



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Ben-Zion interview

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Oral history interview with Ben-Zion interview
Date:	1982 August 3-September 21
Identifier:	AAA.benzio82
Creator:	Ben-Zion (Interviewee) Shikler, Barbara (Interviewer) Mark Rothko and His Times Oral History Project
Extent:	56 Pages (Transcript)
Language:	English .
Digital Content:	Digital Content: Oral history interview with Ben-Zion interview, 1982 August 3-September 21, Transcript Audio: Oral history interview with Ben-Zion interview, 1982 August 3-September 21, Digital Sound Recording (Excerpt)

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

This interview was conducted as part of the Archives of American Art's Mark Rothko and his Times oral history project, with funding provided by the Mark Rothko Foundation.

Acquisition Information

Others interviewed on the project (by various interviewers) include: Sonia Allen, Sally Avery, Bernard Braddon, Ernest Briggs, Rhys Caparn, Elaine de Kooning, Herbert Ferber, Esther Gottlieb, Juliette Hays, Sidney Janis, Buffie Johnson, Jacob Kainen, Louis Kaufman, Jack Kufeld, Katharine Kuh, Stanley Kunitz, Joseph Liss, Dorothy Miller, Betty Parsons, Wallace Putnam, Rebecca Reis, Maurice Roth, Sidney Schectman, Aaron Siskind, Joseph Solman, Hedda Sterne, Jack Tworokov, Esteban Vicente and Ed Weinstein. Each has been cataloged separately.

Available Formats

Transcript available on line.

Restrictions

Transcript available on the Archives of American Art website.

Biographical / Historical

Ben-Zion (1897-1987) was a painter and sculptor from New York, N.Y.

Scope and Contents

An interview of Ben-Zion conducted 1982 August 3-1982 September 21, by Barbara Shikler, for the Archives of American Art's Mark Rothko and His Times oral history project.

Scope and Contents

Ben-Zion speaks of his family's background in Ukraine and Poland and their arrival in the United States after the death of his father. He remembers working as a writer for a Hebrew newspaper in the Bronx, the writing block he suffered in reaction to Nazi atrocities in Europe, and his turn to art with the patronage of J. B. Neumann. He recalls exhibiting with The Ten, meeting Mark Rothko through the Gallery Secession, and the rift that developed among members of The Ten. He describes his own commercial success, the influence of Jewish tradition upon his choices of subject matter, and his relationship with the Jewish Museum in New York. He discusses a period in which he stopped painting and returned to writing, and his later interest in sculpture. He speaks of his writings and his work habits.

General

Originally recorded on 3 sound cassettes. Reformatted in 2010 as 6 digital wav files. Duration is 4 hr., 5 min.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Abstract expressionism
- Art criticism
- Jewish artists
- Philadelphia Ten (Group of artists)
- World War, 1939-1945

Types of Materials:

- Interviews
- Sound recordings

Names:

- Gallery Secession (New York, N.Y.)
- Jewish Museum (New York, N.Y.)
- Mark Rothko and His Times Oral History Project
- Neumann, J. B. (Jsrael Ber)
- Rothko, Mark, 1903-1970

Occupations:

- Painters -- New York (State) -- New York
- Sculptors -- New York (State) -- New York