, New York.

---

## Scope and Contents

An interview of Charles Alston conducted 1965 September 28, by Harlan Phillips, for the Archives of American Art's New Deal and the Arts Oral History Project.

---

## Scope and Contents

Alston speaks of his work as an art director of a community camp and as director of a boys' club in Harlem; the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP) and his involvement; the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) and

his involvement in it; his membership in the Harlem Artists Guild; his contribution to WPA Federal Art Project murals at Harlem Hospital; mural versus easel painting; problems with the Artists Union; and camaraderie among FAP artists. He recalls Lou Block, Stuart Davis, Burgoyne Diller, Edith Halpert, Jacob Lawrence, Ernest Pachano, Aaron Ben Schmoo, and others, and describes his associations with musicians including Billie Holliday, Duke Ellington and Chick Webb.

---

## General

Originally recorded on 1 sound tape reel. Reformatted in 2010 as 2 digital wav files. Duration is 1 hr., 24 minutes.

---

## Names and Subject Terms

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

### Subjects:

- African American artists
- Federal aid to the arts

### Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

### Names:

- Artists' Union (New York, N.Y.)
- Block, Lou, 1895-1969
- Davis, Stuart, 1892-1964
- Diller, Burgoyne, 1906-1965
- Dlugoszewski, Lucia, 1931-2000
- Federal Art Project (N.Y.)
- Halpert, Edith Gregor, 1900-1970
- Harlem Artists Guild
- Lawrence, Jacob, 1917-2000
- New Deal and the Arts Oral History Project
- Pachano, Ernest
- Public Works of Art Project
- Schmoo, Aaron Ben
- United States. Federal Emergency Relief Administration

### Occupations:

- Muralists -- New York (State) -- New York
- Painters -- New York (State) -- New York