



# Smithsonian

*Archives of American Art*

Oral history interview with H. Harvard Arnason

Archives of American Art  
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## Collection Overview

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| <b>Repository:</b>      | Archives of American Art   |
| <b>Title:</b>           | Oral history interview with H. Harvard Arnason   |
| <b>Date:</b>            | 1970 March 3-9   |
| <b>Identifier:</b>      | AAA.arnaso70   |
| <b>Creator:</b>         | Arnason, H. Harvard (Interviewee)<br>Cummings, Paul (Interviewer)  |
| <b>Extent:</b>          | 44 Pages (Transcript)  |
| <b>Language:</b>        | English .  |
| <b>Digital Content:</b> | <a href="#">Audio: Oral history interview with H. Harvard Arnason, 1970 March 3-9, Digital Sound Recording (Excerpt)</a> |

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

This interview is 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.

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## Biographical / Historical

H. Harvard Arnason (1909-1986) was an historian, writer, and a former director of the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

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## Scope and Contents

An interview of H. Harvard Arnason conducted 1970 March 3-9, by Paul Cummings, for the Archives of American Art. Arnason speaks of his family and educational background; the influence of the WPA Federal Art Project on museums; lecturing at the Frick Collection and Hunter College; his work as U.S. representative of UNESCO; his teaching positions and his roles as director of the Walker Art Center and trustee and vice president of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation. He comments on Frank Lloyd Wright's design for the Guggenheim Museum building; competition among New York museums; conceptual art and museums; and the museum as a research center. He recalls Holger Cahill, Thomas M. Messer, Hilla Rebay, James Johnson Sweeney and others. Arnason also describes his writing projects, including his "History of Modern Art."

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## General

Originally recorded on 1 sound tape reel. Reformatted in 2010 as 6 digital wav files. Duration is 3 hr., 30 min.

## Names and Subject Terms

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

### Subjects:

Museum architecture -- New York (State) -- New York  
Museum directors -- Minnesota -- Minneapolis -- Interviews

### Types of Materials:

Interviews  
Sound recordings

### Names:

Cahill, Holger, 1887-1960  
Messer, Thomas M.  
Rebay, Hilla, 1890-1967  
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum  
Sweeney, James Johnson, 1900-  
Walker Art Galleries (Minneapolis, Minn.)  
Wright, Frank Lloyd, 1867-1959