



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Victoria Barr

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Victoria Barr
Identifier:	AAA.barr77
Date:	1977 January 11-February 18
Creator:	Barr, Victoria (Interviewee) Cummings, Paul (Interviewer)
Extent:	222 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Victoria Barr, 1977 January 11-February 18, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with Victoria Barr, 1977 January 11-February 18, Digital Sound Recording (Excerpt)

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

These interviews are 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 others.

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.

Biographical / Historical

Victoria Barr (1937-) is a set designer and painter from New York, New York.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Victoria Barr conducted 1977 January 11-February 18, by Paul Cummings, for the Archives of American Art.

Scope and Contents

Barr recalls how she became very interested in theater set and lighting design; the thrill of learning about Greek history and myths and her painting being influenced by dance; studying graphic design and advertising at Parsons School of Design and Cy Sillman as a teacher; at Yale, Neil Welliver influencing her to become a painter; her first trip to Europe with her parents at the age of 14 and spending time with Pablo Picasso, Marc Chagall, and Henri Matisse; fellow Yale students Victor Moscoso, Eva Hesse, Sylvia Mangold, Bob Mangold, and Louise Nevelson; moving to Aspen, Colorado in 1961 and how her brief experience with marijuana influenced her painting more than anything previously; the family friendship with Philip Johnson and building the Glass House in New Canaan, Connecticut; spending time with Johnson, Meis van der Rohe and Phyllis Lambert during the construction of the Seagram Building in Montreal, Canada; Vincent Scully and Bill McDonald as teachers at Yale; visiting Peggy Guggenheim in Venice; going to Budapest, Hungary 1963, right after the Cuban Missile Crisis, to make a film; being awarded the Fulbright to go to France in 1964; her trip to Greece on scholarship and how at home she felt; that it is no longer relevant to paint from nature; meeting Lillian Lynn and becoming great friends; moving back to New York in 1966 and working for the Museum of Natural History in the exhibits department; her work becoming less painterly, more abstract; beginning her teaching career at Barnard College in 1967; the upheaval of student riots at Columbia University and her involvement in the Peace Movement; moving to stain painting; vacationing in Santa Fe, New Mexico and the hippie culture there; how her trip to India in 1971 influenced her to use more color and primitive motifs in her work; embracing the Women's Liberation Movement; summers in Long Island and her trip to Bali. Barr also recalls Gwen Davies, John McAndrew, Alexander Calder, Chick Austin, Sydney Friedberg, Leo Steinberg, Peggy Guggenheim, Diana Cowan, Bob Chamberlain, Joey Cabell, Peter Blum, Marino Marini, Ben Shahn, Mark Rothko, Jack Tworkov, Fritz Bultman, Alice Katz, Jim Brooks, Willem de Kooning, Jasper Johns, Mark Rauschenberg, Jim Rosenquist, Claes Oldenburg, Bernard Berenson, Millard Meiss, Sydney Freedburg, Aline Saarinen, John Johansen, Jim Sobey, Nancy Graves, Richard Serra, Robert Fiore, Philip Glass, Peter Worshall, Michael Helminski, Marcia Tucker, Elke Solomon, Joan Snyder, Nancy Azara, Jane Kaufman, Pat Steir, Susan Hall, and John Giorno.

General

Originally recorded on 6 sound tape reels. Reformatted in 2010 as 12 digital wav files. Duration is 10 hr., 6 min.

General

Sound quality is poor.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Art, American
- Women artists
- Women designers
- Women painters

Types of Materials:

Interviews
Sound recordings

Occupations:

Painters -- New York (State) -- New York
Set designers -- New York (State) -- New York